

**EDUCATION AND POLITICAL
CONSCIOUSNESS IN KERALA
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MALABAR
(1900 TO 1950 AD)**

**Thesis submitted to University of Calicut in
fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in History**

By

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the thesis **EDUCATION AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MALABAR (1900 TO 1950 AD)** submitted for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Calicut**, is a record of bonafide research carried out by **Sudheerkumar, P.** under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any degree before.

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Dr. K.N. Ganesh

DECLARATION

I, Sudheerkumar, P., hereby declare that this thesis **EDUCATION AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MALABAR (1900 TO 1950 AD)** is a bonafide record of research work undertaken by me, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.I.S.F	:	All India Students' Federation
A.I.T.U.C	:	All India Trade Union Congress
A.M.S.T.O	:	All Malabar School Teachers' Organization
A.M.S.T.U	:	All Malabar School Teachers' Union
B.E.M	:	Basel Evangelical Mission
C.P.I	:	Communist Party of India
C.S.P	:	Congress Socialist Party
D.M.R.T	:	Devdhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust
K.P.C.C	:	Kerala Provincial Congress Committee
L.M.S	:	London Mission Society
N.S.S	:	Nair Service Society
R.A.C	:	Regional Archives, Calicut
S.I.T.U	:	South Indian Teachers Union
S.N.D.P	:	Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam

INTRODUCTION

Education has been a widely discussed topic. There are many different views regarding it. According to an important concept education is the manifestation of the inborn totality of the human being. The role of education is the emancipation of an individual.¹

In the traditional society the role of education was different from what it is today. Ideologically it was accepted that education brings forth the all round development of human beings. But the stratification of the society on the basis of caste, religion and class made it restricted to the elite groups and hence it did not play any remarkable role in the society as a whole.

Naturally, resistance movements became inevitable in modern times and the neglected groups tried to get what they had been denied for many centuries. Political circumstances also changed and it affected the education policies as well. But still what education did was to recreate the stereotypes of the old systems. When modern education system was imparted, many believed that the system would include the downtrodden groups also. But the opposite was the experience. This is because of the simple fact that Education has never been impartial. So it is incorrect to believe that a system in which the downtrodden has the role of critical appraisal of social justice has emerged.²

The education system developed by the dominant groups will always be biased. They want to become the masters without any threat from any

¹ Swami Vivekananda, *Vidyabhyasam*, Sreeramakrishnashramam, Vilangan, Trichur, 1960, p.9.

² Paulo Freire, *Politics of Education* (Tr.), Fabian Books, Nooranad, 1999, p.129

quarter. Now that education was limited to a creamy section of the society, the majority of the common people were denied the same.

Like changes in the field of education, the dominant classes never tolerated changes in the political formation as well. So any attempt to change the pattern was strongly dealt with. It is believed that education was one of the important ingredients to bring about any change in the social and political structure. Political power was the major influential aspect in the society. So there was serious and deliberate effort to deny the same to those who were not at all supposed to be welcomed to wider political arena. But this process did not continue for long since there were liberating forces that came up to take up the responsibility to equip the downtrodden with the idea of political and economic rights.

Many studies have been conducted about the political and educational history of Kerala. But it is significant that no serious study has been done to untangle the relation between education and political consciousness in Kerala. Kerala being one of the leading states in terms of literacy as well as one of the most politically active states in India, the study about the relationship between growth and development of political consciousness and the role of education in this process seems to be relevant. Kerala is a state where many political and educational experiments have taken place. So an examination is to be done to see how the people of Kerala reacted to these experiments.

There is an argument by some thinkers like T.J.Nossiter and Dr.E.J.Thomas that education played a vital role in changing Kerala society. They are of the opinion that education along with some other factors changed the society and paved the way for political and social consciousness. Robin Jeffrey

considers the role of education as a catalyst in politicizing and radicalizing the masses. Scholars like Dilip.M.Menon think that all the reforms we have today have been the legacy of the Missionary education.

The relationship between education and political consciousness is clearly manifested in the region of Malabar, which formed a district of the Madras Presidency under British rule. On the one hand, Malabar was one of the most developed districts in Madras Presidency in terms of education, and it was also the centre of political activity during the period of the freedom struggle. It is easy to speculate upon a connection between education and the growth of political consciousness, as it has always been the educated middle class who had been in the forefront of the freedom struggle. In this context, the following questions are looked at in this enquiry taking Malabar as the field of study.

The first problem is how the education system worked here under the colonial influence and whether education was a liberating agent in its real sense in Malabar. A serious consideration is also given to the argument whether education had played the role of a change agent in bringing about major social and political changes; what role did the educated groups play in Malabar in politicizing the masses; whether they spearheaded the political struggles or kept their silence, enjoying what the colonial masters offered to them. The role of education in the colonial rule is examined in the context of the on going political struggle. Further the existence of any other factors that fomented the augmentation of political consciousness in Malabar has to be examined.

Methodology

Normally what is attempted is a standard historical narrative of the development of political consciousness in Malabar or a detailed history of education in Malabar. Here the endeavour is not to develop such a narrative but to examine the linkage between the process of education and the growth of political consciousness. Much of the information that is used here on the growth of political consciousness and education is already well known. But in our opinion the linkage between the two has not been sufficiently explored. So as an interdisciplinary methodology using social as well as pedagogical analysis linked to historical information is used to untangle the process of social and political transformation in Malabar.

Sources.

The following sources were used in this study.

1.Archival sources

We have depended mainly on the sources available at the Regional Archives, Calicut.

2.Interviews

We have conducted interviews with a number of persons both reputed and unknown to get a clear picture of the responses of the people to the ongoing changes in the period of study.

3. Biographies and Autobiographies.

We have gone through almost all the biographies and autobiographies available and were helpful in framing ideas about the life and thought of the people during the period of study.

4. Literary sources

There are a number of books, magazines, weeklies and newspapers that provided ample materials for the completion of the study.

5. Earlier studies

Many scholars have given much relevant information to supplement the study. They approached the social, educational and political developments in our society in a serious manner. The study by P.R.Gopinathan Nair – ‘Education and Economic Change in Kerala’ is worthwhile. Another study that comes under this group is that of V.K.Ramachandran-‘Kerala’s Developmental Achievements: A Review’. P.K.Michael Tharakan has brilliantly described the educational development in the 19th century Travancore through ‘Socio- Economic factors in Educational Development: The Case of 19th century Travancore’.

An important study has been made by Aparna Basu in the book titled-‘The Growth of Education and Political development in India (1898-1920).Thayat Sankaran has written *Bharatheeya Vidyabhyasam: Charit'iravum Varthamana Prasnangalum*, which deals with the history of modern education in India and the problems of today.

B.V.Shah and K.B.Shah have described the social context of education through ‘Sociology of Education’. ‘Development of Education System in

India' is a significant work by Arther Mayhew and H.R.James that describes the growth and development of modern education system in India. 'The Sociology of Education-An Introduction' is an important book written by Ivor Morrish that points out the social relevance of education. The educational concept of Gandhiji is very clearly explained in his work 'Towards New Education'. Paulo Freire has been vivid about his educational concepts in *Vidyabhyasathinte Rashtreeyam* (The Politics of Education). Ananda.E.Wood has given a brilliant examination of education in Kerala through 'Knowledge before Printing and After'. Tapas Basu too has given a detailed history of the student movement in India through 'Probing into the History of Indian Student Movement'.

C. Bhaskaran has a description about the founding of Student Unions in Kerala and the struggles conducted by them in politicizing the Kerala society through-*Keralathile Vidyarthi Prasthanam*.

The M.Phil thesis by M.N.Padmanabhan- 'Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar' describes the role of the teaching Community in the freedom struggle. Dr.K.J.John through 'Christian heritage of Kerala' has picturised the spread of Christianity and its contribution in many fields in the history of Kerala. P.K.Muhammed kunhi has given a detailed story of the Muslims of Kerala and their culture through *Maslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum*. P.K.Gopalakrishnan has made a serious effort to find the culture of Kerala through *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*. Through 'Nationalism and Social Change :The Role of Malayalam Literature', Dr.K.K.N.Kurup has examined the role of literature in fomenting the National Movement in Kerala. A.R.Desai has attempted to go through the social movements in India and the influence of such movements in bringing

about changes in the history of the country through 'The Social Background of Indian Nationalism'. An important study by Robin Jeffrey is remarkable in many respects. 'Politics, Women and Well-being' unravels the social, political and educational background of Kerala society. 'Religion and Ideology in Kerala' is an important work by Genevieve Lamercinier that examines the social and ideological situation in Kerala. Through the celebrated work 'Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India' Dilip.M.Menon has examined the growth of social, political and educational aspects of the Kerala Society.

Dr.E.J.Thomas has given a description about the social and political structure of Kerala through his work-*Keralathinte Samootha Ghatanayam Roopantharavum*. M.S.A.Rao has gone through the social movements led especially by the lower castes in Kerala and the indelible impact they made in the Kerala society through 'Social Movements and Social Transformation-A Study of two backward class Movements in India'.

Cherukad (*Jeevithappatha*), A.K.Gopalan (*Ente Jeevithakatha*), P.Narayanan Nair (*Ara Noottantilute*), Mannath Padmanabhan (*Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal*), Thikkodiyar (*Arangu Kanatha Nadan*), C.K.Gopalan (*Quit India Samaravum Njanum*), M.N.Govindan Nair (*Emmente Atmakatha*), E.K.Nayanar (*Pinnitta Vazhikal and Samaratheechoolayil*) E.M.S.Nambudiripad (*Atmakatha*), K.P.Kesavamenon (*Kazhinha Kalam*) were some of the helpful auto biographies to get a clear picture about the situation in Kerala.

The ideological differences between the Indian National Congress and the Communists have been well explained by K.Kelappan in his work *Congressum Communisavum*.

The peasant struggles in Malabar have been described by V.V.Kunhambu through *Kayyurum Karivellurum* and *Kayyur Samara Caharithram*. M.N.Kurup has given another major contribution in this topic through the biography of *A.V.Kunhambu*. The working class movement in Kerala has been well depicted by R.Prakasam in his work *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram*. The political struggle in Kerala and the role of the working class have been described by P.Krishnapillai through *Sakhakkale Munnottu*.

'The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala' by P.K.K.Menon has the distinction being the most important work about the National Movement in Kerala. The *Sampoorna Krithikal* by E.M.S.Nambudiripad has great importance in the context of the National Movement since many of the articles were written during the period of freedom struggle.

'Malabar' by William Logan is helpful in getting the history of the Malabar region. P.Radhakrishnan through his work 'Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social change' has highlighted the past of Kerala especially the land and revenue system and the many struggles by the peasant community against exploitation. Another remarkable work on the same subject is by T.C.Varghese – 'Agrarian Change and Social Consequences', which provides the economic situation in Kerala, the land and revenue system.

Limitations of the Sources

Since this study is not the standard history of education or of political development, the normal secondary or even primary sources on the political or educational history of Malabar are not very helpful. Many of the valuable documents that might have helped the study have been irrecoverably lost. More over the old generation that had the experience ended their lives

without recording their memories properly and hence the possibility of first hand information has been very limited. Much of the information has to be gathered from non-conventional sources, including memories of the participants in political struggles, those who have undergone school education in colonial times and so on. So autobiographies and biographies are heavily depended for the completion of the study.

Framework of the Thesis

The first chapter in the study-**The Features of Kerala society and Education before Twentieth century- An Overview**-gives a brief account of the social, political, economic and educational situation that prevailed in Kerala on the eve of the 20th century.

The second chapter-**Caste, Community and the Struggle for Modern Education**-describes how the social and political life of the people of Kerala in the 20th century had been. It also considers how the common people undertook the struggle against casteism and other social evils. It also goes through the various struggles conducted by different community organizations for attaining education.

The third chapter-**Progress of Education in Malabar**- discusses the growth and development of education in Malabar; the problems faced by the people on the way to achieve mass education. Major steps taken by the Government in the field of education are also evaluated. The activities by the Missionaries in spreading education are given attention.

The fourth chapter -**The Growth and Development of Political Consciousness in Malabar**- elaborates how political consciousness was developed in Malabar and achieved greater momentum later. The activities

of the major political parties are discussed. The persons, who spearheaded the struggle for freedom and their educational background, are given importance. The founding of Peasant Unions and Trade Unions and their role in spreading mass education are also examined.

The fifth chapter-**The Teaching Community and Political Consciousness in Malabar**- deals with the founding of the Teachers Unions in Malabar and their role in politicizing and radicalizing the teachers and students in the context of the freedom movement. The role of the teachers in the educational institutions and society in Malabar are also looked at. Various struggles by the teaching community are elaborated in this chapter. The role of the teachers in the fight against the colonial Government is given importance.

The sixth chapter-**Radicalization of the Student Community in Malabar**- includes the study of the student life in Malabar and the role of the students in bringing about educational and political changes. The various struggles and the founding of the Student Unions, and their role in spreading political ideologies are given greater consideration. The participation of the students in the National Movement is also a topic of study.

The seventh chapter-**The Role of Letters in the Development of Political Consciousness in Malabar**-discusses how the common people got politicized since the academic community was not at all taking the responsibility to politicize the students and the society. The remarkable role played by the newspapers, public speeches by eminent persons, the libraries and reading rooms etc. in imparting political awareness is analysed.

The concluding chapter briefly summarises the findings of this study.

Chapter-1

THE FEATURES OF KERALA SOCIETY AND EDUCATION BEFORE TWENTIETH CENTURY - AN OVERVIEW

This chapter contains a detailed discussion about the features of the traditional Kerala society. An attempt is also made to give a bird's eye view of the Kerala society on the advent of the British. The features of caste system, development of political consciousness, economic relations among various sections of the people and the educational framework are given due attention.

Caste in the Traditional Kerala Society.

The salient feature of traditional Kerala society was the presence of a strong caste hierarchy. Kerala society had displayed extreme caste consciousness for many centuries on end. Kerala was considered to be the most caste-ridden part of India.¹

Scholars have pointed out that caste division in Kerala had the following features:

In the caste society the status of an individual is determined by the status of the group in which he is born. The status remains unchanged by education or wealth or success or failure. A man is born into a caste and he dies in it. No one can change this destiny.²

¹ P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of The Oppressed, Konark Publishers, Delhi, 1994, pp.9-10.

² M.Sahadevan, Towards Social Justice and Nation Making, Palakkad, 1993, p.2

There has been considerable debate on the origin of caste in Kerala. It has been pointed out that during the *Sangham* period people were divided on the basis of their profession and the nature of the land they occupied.³ However some historians like Elamkulam Kunhanpillai have argued that caste system became deep-rooted in Kerala after the Chera-Chola war.⁴

Recently there have been other theories linking the growth of caste to the emergence of a hierarchical agrarian order, temple centred society, prevalence of occupational divergence among temple servants and the influence of *Brahminical* ideology.⁵ Such theories have been borrowed from the recent anthropological formulations on the transition from tribe to caste that have attempted to account for the growth of stratification on the basis of the break down of kinship and use of non-kin labour in production. The resulting hierarchical production relations are reinforced by social and ideological factors, which resulted in the formation of caste. For example the *Panas*, *Parayas* and *Kuravas* appear in the *Sangham* works as distinct social groups. They have become the slave castes of Kerala in the later period. It is possible that they represented segments of a tribal society who later were transformed into slave castes in a hierarchical social form. Caste ideology probably had stronger roots than religious identity. Changing religion did not result in the breaking of caste identity. This type of caste system was beneficial only to the *Savarna* Hindus, which made the underprivileged

³ Elamkulam Kunhanpillai, *The Studies In Kerala History*, N.B.S, Kottayam, 1970, p.15

⁴ *Ibid*, p.265

⁵ Rajan Gurukkal, *Medieval Kerala temple and the Agrarian System*, Vallathol Vidyapeedam, Sukapuram, 1995, Passim

classes quite docile and subservient.⁶ The main feature of Kerala society was the deep chasm that separated the high castes from the low castes.⁷

Till the 12th century, the only one identifiable social group in Kerala was the *Brahmins*. Even though the *Nairs*, *Ezhavas* etc. come into sight in the epigraphs, it is unclear whether they represent the castes of today. There are references to *Mel Nairs*, *Patamel Nairs* etc. who appear to be servants of rulers, and *Ezhavas* were tied to the soil and were transferred along with land.⁸

In the traditional Kerala society the upper step of the caste ladder was occupied obviously by the *Brahmins*. The descending order was- *Brahmins*, *Antharalas*, *Nayars*, *Thiyyas*, *Artisans* and the aboriginal tribes.⁹ The life of the *Brahmins* was mainly about the temples; they were also the major landlords of the region. They also seem to have practiced medicine, astrology, mathematics and even architecture, and also served as courtiers and scholars in the *kovilakams*.

The communities upward from *Nairs* to *Brahmin* formed the privileged class in the medieval Kerala society.¹⁰

The *Nambudiris* and the *Nairs* together formed the land owning class.¹¹ By the end of the 13th century, the *Nambudiris* transformed themselves into land proprietors from being the managers of surplus attributed to a deity with

⁶ R.N. Yesudas, *People's Revolt in Travancore*, Kerala Historic Society, Trivandrum, p.86

⁷ P.K.V.Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed*, p.9

⁸ M.G.S.Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, pp.95-96.

⁹ C.A.Innes, *Malabar, Gazetteer Department*, Govt. of Kerala, 1997, pp.95-96

¹⁰ M.Sahadevan, *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making-A Study of Sahodaran Ayyappan*, 1993, p.26

¹¹ T.J.Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, Oxford, 1982, p.57

hereditary rights.¹² Though the *Brahmins* never seized formal political power, they were respected by the local authorities.¹³ They never needed formal political power since they were in a position to control even the rulers. Some of them had the privilege of conducting the *Ariyittuvazhcha* ceremony to appoint the *Rajas* of various *Nadus*.

The *Antharalas*, who were next to the *Brahmins* in the caste ladder, were temple servants. They supported the *Nambudiris* in conducting the day-to-day activities of the temples. The *Nair* led his life in the service of the *Nambudiris* or *Janmis*. They also formed the army of *Rajas*.

Even though the *Nairs* belonged to the privileged class, they too had suffered caste evils like unapproachability. The *Brahmins* and the *Kshatriyas* kept the *Nairs* at some distance while talking to them. If they touched a *Nair*, they had to bathe. Among the *Nair* sub castes, the same custom was followed. The general feast and marriage among the sub castes were forbidden. In these matters, the *Nairs* and the *Ezhavas* had similar methods.¹⁴

Though the *Nambudiris* had supremacy, they had many problems within their community. The social structure of the community created many problems to its members. Only the elder male members of the family were allowed to seek marital alliance from the same community.¹⁵

Due to high death rate in the community, the increase of population was bridled. Later, when the number of married couples increased, the

¹² Lemercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, Institute for study of Developing Area, Trivandrum, 1994, p.106

¹³ Ibid, p.103

¹⁴ Mannath Padmanabhan, *Jeevitha Smaranakal*, p.105

¹⁵ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, Chintha, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, pp.29-30

population began to soar.¹⁶ To tide over this problem, the *Brahmins* adopted a new system of marriage with the *Nairs* called *Sambantham*, which was a type of contract marriage.¹⁷ The *Brahmin-Nair* combination controlled the society. But the *Nairs* had many difficulties. Their women were sexually exploited by the *Brahmins* in the name of *Sambantham*. The *Nair* women did not follow the norms of chastity. Some historians argue that the moral degradation appeared between 12th and 16th century. The *Nambudiri Janmis* made a law that the *Nair* women need not observe chastity.¹⁸

Robin Jeffrey writes:

“*Nair* girls roamed freely in their localities. A girl would be noticed, and when she was old enough, requests would come from *Nair* men or *Namboodiris*, other *Brahmin* or *Kshatriya* to form a union. If the proposal was agreed to a sacred simple ceremony was performed, this was called *Sambantham*.”¹⁹

Both the parties benefited from this type of alliance. The position of the *Nair* in the society was elevated considerably and they got strong support from the *Janmis*. Similarly the *Nambudiris* got support of this warrior class to consolidate their hold on the other sections of the people. The children thus born had not enjoyed any right in the property of father. Polygamy also was not considered as a sin in those days and was prevalent then. This custom disappeared only after the spread of English education.²⁰

They were ignorant in many respect; they were able to seek alliance only from the same community. This resulted in marriages by even the old *Brahmins*. Many of the old *Brahmins* married young women.²¹ Since the

¹⁶ Lemercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, p.113

¹⁷ Ibid, pp.113-114

¹⁸ Elamkulam Kunhanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, p.282

¹⁹ Robion Jeffrey, *Politics, Women And Wellbeing*, Oxford, 1993, p.36

²⁰ Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Moorkoth Kumaran*, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1975, p.3

²¹ V.T.Bhattathiripad, *Sampoornakrithikal*, DC Books, Kottayam, 2000, pp.131-2

community lacked sufficient male members, exchange marriage was also practised.

The lower castes were the next in the caste ladder. The major section among them was the *Ezhavas*. Until the beginning of the 20th century, their religious practices were little influenced by the *Brahminical Hinduism*. They worshipped *Kaali*, the cruel aspect of mother goddess; and it involved bloody sacrifices, which the *Brahmin* Hindu was opposed to.²² The lower castes of Travancore society, particularly the *Ezhavas*, *Shanars* and *Pulayas* and *Parayas* accepted their fate since there was no alternative.²³

They formed the sizeable section of the total population and were untouchable and unapproachable. The rigid caste system kept them in permanent bondage and ignorance.²⁴ A code of conduct was strictly followed in keeping the distance by which the upper castes were polluted. The concept of pollution by touch or approach was the chief source of almost all disability the communities below the Brahmins suffered.²⁵ The Brahmin had to keep 32 feet away from the *Ezhavas*; 64 feet from the *Pulayas*. If safe distance was not maintained, they would become polluted. If the Brahmin saw an *Ullada* he would at once become polluted.²⁶ The lives of the lower castes were miserable. There was no freedom of movement; they were not allowed to touch the well or pond; they were not given freedom of education.

²² Lemercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, p.142

²³ Robin Jeffrey, The Decline of *Nair* Dominance in Kerala, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, p.28

²⁴ P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.11

²⁵ M. Sahadevan, Towards Social Justice and Nation making...., p.10

²⁶ Payyappilli Balan, *Paliyam Samarakatha*, Deshabhimani, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p.20

In the 19th century, even though the *Ezhavas* did not have unapproachability, their approach had compelled others to take bathe. They had no entry to the Hindu temples.²⁷ The lower castes were denied entry to the structural temples during 11th and 12th centuries.²⁸ No *Brahmin* had performed ritual in the house of a *Thiyya*.²⁹ They had no access to the public buildings, even courts.³⁰ The *Avarnas* of the lowest class were not allowed to wear gold.³¹

In an attempt to keep away from others, the upper castes in Kerala tried to avoid the 'unapproachables' even from their ideological world. The *Savarnas* knew how to write. The written language is the product of this group. The *Avarnas* never appear in their literary works. Even the *Nairs* were *Sudras* in that system. Then how can the *Chandala* castes appear in their writings? The description how the castes such as the *Ezhavas*, *Parayyas*, *Uralas*, *Ulladar*, *Pulayyas*, and *Nayadis* lived here can not be seen in their works.³²

The upper castes were not ready to accept the down trodden as human beings. The religious proscriptions were so oppressive as far as the life of the unprivileged castes was concerned. The hereditary 'no's haunted them through out their life. The traditional ethical code followed the caste system in such a way that the upper layer of the society enjoyed supreme powers in determining the matters relating to the social relations.

²⁷ A.K.Gopalan, *Ente Jeevithakatha*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1980, p.35

²⁸ N.K.Jose, *Kshetra Pravesana Vilambaram Oru Padanam*, Hobby Books, Kottayam, 1988, pp.17-18

²⁹ Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Moorkoth Kumaran*, p.27

³⁰ P.K.V.Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed*, p.13

³¹ Payyappilli Balan, *Paliyam Samarakatha*, p.26

³² K.N.Ganesh, *Kerala Samootha Padanangal*, Prasakthi Books, Pathanamthitta, 2002, p.25

The public feast was also served strictly on the basis of caste order. The communal feasts were also carried out in the order of caste. Those not belonging to same caste were driven out of the hall.³³

Caste, *Janmi* system and feudalism together gave untouchability a monstrous character that excluded substantial sections of the labourers.³⁴ The lower castes were not allowed to cover even their bosoms. There was a struggle in May 1822, when the caste Hindus stripped the clothes off the *Nadar* women and committed atrocities. There was an agitation for the basic needs of the people with the support of Missionaries.³⁵

R.N.Yesudas writes:

“The most important change in the social set up as a result of the introduction of Protestant Christianity in the country by the Missionaries with the help of company people. The most important of their movements was the one by the *Nadar* and other backward communities for the right of women to cover their bosoms.”³⁶

The culmination of the struggle for the right to wear clothes resulted in the Breast Cloth Agitation of 1859 that broke out in Southern Travancore. Although certain reservations were included in the proclamation granting the women the right to cover their bosoms, the *Nadar* women took their own liberty at their risk to dress decently and freely moved about in the streets and markets without considering the prejudices of the privileged classes. In 1865 the *Ezhavas* and other backward classes were allowed to cover their bosoms in a proclamation by the *Raja*.³⁷

³³ Cherukad, *Jeevithappatha*, Current Books, Trichur, 1992, p.72

³⁴ Payyappilli Balan, *Paliyam Samarakatha*, p.17

³⁵ R.N. Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore*, Kerala Historic Society, Trivandrum, p.83

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.48

³⁷ R.N. Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore*, p.157

It is rather surprising that slavery had existed in Kerala society as well. It is believed that the origin of slavery in India was closely associated with the inception of the caste system, which in turn was based on our hierarchical social order.³⁸ Slavery prevailed in Travancore in the middle of the 19th century and continued to exist till the 1st half of the 20th century in a mild form. The slave communities were denied all human rights.³⁹ There were several slave classes like the *Pulayas*, *Paraya*, and *Vettuvvas* etc. But the *Pulayas* contributed the bulk of the total slave population.⁴⁰ They lived in huts, which were near the fields, or in the valleys.⁴¹ They were denied human considerations; they had no right to education.⁴² K.K.Kusuman thinks that the debtors who failed to repay money were also compelled to accept slavery.⁴³

This might have happened after the 15th century. The *Kanakkans* also belonged to the *Cheruma* community but they had more freedom than the *Pulayas*.⁴⁴

These communities were given special rights on particular days that came to be called as *Pulappedi* and *Mannappedi*. *Pulappedi* and *Mannappedi* had existed in Kerala.⁴⁵ The religious system of the slave castes was built on the belief in

³⁸ K.K.Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*, Kerala Historic Society, Trivandrum, 1993, p.15

³⁹ P.K.V.Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed*, p.6

⁴⁰ K.K. Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*, p.28

⁴¹ T.H.P.Chentharassery, *Ayyankali*, p.24

⁴² P.K.V.Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed*, p.7

⁴³ K.K.Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*, p.29

⁴⁴ Chentharassery, *Ayyankali*, p.27

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.16

supernatural beings whose function was to do evil, in order to foment human beings over in the smallest details of their daily lives.⁴⁶

Very cruel punishments were meted out toward the lower castes. Thurston narrates the case of a *Nair* killing a *Pulaya*, who polluted the former in 1904. This was believed to be done for the pleasure of god.⁴⁷ When the male members of these communities suffered bitter humiliation, the plight of the women was really shocking. They were not allowed to wear better clothes or ornaments. The women had used stone chains and stone rings.⁴⁸

To perform strict untouchability and unapproachability, the upper castes needed some apparent symbols of caste from the unprivileged groups. The low caste was recognized by the colour his skin. The fair of them were not allowed to cover the parts above waist. New clothes were to be used staining black colour on them. They were forbidden to wear chappals, umbrellas, costly jewellery, and good clothes. Even the umbrellas were used only by the *Brahmins*.⁴⁹

The gap between the *Savarnas* and the *Avarnas* acted as a hurdle in the progress of the Hindu community particularly that of the lower castes.⁵⁰

Seeing all the workers untouchables, and denying sufficient wages for them were better ways for the landlords to get more wealth. The *Nairs* were given certain privileges so that the land and the temples could be protected.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Lamercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, p.143

⁴⁷ P.K.V.Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed*, p.14

⁴⁸ T.H.P. Chentharassery, *Ayyankali*, p.25

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.14

⁵⁰ A. Sreedharamenon, *Kerala Samskaram*, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1978, p.223

⁵¹ K.N. Ganesh, *Kerala Samooha Padananagal*, pp.244-5

Religious faith was one of the factors that helped maintain the practice intact. Another factor was psychological one. The practice of untouchability and unapproachability was certainly not a welcome thing for the inferior caste in whose disfavour it was practised. Every caste had a psychological satisfaction of being in a position to practise it in their favour with the caste inferior to their own in the social ladder. This clever device successfully prevailed in the lower castes prevented them from revolting against the system for a long time till the 1st half of the 20th century.⁵²

The atmosphere changed absolutely when the Missionaries began their work in Kerala. The Christian Missionaries, for their selfish ends, brilliantly exploited the social conflict in Kerala and began proselytization. The converted people enjoyed many rights that their counterparts had not.

The converted *Pulayas* and *Parayas* could travel along the way through which an *Ezhava* could not walk.⁵³ The Missionary activities brought about many remarkable changes in the realm of education and social life.⁵⁴

By the end of the 19th century, the lower castes in Travancore became conscious of their rights for which the Christian Missionaries played an important role. The caste Hindus were not ready to tolerate the Missionary activities. They lashed out at the Missionaries and the Christians because they believed that the *Nadars* and other socially backward classes used Christianity a means to evade taxation and *Corvee* labour as well as to raise their social status, which, they believed, would weaken their position.

⁵² P.K.V.Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed*, p.15

⁵³ Mannath Padmanabhan *Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal*, p.133

⁵⁴ M.K.Kumaran, R.Sankar, Department of Cultural Publications, Triv andrum, 1990, p.49

So they thought of destroying the Missionary activities as the only way of checking the innovation and to establish the old customs and practices.⁵⁵

The lower castes were eager to grab the various privileges that were denied to them. It was the *Ezhavas* who inaugurated the protest movement for the entry in to the temples. No other section among the Hindus was in a position to demand the same. Later the *Pulayas* under the leadership of Ayyankali came forward with the same demand.⁵⁶

It is apt to quote P.K.V.Kaimal in this respect.

“Social differences may be a universal phenomenon, but nowhere in one’s birth the criterion to determine one’s position in the society as in Travancore and else where in India. However low might be the social status of the family in which a man has been born in another countries, he can by his own merit and ability to rise to even the highest rung in the social ladder”⁵⁷

Economic Relations

From the earlier times the economy of Kerala had been basically agrarian. Land and its produces determined the economic foundation of the region. However it is quite remarkable that peculiar type of activities were there connected with land in the traditional society. The cultivators were not the actual owners of the land property. They neither had the authority to own it nor use it according to their will. The relation between the *actual* owners of the land and the cultivators determined the economic foundation of the region.

The beginning of the formation of a stratified social order in Kerala is attributed to the coming of the *Brahmins*. During the 7th and 8th centuries

⁵⁵ R.N.Yesudas, A People’s Revolt in Travancore, p.125

⁵⁶ N.K.Jose, *Kshetra Pravesana Vilambaram Oru Padanam*, Hobby Books, Kottayam, 1986,p.35

⁵⁷ P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of The Oppressed, p.16

Brahmins poured into Kerala from the northern parts. The religion and culture of the *Brahmins* spread rapidly building a new synthesis of *Brahmin* and indigenous cultures. This culture was invariably bound up with the matrilineal system, the rise of the *Nairs* and, above all, the feudal system in Kerala.

The extension of *Brahmin* influence into Kerala resulted in the old chieftains being brought under the control of the *Brahmins*, and in the emergence of a new warrior class known as *Nairs*, paved the way for a new and effective form of feudal land lordship in these numerous principalities.⁵⁸

The *Aryanisation* resulted in the emergence of four main caste groups as elsewhere in India. But there was absence of *Vysya* community- the commercial caste.⁵⁹ The *Brahmin* lawgivers did not assign trade to any community. In fact, they discouraged castes from directly engaging in trade. The *Thiyyas*, Christians and the Muslims became traders.⁶⁰

The rise of many temples also paved the way for consolidating the domination of the property owners. To rule the temple there was a management of board of trustees or *Ooralas*. They were selected from the patrons of the temple. The *Brahmins* were invariably chosen in almost all the cases.⁶¹ They enjoyed the temple property according to their will. So not only the trustees but also the priests and the *Tantris* became wealthy.⁶²

⁵⁸ T.C.Varghese, *Agrarian change and Social Consequences*, p.12

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.15

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.16

⁶¹ Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, p.329

⁶² *Ibid*, p.348

From 9th to 13th century A.D, most of the land was owned by the non-*Brahmins*. During these centuries lands were bestowed on the *Nambudiris* and the temples.⁶³

Buchanan says in 1800 A.D. that the *Nambudiris* pretended to be the possessors of the landed properties in *Malayala* from its creation. Before the advent of Hyder, they claimed to be the actual lords of the whole soil except *Devaswam* and *Cherikal*.⁶⁴

The *Janmis* and the nobles in Kerala were able to convince the common people that the legends concocted by them to cement the feudal system were true in no mean achievement. Its effects were unparalleled and extraordinary; the *Janmis* could continue their exploitation for centuries without the least opposition from the oppressed classes.⁶⁵

The historical reasons for this strange phenomenon were:

1. The willingness of the intelligentsia to serve the feudal lords and their consequent failure to guide the common people to a correct appreciation of events and things.
2. The mental slavery that resulted in from economic servitude.⁶⁶

During the medieval period, as in other matters, the *Janmi-Kudiyani* relations were also determined on the basis of traditional laws. The traditional laws were called *Kana Janma Maryada*.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 325

⁶⁴ C.A.Innes, Malabar, p.306

⁶⁵ Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, Studies in Kerala History, p.324

⁶⁶ Ibid

All sections of population were obliged to observe these laws.⁶⁷ But this *Kana Janma Maryada* was restructured by Tippu Sultan and then by the British. Tippu appointed many officials to look after the land and to levy of taxes from it. This system was largely unknown to the *Janmis* and peasants in Malabar.

From early 18th century onwards the situation was favourable for the proliferation of small landlords. When land revenue was initiated, officers known as *Adhikaris* were appointed to collect revenue. They had vast powers.⁶⁸ They were mostly *Nairs* and many of them became *Janmis* in later years. The number of *Janmis* was also increased by the practice of Kings bestowing titles in return for the monetary payments.

These titles, *Janmis*, were conferred on people among all classes of people.⁶⁹ Thus by the 19th century the whole of the land in Malabar was the private property of the *Janmis*.⁷⁰ The largest landowner or *Janmi* in Malabar was Zamorin.⁷¹

In Malabar, the land was distributed in large scale among the following groups:

Kovilakams- for example, Zamorin, Chirakkal, Arakkal, Kadathanad, Mankada.

Naduvazhi Nairs- like Kavalappara, Nilambur, Koodali.

Namdudiri Families-like Poomulli, Olappamanna, Desamangalam.

⁶⁷ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1997, p.95

⁶⁸ Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, p.361

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.362

⁷⁰ C.A.Innes, *Malabar*, p.307.

⁷¹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.101

Devaswamas -like Guruvayur devaswam.⁷²

In Kerala the hereditary property (*Janmam*) was freely bought and sold.⁷³ *Janmam* was the 'full property right' in the soil, subject to payment of the Government revenue.⁷⁴ *Kanam* was a tenure partaking of the nature of both a mortgage and a lease; the tenant would pay a lump sum to the *Janmi*; an actual rent was fixed according to the capacity of the land, and from it the tenant was entitled to deduct the interest due to him on the amount of the *Kanam* the net balance payable to the *Janmi* actually was called *Purappad* or *Michavaram*. The *Kanamdar* was entitled to twelve years enjoyment. After a 'renewal fee' he could enjoy the same for another term. The *Janmi* normally fixed this fee. The *Kanamdar* could sub mortgage the land. In the *Kuzhikkanam* tenure the sum expended on improvement was considered and the necessary reductions were given.

The tenant was entitled to enjoy the land rent free or for a nominal fee for twelve years. At the end of that period he must get an ordinary *Kanam* or *Verumpattam* lease from the *Janmi* or must surrender on receiving the value of his improvements.⁷⁵ *Verumpattam* was the single lease from year to year; the rent was often the whole of the net produce after deducting the bare cost of the seed and cultivation in each case the tenant was practically a labourer on subsistence wages; but the order confirms for one third of the net produce, after deducting cost of seed and cultivation, to be reserved for the tenant, and the remaining two thirds paid to the *Janmi*.⁷⁶ The large peasantry constituted a hierarchy with the *Nairs* as the *Kaanakkars* at the top, *Thiyyas*

⁷² Ibid, p.102

⁷³ C.A.Innes, Malabar, p.310

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.320

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.321

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.322

and *Mappilas* as *Verumpattakkar* in the middle, artisan and service castes as *Cherujanmakkar* below them, and the polluting castes as agriculture labourers at the bottom.⁷⁷

During the invasion of Tippu Sultan many *Nairs* fled to the forests and the *Nambudiris* to Travancore. In the confusion many people illegally owned property saying that the original owners had gifted them.⁷⁸ They constituted a new breed of *Janmis*.

This new generation of *Janmis* too harassed the tenants. Their aim was to squeeze out as much as possible from the tenants and become wealthy.

When the *Nambudiris* and other landowners came back, they got their properties back. The British helped them to regain the land lost and they also offered *Malikan* to the *Naduvazhis* and the kings.⁷⁹

The *Janmis* were unable to meet the military might of the British and thus they learned to live under the British as local chieftains.

The *Janmi* system in Malabar was the result of mutual understanding and respect of the *Janmis* and the Government.⁸⁰

The British changed the traditional land relations altogether. Laws were enforced in place of the traditional systems. Not only in the field of economic relations but also in other areas, especially in social, economic and political, the old system was the basis.

⁷⁷ P.Radhakrishnan, *Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social Change*, 1988,p.42

⁷⁸ Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, p.360

⁷⁹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.105

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.106

Thus the age-old tradition ended. Instead, an economic relation was accepted between the landholder and the person who wanted land on lease.⁸¹ In the traditional system there were laws for shares for the *Janmi* and the tenant. At the same time the Government stood in favour of the *Janmis*.⁸² ignoring the realities.

The English East India company took over the responsibilities of collection from the *Rajas* and the old system was considered to be *ryotwari* and framed a new tax system. The new scheme also put forth an intermediary class between the Government and the actual cultivator as the owners of the land and they were allowed to have a share of agricultural produce.⁸³

The tenants had no permanent right of occupancy.⁸⁴ The court also upheld that the *Janmis* were the owners of land and they should give the land revenue. The settlement should be reached with the landlords not with the cultivators.⁸⁵

The landlord or *Janmi* was considered as the possessor of *Roman Dominium*, and all other groups connected with land and agriculture were pushed down to the position of tenants. The *Kanamdars* were considered as mere mortgagers, and *Kuzhikkanamdars* and *Verumpattakkars* as tenant-at-will and all of them could be evicted by the freedom of contract enjoyed by the owners.⁸⁶ With the help of a central power the rules were ruthlessly

⁸¹ Ibid, p.95

⁸² Ibid, p.98

⁸³ T.C.Varghese, *Agrarian change and Social Consequences*, p.27

⁸⁴ C.A.Innes, *Malabar*, p.320

⁸⁵ T.C.Varghese, *Agrarian change and Social Consequences*, p.28

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.29

implemented. The inferior tenure holders became more and more dependent on the *Janmis*.⁸⁷

Large-scale evictions of the *Kanakkudiyans* by the *Janmis* occurred even though there were no rent arrears, and the same was handed over to those who offered more rent.⁸⁸

Harder and harder terms were imposed by the *Janmis* on the *Kanakkaran* according to their will. The British police and the court supported them. The Hindu tenants were almost submissive. But the *Mappilas* were not in a position to tolerate it.⁸⁹ So many *Mappila* revolts resulted.

The important fact is that all the *Janmis* formed only 2% of the total population in Malabar in the second half of the 19th century.⁹⁰ The rest of the population, about 98%, was virtually the sufferers of the age-old *Janmi* system.

In other regions especially Travancore and Cochin, the *Janmis* were not so oppressive as in Malabar since the land property was mainly under the control of the Government. Even though the *Janmi* system was in vogue in these regions, the Government had a close watch on the *Janmis*. The influence of the *Nambudiris* and of large chieftains was less in Travancore. The

presence of a centralized Government was the main reason for that. The assessment of land revenue from the tenant was in light terms compared to that of Malabar. The Pattom Proclamation of 1865 is believed to be the starting point of major changes in the land relations in Travancore. It

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.29

⁸⁸ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.97

⁸⁹ P.Radhakrishnan, *Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social Change*, 1988, p.42

⁹⁰ T.C.Varghese, *Agrarian change and Social Consequences*, p.39

allowed the full ownership rights to the tenants who occupied the *Sirkar* land and paid the land revenue.⁹¹ Another proclamation in 1867 extended the same privileges to the tenants of *Janmam* lands.

The Cochin administration had an intermediary position between Malabar and Travancore. About 40% of the cultivated land was under the possession of the Government, which was called *Pandaravaka* and the rest *Puravaka*. The *Janmis* paying *Rajyabhogam*, which was made by the tenants, cultivated the *Puravaka* lands.⁹²

The *Raja* , through an edict in 1863, prevented eviction of *Kanam* land before the completion of the term of 12 years. Landlord- tenant relations on the *Janmam* lands were similar as in Malabar.⁹³ .

Appointment of Commissions

The Government was forced to appoint a Special Commissioner, T.L.Strange in the 1850s to investigate into the causes of the *Muppila* riots of 1838. Meanwhile the eviction from land crossed all caste barriers and created many social and economic problems during the period from 1841 to 51. The scale of evictions had become a major disturbing factor in Malabar land relations. Restlessness seemed to exist everywhere. In 1852 the special Commissioner submitted his report to the Government. Many corrective measures were put forth to address the grievances of the tenants.⁹⁴

1. The courts should consider the usages and practice them in Malabar before making any interpretations of land lord-tenant relations.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.64

⁹² Ibid, p.33

⁹³ Ibid, p.69

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.52

2. Registers should be prepared of the lands held by tenant families from earlier times.

3. The collectors should be given powers to decide summarily the questions relating to the issues between the landlords and the tenants before going to the courts.

4. An attempt has to be made to explore the possibilities of restricting the absolute rights enjoyed by the *Janmis* over wastelands.

The Government accepted the first three and rejected the fourth. But the Government did not implement the first three in real spirit.⁹⁵

In 1880, the Government received an anonymous letter, which stated that the unjust activities of the *Janmis* were responsible for the agrarian discontent. The Government soon appointed a commission led by William Logan in 1881.⁹⁶ He was of the opinion that the British land policy in Malabar was faulty from the beginning to end. Rack renting, the exorbitant renewal fees, and indiscriminate evictions were the root causes for the agrarian unrest.⁹⁷ His suggestions included the curtailment of the powers of the *Janmis* in ousting of the actual cultivator.

He also favoured in giving the full benefits to the tenants that they had enjoyed in the traditional system entitling them to sell the improvements of their holdings.⁹⁸ He also suggested that wasteland might be distributed to the contractors to create a class of owners of small gardens.

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ P.Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social Change,p.47

⁹⁷ William Logan , *Malabar Manual*, Mathrubhumi, Calicut,pp.668-671

⁹⁸ P.Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land Reforms and Social Change, pp.67-68

Logan's report was unpalatable for the Government. So the Government appointed another commission headed by Madhava Rao in 1884. He recommended for occupancy right to the tenants holding land directly from the *Janmis*. The Government referred the same to the High Court. The court upheld the rights of the *Janmis* on land. So the Government did not accept the recommendation.⁹⁹

The first law to regulate the relation between the *Janmis* and the tenants was the Malabar compensation for Tenants Improvement Act 1887. This was enacted to end the clash between the *Janmis* and the tenants. This act was not effective in attaining the goal. So an amendment was made in 1900.¹⁰⁰

The Master Commission submitted its report in 1887. The report of the Commission contained strict guidelines about eviction of tenants from land. The eviction should only be done at the end of the agriculture year and after giving six months notice. He also favoured legislation in this matter.¹⁰¹

Political Consciousness

Kerala was divided into three distinct political entities-Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The first two regions were ruled by Kings, and the last one-Malabar- was ruled by the British. Malabar was a district under the Madras state. Political awareness in Kerala in the 19th century can be discussed considering all the three units a single entity.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp.68-69

¹⁰⁰ Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, Studies in Kerala History, p.368

¹⁰¹ P.Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social Change, p.70

In Travancore formation of a new state came into existence in the late decades of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th century. In Cochin and Malabar also new political entities had come into being.¹⁰²

The modern states described here are centralized states such as Travancore and Cochin. Malabar was under the direct rule of the British.

Political consciousness as a phenomenon appeared very late in Kerala, especially in Travancore and Cochin.¹⁰³ It appeared in Travancore in the last quarter of the 19th century in the form of protest movements. These movements were against the domination of the out of state *Brahmins* in the 1880s.¹⁰⁴

The first manifestation of political consciousness in the organized manner in Travancore could be found in the mammoth petition submitted in 1891 to the *Maharaja*.¹⁰⁵ The *Malayali Memorial* movement of 1891 was led by G.P.Pillai who was a guide even to Gandhi in some respects. It was the first popular movement in modern Travancore.¹⁰⁶

He released a notice in which he wrote 'Travancore for the Travancoreans'.¹⁰⁷ The *Malayali Memorial* of 1891-92 meant only that the Government service should be opened for the *Nairs* of Travancore. The movement was arranged

¹⁰² M.K.Kumaran, R.Sankar, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1990, p.72

¹⁰³ T.K. Ravindran, *Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala*, Kerala Historic Society, Trivandrum, 1972, p.LXX

¹⁰⁴ M.K.Kumaran, R.Sankar, p.78

¹⁰⁵ T.K. Ravindran, *Asan and Social Revolution*, pp. LXX-XI

¹⁰⁶ Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, Current Books, Trichur, p.200

¹⁰⁷ M.K.Kumaran, R.Sankar, p.80

in such a way to make sure the participation of other communities. Later they came to know that they were let down.¹⁰⁸

The bureaucracy was so corrupt and the people were in a state of fear that they could not raise their voice against them. But there were sparks of fury against this situation. In 1892, a 14 year old boy wrote in the newspaper that the Neyyattinkara Munsiff was corrupt and thus the people suffered much difficulty. He was Ramakrishnapillai, called *Swadesabhimani* in later years.¹⁰⁹

The political history of Travancore from *Malayali Memorial* to the Abstention Movement could be considered as the struggle for representation of various communities in the Government service.¹¹⁰ The lower castes were not appointed to the Government jobs. Their rights were bluntly denied. They had no political or social rights. Even though Palpu had studied medicine, he was denied a job by Cochin and Travancore Governments, for he belonged to a lower caste. The princely reluctance for going any employment, the rudimentary political right of the subjects of the state was bread by religion and caste predictions.¹¹¹

Dr. Palpu made a vain attempt to gain constitutional rights to the *Ezhavas* also. It was the firm decision that gave energy for the *Ezhavas* to rise from the ashes of sound disabilities like a phoenix to the political liberty in later years.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ T.Venugopal, *Swadesabhimani Rajyadrohiyaya Rajyasnehi*, Kerala Press Academy, Cochin, 1996, p.652

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p.57

¹¹⁰ M.K.Kumaran, *R.Sankar*, p.82

¹¹¹ T.K. Ravindran, *Asan and Social Revolution.....*, p.LXXI

¹¹² Ibid, p. LXXII

Kumaran Asan was quite aware of the situation in which the upper caste had political domination. He found that the political evils too had its origin in the caste problem.¹¹³

It is, however, significant that people of Kerala, Travancore in particular, were rather inert during the entire 19th century except some sparks from flamboyant persons like Dr.Palpu, Kumaran Asan, C.Sankaran Nair and others, as well as incidents like the *Mappila* revolts. The brutal suppression on the part of the British regime was more visible in Malabar since this area was directly under the control of the colonial regime. They tried to squeeze out even the last paisa of the people, which brought about bloody outbreaks. Many rebellions rocked Malabar during the 19th century. The *Janmi*-Government nexus was mostly responsible for the many agrarian upheavals in Malabar.

The poverty-ridden people of Malabar had to face the mighty British Government with whatever weapons they got. The so-called *Mappila* uprisings reveal the socio-political grievances of the common people. These rebellions were responsible for a number of measures taken by the Government. Though the people were aware that the British Government had been denying their rights, their grievance was limited to their miserable plight as tenants and labourers. When sharp fall in agricultural prices occurred, the people had no other option to find a means for subsistence. The *Mappila* revolts should be approached in this context.

Another interesting event in Malabar in the 19th century was the participation of Sankaran Nair in the meeting of the Indian National

¹¹³ Ibid, p. LII

Congress. He belonged to a family in which many had held important posts under the British regime. His father was a *Thahsildar*.¹¹⁴

After education, he began to show interest in social activities. He wanted to change the matrilineal system existed in Malabar. He was opposed to the domination of the *Karanavar* in the *Taravadus*. This precedence brought about the break down of many families, he believed. But the Government was against the proposals and thus his attempt failed.¹¹⁵

In the 1887 Madras meeting of the Indian National Congress, he argued for doing away with the *Chathurvarnia* system of caste and to mobilize movement against the oppression towards the Hindu women. He was a social activist rather than a political leader. His name was more connected with the marriage bill. But his interest in this field gradually led him towards political activities. He was not ready to tolerate any discrimination towards the Indians. Once he was invited to participate in the *Dasara* festival by the *Raja* of Mysore. Everybody had to present some gift to the *Raja* except the English. Unable to tolerate the humiliation, he left the place.¹¹⁶

Even though Sankaran Nair had chaired the 1897 Amaravati session of the Indian National Congress,¹¹⁷ the political activities in Malabar stood where it had been. No organized political forms were visible in Malabar until the beginning of the 20th century.

¹¹⁴ K.P.S.Menon, C.Sankaran Nair, Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1971, p. 6

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.29

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.76

¹¹⁷ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.10

We have examined the social, economic and political situation in Kerala but the study can't be complete without going into the system of learning that the society followed.

Learning in Kerala.

We have already examined the social, economic and political situation in Kerala before the 20th century. It is equally important to understand how the people of Kerala learnt.

The system of learning prevailed in Kerala may be classified in to two.

1. Indigenous education in the traditional mode.
2. The modern education imparted by the Government and other agencies.

1. Indigenous Education

The traditional education in Kerala was followed by many generations for centuries. The education thus imparted was strictly on the basis of caste. The *Brahmins* and other castes never had the same system of education since their roles in the society were different. It is necessary to have a general understanding of the terms of education of different castes.

A. Education of the *Brahmins*.

The *Brahmins* had been following traditional system of education that did not match with the education of the modern times. The initiation into letters took place in the 5th year. That day in addition to *Vedic* rituals, 51 letters of the alphabet have to be written by something made of gold on the rice. On the tongue *Hari Sree Ganapathaye Nama* was written. Then *a, aa...*All the rice used for writing had subsequently been eaten. Primary education continued

until the beginning of the Veda recitation after the 'sacred thread ceremony'. First lesson was the learning of 51 letters. Letters were written on sand. Four or five letters were learned a day. Compound letters were learned after learning individual letters and consonant vowel compounds. Then the *Akshara Samkhya* was taught. Then the pupils would read letters from the palm leaves. One had to recite by heart the lesson previously studied irrespective of the class in which he was studying. If there was no need to repeat the lessons, the pupils were to write them on the palm leaves.¹¹⁸ Sanskrit lessons, verses for astrological calculations and practice, and the calendar time reckoning were taught.¹¹⁹ Lessons started after break fast in the morning and lasted up to 11am. The classes started again before 2 p.m. and continued till 5 p.m. The students used to recite moral verses then.¹²⁰ There were centres for higher education for them as well where they learned the advanced lessons.

The *Nambudiris* with the help of their superior knowledge of Sanskrit had supreme influence in the religious and the cultural life of the people. They succeeded in giving a new way to education separating linguistic education from the vocational and military component. Literary education replaced the system of all round education given by the *Kalaris*.¹²¹

This was a typical *Gurukula* system of education. The personal relation between the *Guru* and the *Sishya* was given due importance in this system.

¹¹⁸ Ananda E Wood, Knowledge before printing and after, Oxford, Delhi 1985, p.35

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p.39

¹²⁰ Ibid, p.40

¹²¹ M.P.Sarojini Amma, A Study of the History and Development of the N.S.S as a Voluntary Educational Agency in Kerala, Ph.D Thesis, Calicut, 1996, pp.76-77

As the residents of the *Sabhamadam*, the *Nambudiri* children were given free food and accommodation. The subjects were *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Mimamsa* and *Vyakarana*.¹²² The *Sabhamadams* of north Kerala had done much to the spread of education. Like the *Salais* that existed in different parts of Kerala earlier, these *Madas* had spread the *Vedic* education. These centers were mainly for the *Nambudiris*.¹²³ *Vedic* education started for *Brahmins* after *Upanayanam* and continued till the 16th year.

Rigveda was learnt by heart, without understanding the meaning. The *Purohita* would recite one *Rik* and the pupil would repeat and learn it by heart. The pupil was not trained to read or write in Malayalam or *Devanagari*. Even though the knowledge of letters was compulsory, there was a leaning towards the Sanskrit language.

During the study of *Vedas* no language other than Sanskrit was allowed to be spoken by the students.¹²⁴ This manner of teaching, and all these lessons, including *Gunapatham*, constituted the traditional education in those days not only for the *Nambudiris* but also for all caste Hindus i.e. of *Sudra* and higher.¹²⁵

The indigenous institutions were unable to meet the hard terms of knowledge that developed under colonialism. The western schools gradually replaced the *Pathasalas* and the *Kalaris*, where only a relatively small number of pupils could be trained under one teacher.¹²⁶

¹²² A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1978,p.181

¹²³ *Ibid*, p.180

¹²⁴ Palakkeezh Narayanan (Editor), *V.T.Oru Ithihasam*, Current Books, Trichur, 1996,p.81

¹²⁵ Ananda E Wood, *Knowledge before printing and after*, p.39

¹²⁶ M.P.Sarojini Amma, p.78

The pulse of the modern times was well recognized by some progressive *Brahmins* and they demanded that the *Nambudiris* should adopt the western style of education. But there was strong opposition from the orthodox. The *Yogakshemam* stressed the need for the educating the boys for the first time. Then the opposition and support increased. When the uncle of E.M.Sankaran Nabudiripad started *Namboodiri* School at Edakkuni, the discord between the orthodox and the progressive factions became more detectable.¹²⁷

B. Education of the Non *Brahmins*.

Before the implementation of the modern system of education, the *Ezhuthupallis* were the basic units of learning. The teacher was called *Ezuthachan*. The initiation of the child to the study was called *Vidyarambham*, which was considered to be a sacred religious ritual and was normally at the age of three, sometimes it might go to seven. The child was first initiated in to the letters of the alphabets by writing in the sand. After which they were trained to write short sentences on the palm leaves. Most of the texts and verses were commuted to memory. Simple arithmetic, a little of astrology and astronomy were also taught. It was obligatory for all to learn *Amara* and *Sidha*. The study of the *Puranas* and the epics was also carried on by assiduous pupils.¹²⁸

Normally *Janmis* or other powerful persons in the village, often for the education of their children, founded *Ezhuthupallis*. They also allowed other children generally of the same caste.

¹²⁷ Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha E.M.S*, Sakthi Publications Perinthalmanna, 1990, p.84

¹²⁸ Kerala District Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.711

Cherukad describes about the founding of an *Ezhuthupalli* in his village:

“Krishnan Nair was very rich. He started an *Ezhuthupalli* at his *Pathayappura*. He appointed Gopalan Ezhuthachan as the single teacher. There were about 25 pupils in that school.”¹²⁹

If there was more population, there existed more than one *Ezhuthupalli*. The discipline was strict in the *Ezhuthupallis* and there would be no excuses. The salary was not paid in cash instead the things for their day-to-day life was given.¹³⁰

In his auto biography Mannath Padmanabhan describes about the early education in Travancore thus:

“I was taught *Nilathezhuthu* and *Enchuvad* by Kesavan Asan himself. I went to some other *Kalaris* and learnt *Vakyam*, *Paralperu*, *Amarakosam*, *Pathinaluvritham*, some *Veethakkanakku* and *Keezhkanakku*. Writing on the palm leaf was also learnt. The children went to the *Ezhuthupallis* wearing the *Konakam*. The first who gets into in the *Kalari* was given the name *Elan*. Severe punishment was there. Hanging down from the *Kondamaram* was the supreme punishment.”¹³¹

The children had to reach the *Kalaris* before 7 O' clock. The child who studied very well was *Chattampi*. He would closely watch the activities of the other children. When just entered, they had to write on the floor what had previously studied and repeated that had learnt in the previous day. If wrong, big blows would result. There was no common timetable. Different children had different lessons.¹³² The last period was reserved for the enquiry of crime and punishment. Those who did not come to the *Kalaris*, those who took bath in the ponds without permission, those who stole something at home, those who quarreled on the way to *Kalari* were punished. There were at least eight or ten hours of class every day.

¹²⁹ Cherukad, *Jeevithapatha*, p.56

¹³⁰ A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*, p.182

¹³¹ Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal*, pp.4-5

¹³² *Ibid*, p.6

Beating with the stick was a common punishment. People used to frighten the children saying that the *Asan* was coming.¹³³

Vakyam, Adivakyam, Paralpperu, Siddharupam, Balaprabhodhini, Sreeramodandam and *Amarakosam*, the first parts all these became good education of the *Nair* child.¹³⁴ It was compulsory for the children to read the *Ramayana* daily as part of the learning process.¹³⁵

This system of *Ezhuthupallis* continued till the advent of the British. After their coming the *Ezhuthupallis* began to disappear gradually.¹³⁶ But they continued to exist in poor condition even in the strong influx of modern system of education that the people of Kerala accepted with great suspicion and interest. The *Kalaris* were unique type of educational institutions that offered martial training in addition to the general education.¹³⁷

The *Kalaris* were constituted for the education of the *Nairs*, but some other castes like the *Thiyyas* also had access to the *Kalaris*. The children after primary education in village school would either go to the *Kalaris* or take to the study to Sanskrit in *Vedic* schools or had them training by reputed teachers.¹³⁸

C. Education of the Backward Classes.

Education was generally the monopoly of the caste Hindus. The right to education of the Backward Classes was prevented by the upper castes.

¹³³ Ibid, p.7

¹³⁴ P.Narayanan Nair, *Ara Noottantilude*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1999, p.16

¹³⁵ Ibid, p.18

¹³⁶ A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*, p.183

¹³⁷ M.P.Sarojini Amma, p.73

¹³⁸ Ibid, p.74

With the influence of the *Brahmins*, the educational field began to be more exclusive. The *Chaturvarnia* was also a reason for the same.¹³⁹

The purpose of this denial was the consolidation of supremacy by the upper castes. By denying right to education to the *Sudras*, the Brahmins *could easily* suppress them and exploit their services for the benefit of all the other divisions of society.¹⁴⁰

Those who were engaged in the physical labour including the *Panas* were pushed to the lowest stratum of the social order. The female education also was not allowed. Education was confined to the upper layer of the Hindu community.

This was the situation in Kerala till the recent years. This situation began to change, when organized efforts were made to change the lamentable condition of the oppressed.¹⁴¹

Besides the fields of literature and art, other fields like the cultural life of the society, a minority group always tried to dominate. They flourished well and created many poets, wise men and philosophers. At the same time, the majority of the people were in ignorance. There were no attempts to lift them from their plight.

The upper castes tried to prevent the progress of the group by imposing laws and restrictions.

The *Vedas* and the *Vedangas* could only be learnt by the *Brahmins*, the *Sastras* and the *Kavyas* in Sanskrit were also not for the lower castes. Thus only the

¹³⁹ A.Sreedhara Menon , *Kerala Samskaram*,p.175

¹⁴⁰ K.K. Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*, p.19

¹⁴¹ A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*, p.175

old songs and some plays were left to the perusal of the lowest stratum of the society. The situation came to exist that the people –a minority had the knowledge of *Sastras, Vedas, Upanishads*- at the same time there existed a group where there was no knowledge about anything. In the land of Thunchath Ezhuthachan, Kottayam Thampuran and Unnayi Warriar, there lived a vast majority of people who depended entirely on the oral *Pattu* tradition.¹⁴² Thunchath Ezhuthachan wrote epics by keeping a bird in front, for the low caste people should not see *Saraswathi* the goddess of knowledge.¹⁴³

The classrooms were also centers of caste evils. The untouchable students were punished in a different way in the *Kudippallikkudam*. They must stretch their arms to the front and the teacher would throw the cane so that the teacher would not be polluted.¹⁴⁴ There were a number of *Kudippallikkudams* all over Kerala.¹⁴⁵

The *Thiyyas* also had run the *Ezhuthupallis* and there were pupils among *Nairs* and other upper castes in them.¹⁴⁶ But such institutions were less in number.

With the advent of modern education by the Missionaries, it influenced the lower stratum of the caste hierarchy. All communities after the *Nairs* and the Christians began to receive English education and accept the new culture to become intelligentsia.

¹⁴² E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude -Mathrubhumi*, Chintha, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, pp.52-53

¹⁴³ Ibid, p.53

¹⁴⁴ Thikkodiyar, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, Current Books, Trichur, 1996, p.24

¹⁴⁵ M.K.Sanu, *Narayana Guru Swami*, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1986, p.49

¹⁴⁶ Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Moorkoth Kumaran*, p.27

The *Ezhavas* and other oppressed castes also realized the relevance of modern education in their life. They believed that the best way to get the slave model of life away was to educate themselves. The British Government and the Christian priests, who spread that equality was their supreme priority, supported them.¹⁴⁷ But it also did other functions. English education in Malabar became instrumental in igniting a national feeling and kindling movements of emancipation or the caste structure.¹⁴⁸ Even though modern education had greater role in changing the society.

The caste Hindus were bitterly against it, as they believed that the introduction of modern education would disturb the caste structure in which they had supremacy.

The upper castes in Malabar, especially the *Nairs* and the *Brahmins*, never ran after the English education due to communal reasons. At the same time, the lower castes never had the financial stability to attend the modern schools.¹⁴⁹

D. Education of the Muslims.

In the 19th century the Muslims were rather illiterate and mostly belonged to the agricultural labourers, traders etc.¹⁵⁰

In Kerala, the Muslims were far behind the other communities in the field of learning. They considered *Malayalam* the Hindu language and English, the language of the hell. This prevented them from mingling with the

¹⁴⁷ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalute Mathrubhumi*, pp.67-68

¹⁴⁸ M.P.Sarojini Amma, p.104

¹⁴⁹ K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, p.21

¹⁵⁰ C.A.Innes, Malabar, p.186

mainstream. This also alienated them from the common ancestry. The standard of the Muslim pupils was also behind the children of the other castes.¹⁵¹

Moidu Moulavi recalls:

“During the period of my education there were very few people in remote villages. Connecting the *Othupallis* there were schools which had classes up to three i.e. today’s 4th standard.”¹⁵²

This kind of schools existed in villages like Maranchery. Before admitting to the schools, they had to learn the *Qur-an*.¹⁵³

As far as the Muslim population was concerned, the ultimate learning centre was the Mosques and the *Madrassas* attached to them.

The mosques of the state were the centres of religious education. With religion they taught history and geography.¹⁵⁴

Attached to each mosque there was a *Madrassa*, where the Muslim students were initiated in to Arabic language and literature.¹⁵⁵ The study in *Madrassa* was in Arabic Malayalam.¹⁵⁶

The alphabets in Arabic were taught by heart. At the same time, the *Qur-an* and the method of writing are also taught. Then only the pen was allowed. They used to spread white powder on a flat board and used a bamboo stick dipped in a pot of ink to write letters. There was no syllabus then. The *Mollas*

¹⁵¹ P.K. Muhammed Kunhi, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1982,p.191

¹⁵² Moidu Moulavi, *Moulaviyude Atma Katha*, D.C. Books,Kottayam,1935,p.11

¹⁵³ Ibid, p.11

¹⁵⁴ P.K. Muhammed Kunhi, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum*, p.183

¹⁵⁵ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.711

¹⁵⁶ Moidu Moulavi, *Moulaviyude Atma Katha*.,p.14

taught according to their liking. Reading of *Qur-an* was the foremost thing. If one had learnt to read the *Qur-an*, his education was almost complete. The girls' education ended there and they would be thrown to the dark rooms of the houses. The boys who had learnt the *Qur-an* would be sent to the mosques to study the *Kithab*. For this study also there was no syllabus. The study begins with *Pathu Kithab*. After learning this, the child enters to the grammar. There was no benefit from the study at the mosques but any opposition would invite the wrath of the conservatives and their torture.¹⁵⁷ Most of the pupils were given lessons on *Qur-an* and trained to read the holy text. Only *Qazis* and *Ulemas*, who came from far off places and were fed by the local people and taught the pupils. A few learnt the advanced courses on Islamic religion and theology.¹⁵⁸

Boarding and lodging were free for knowledge seekers.¹⁵⁹ The supreme educational centre in respect of education was Ponnani.¹⁶⁰ With the assumption of power by the British, the aged social equilibrium began to get disturbed. The disturbance was much in Travancore and Cochin, which in Malabar was not remarkable since the British did not try to disturb the feudal landlords. They wanted support of the land owning class. The Malabar area witnessed many *Mappila* revolts and which, the English thought, were the result of ignorance. So the Government decided to provide education to the Muslims in large scale.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p.11

¹⁵⁸ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.712

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ P.K.Muhammed Kunhi, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1982,p.182

The communal disturbance and the feud between the Muslims and the British were in vogue. There was no progress of education in Malabar except the establishment of a few higher secondary schools and colleges.¹⁶¹

Owing to the recurring rebellions, the Company's Government took steps to improve the education imparted to the Mappila children in the Madrassas attached to every mosque. In 1871-72, a plan was derived to induce the Mollas whoever in the instruction of the Madrassas religious training with Elementary Education through the vernacular language.

Those who followed the instruction were given grants but this did not succeed.¹⁶² For imparting education, arrangements could be made in the schools attached to the mosques.

The *Mollas* were instructed to start vernacular education together with religious training.¹⁶³ Since the *Mappilas* had aversion to join the common schools, the Government decided to open *Mappila* schools. A special Assistant to the District Education Officer was appointed in 1926. Twelve Deputy Inspectors were also appointed to look after education of the *Mappilas*. Eight of them were employed in Ernad and Ponnani taluks, which had a large number of Elementary Schools for this community.¹⁶⁴

The *Mappilas* were ardently opposed to the English education. They thought that the traps of proselytization were behind the introduction of modern education, so most of the Muslims kept away from the stream. The rule of the British was, the Muslims thought, a curse on the community, on business

¹⁶¹ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, *Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala*, C.D.S., Trivandrum, p.6

¹⁶² Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.71

¹⁶³ M.P. Sarojini Amma, p.103

¹⁶⁴ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, pp.713-14

and freedom. So they believed that the education imparted by them should also be rejected at once. Languages such as *Sanskrit*, *Urdu* and *Persian* had faced the same fate. But no community showed opposition like the Muslims in resisting the imposition of the English language.¹⁶⁵ Later during the National Movement, this policy became noticeable. Those *Ulemas* who stood in the forefront of the freedom struggle opined that the English education should be opposed or boycotted.¹⁶⁶ So strong was their hatred to the English language and culture in the beginning of the 20th century. They were far behind other communities in education. They gave importance to religious education. Similarly majority of the parents had no interest in giving material education to their children.¹⁶⁷

2. Modern Education.

The advent of the English education began a new epoch in the history of Kerala. A conscious effort for change, an intelligent awareness among the literates and an excited enthusiasm in the field of culture set in during that period. This was not only the case of Kerala but also throughout India. Myriads of factors, internal and external, contributed to this change.

Christian Missionaries who diffused the spirit of gospel through the length and breadth of Kerala played a very decisive role in bringing about this renaissance.¹⁶⁸ The early reforms mooted by the Christian Missionaries, the *Aryasamaj* and others did not satisfy the backward classes and felt disappointed with the benefits that trickled down from the reform movements, led by western educated, urbanized *Brahmins* and other high

¹⁶⁵ P.K. Muhammedkunhi, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum*, p.149

¹⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁶⁷ M.Rasheed, *Muhammed Abdurahiman Sahib*, Islamic Publishing House, Calicut, 1994, p.4

¹⁶⁸ K.J. John (Editor), *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, 1981, p.128

castes. The Backward Class agitated against the upper castes that had monopolized the use of resources and benefits.¹⁶⁹

The East India Company came to India for business and then to rule for which it needed clerks. To meet the situation it started schools and colleges. This was the place from where the intellectuals came out. These clerks were not available for the Indian business group. The *Nairs* and other upper castes tried to enter the civil service and for achieving the necessary basic qualifications, they also began to join the schools and colleges.¹⁷⁰

In the 16th century itself, seminaries and grammar schools were founded for Keralites and Europeans. Models were started in Kerala by the catholic Missionaries. They started a seminary for Syrian Christians in 1541 at Kodungallur.(The seminaries can not be considered as a modern educational institution. They were just like the *Othupallis* that once existed in Kerala.) They also started a school at Chennamangalam in 1548 and also a school for native children at Kodungallur. A college was started at Kochi in 1585 and it is clear from the Portuguese records that there were about 300 students in this college. This necessitated writing books in vernacular for the children. The Missionaries took up the children and ventured writing about the teachings of Christ in Malayalam and later some text books for the use of primary classes also.¹⁷¹

From 1800 A.D, the British power began to consolidate in Kerala. By then the Missionary educational institutions mushroomed all over India. The first of

¹⁶⁹ M.S.A. Rao, *Social Movements And Social Transformation: A Study of Two Backward Class Movements in India*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p.31

¹⁷⁰ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, p.166

¹⁷¹ K.J. John(Editor), *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, p.130

this kind was started in Nagarcoil. This institution played a major role in the educational attempts of the state.¹⁷²

It was the activity of the Missionaries that the Government entered in the field of education. In 1817 Gowri Parvathi Bhai with the help of Col.Munro tried to invoke free and compulsory education. An effort was made to start English and Malayalam primary schools all over the state. The children from 5 to10 age group were to be educated compulsorily. Teachers were also appointed and the Government disbursed salaries. And the principle spread that it was the duty of the Government to impart education. In 1834 Swati Thirunal started the first English school in Travancore. Mr.Roberts was the first Head Master there. He was invited from Nagarcoil to take up the responsibility.¹⁷³

When Munroe was the resident of Travancore, he encouraged Missionaries. Benjamin Bailey, Gundert and Buchanan were some among in the field. The Missionaries promoted the native language as well.¹⁷⁴

The Protestant Missionaries were the first to bring the western education in to Kerala. Ringle Taube had established many schools in different parts of Trivandrum and Nagarcoil between 1806 and 1816. Irrespective of caste restriction, everybody was welcome there. The learning was free for all. The premier position of this field was Dr.Mead who belongs to L.M.S. In 1817, he came to Kerala and started many ordinary schools besides vocational institutions. He spread girls' education as well.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² M..P.Sarojini Amma, p.82

¹⁷³ A. Sreedharamenon , *Kerala Samskaram*,p.187

¹⁷⁴ K.J.John, *Christian Heritage of Kerala*,p.131

¹⁷⁵ A.Sreedharamenon,*Kerala Samskaram*, p.186

In 1813 the Syrian Christians started a school at the Kottayam Seminari for the training of the priests. In 1821 a grammar school was started in Kottayam. Their wives started a Girls' school in Kottayam.¹⁷⁶ In 1818, a Missionary English school was started by J.Dawsen in Kochi. It was at Mattancherry.¹⁷⁷

The Madras Local Board Act of 1834 gave a boost to modern education in Malabar. A number of primary and secondary schools came in to being managed by local bodies, which was not very common in Travancore and Cochin areas. Basel Mission also was very active in educational activities. The Roman Catholic Mission also contributed their share in education but not as much as they had not done in other fields.¹⁷⁸

In Malabar, the educational activities were started by the Germans. In 1841, Rev. Hobile started an English school at Varanasseri in Kannur. The teacher was Ambu Gurunathan who was well respected by the people. He was a *Thiyya*.¹⁷⁹

The Basel Mission started a primary school at Kallayi in 1848, and it was transferred to Calicut in 1872. It was made a Middle School in 1878. This became a High School and then a Second Grade College in 1907.¹⁸⁰ Another school was Victoria College Palakkad, which began in 1866.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ M.P. Sarojini Amma, p.101

¹⁷⁹ K.K.N.Kurup, Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India, Chugh Publishers, Allahabad, 1991, p.104

¹⁸⁰ M.P. Sarojini Amma, p.101

¹⁸¹ Ibid

In 1871 it was made a High school and in 1888 a college.¹⁸² A B.E.M school was also started at Thalassery in 1856. This commenced the beginning of English education in Malabar.¹⁸³

To spread Christianity, education was a means, Freels believed. So he started schools at Ananchery, Kozhikkode and on the either side of the Kallayi River. As the Bible was taught, there was little time for *Suvisesham*. The Malabar Christian College was the school established by him in 1842. In 1846 Hooper became the manager. He roamed everywhere for *Suvisesham*. The *Sisusalai* started in 1846 became the Girls School. In 1847, 27 girls learned copying the Bible there.¹⁸⁴

After the exit of Freels, Fouflor came to take up the works. Soon this school was attached to the Kozhikode school. To the girls' school the non-Christian children were also admitted.¹⁸⁵ They had the following aims: The *Malayala Sabha* should have to be self reliant in preaching of the *Veda*, and learnt in it. The members should also have the knowledge of letters. So many *Vedasalas* were founded. It was the necessity that each and every girl should undergo primary education.¹⁸⁶

In 1851 Yoden came to Kannur and established the Sunday *Sala*. In orphanages not only the orphans but others also had studied. Apart from the Bible, the history of the church, the question and answers of Luther, the

¹⁸² C.A. Innes, Malabar, p.297

¹⁸³ A. Sreedharamenon, *Kerala Samskaram*, p.186

¹⁸⁴ *Malayala Basel Mission Sabhayude Charithram*, pp.95-97

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.107

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp.187-188

Pavithra Charithram, *Vedoktham*, the Christian songs etc. had also been taught.¹⁸⁷

Along with the evangelical work they involved in educational activities.

They started schools for girls and boys, introduced modern curriculum and even wrote textbooks in vernacular. Naturally the scientific study of Malayalam literature occupied an important place in their curriculum. It inaugurated a new chapter in the development of language and literature.¹⁸⁸

The Basel Mission, under the leadership of Dr. Herman Gundert, promoted educational activities in Malabar. The mission ran many schools. One was at Tellicherry, the Brennen School established in 1862. It was mainly for English education. In 1872, the Government took over the school due to mismanagement and converted it into a District school in 1883. In 1891 it was affiliated to the Madras University and recognized as a Second Grade College. The administration of the Middle and High schools was handed over to the municipality.¹⁸⁹

As a result of the activities of Herman Gundert, many people belonging to the upper castes joined Christianity. This also was the main reason for the spread of *Suvisesham* among the masses, for which they started special schools. These schools were established at Nettur, Thalassery. The spread of *Suvisesham* by the *Mats* and the use of regional language, and English was a success in Karnataka. So they tried the same strategy in Kerala. Gundert took charge of these schools. The custom of schooling in the state was that the children studied in the *Nattupallikkudam* where they learned reading and

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p.188

¹⁸⁸ K.K.N. Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p.115

¹⁸⁹ M.P. Sarojini Amma, pp.100-101

writing. Then they would learn *Thullal*, *Kilippattu*, and *Manipravalam* etc. And then *Amaram*, *Roopam*, *Kavyam* etc. The teacher would write on the palm leaf, the children would learn it by heart. Gundert at first contacted the learned people and gained considerable knowledge in Malayalam. He began to use Malayalam as a familiar language and became an authority in it.¹⁹⁰ More over he wrote textbooks for teaching in schools, which included History and Geography. He was the first to prepare a grammar book in Malayalam.¹⁹¹

When the B.E.M constituted a network of educational institutions in north Malabar, the *Thiyyas* were the first, as a significant minority, to join these institutions. They got into the colonial administration as *Thahsildars*, Lawyers, Readers, and Sub judges up to the rank of Deputy Collectors. There were two colleges, the Brennen at Thalasseri and the Zamorin's at Calicut. But the *Thiyyas* were denied admission to the Zamorin's college till 1918.¹⁹²

The impact of the spread of the B.E.M schools brought about amazing changes in Malabar. A number of *Thiyyas* interestingly took part in the process of education there by creating a friendly group in the Kerala society. All castes were allowed to enter the schools.¹⁹³ The Lower castes also were allowed to take up jobs and this elevated their position in the society. Children belonging to all communities joined the new breed of schools and colleges and they began to challenge the culture of the old

¹⁹⁰ *Malayala Basel Mission Sabhayude Charithram*, pp.19-20

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*

¹⁹² K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 1995, p,24

¹⁹³ K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p.108

Kerala. The *Vedic* intelligentsias were not respected and were considered to belong to the old school. The new learnt men were much respected. This was the greatest blow that the old Kerala culture received at the hands of the new culture.¹⁹⁴

The Missionary schools were open to all. But there was difficulty in recruiting children from the lower milieu so that they did not in fact enjoy the advantages. A series of cultural obstacles existed in Kerala to block any such move. They had played an important role in the growth of primary and secondary education in the latter half of the 19th century. As the public instruction was not a major responsibility of any colonial Government, the Missionaries in India tried to shoulder this responsibility and their objective was to propagate the gospel.¹⁹⁵ They started learning the vernacular and also wrote for the masses, spreading the message of Christian religion.¹⁹⁶

For the purpose of spreading Christianity they used the vernacular very cleverly. In Malabar and south Canara, most of the textbooks were in vernacular language and English. They were compiled, edited and published by the Missionaries for using them in their educational institutions. They were not free from religious character and also contained criticism against the native customs and manners.¹⁹⁷

The primary reading materials in Malayalam were prepared on the basis of the gospel. Some excerpts are: 'the wage of sin is death' 'those who die with Christ shall live with him.' Some lessons were written incorporating the

¹⁹⁴ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, p.166

¹⁹⁵ K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p.109

¹⁹⁶ K.J. John (Editor), *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, pp.128-9

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.101

parable of Jesus. Among the stories, a popular one from the *Panchathantra* was included. It narrated how a *Brahmin* carrying a sheep for sacrifice, was mocked at by some hooligans that he was carrying a dog. Finally the *Brahmin* gave up the sheep believing that it was a dog.¹⁹⁸ Although the story was didactic, it was against the *Brahmins*, the custodians of the Hindu religion.¹⁹⁹ The theme of most of the songs used in the schools were Biblical in spirit.²⁰⁰

In the matter of education, especially in the fields of elementary education, Basel Mission schools served a model for the British Government to follow. Solid, airy and spacious were the buildings; where the children sat on benches and used desks; and wrote on slates and paper. There were textbooks to learn. Gundert was made the first inspector of schools in Malabar and Canara. He wrote and printed textbooks. The B.E.M also was the first to open boarding schools. Night schools were also founded. No one in the Basel Mission congregation was illiterate. There were special adult schools for the converts. The Missionaries were also the pioneers of English education in Kerala.²⁰¹

For training the evangelists and the teachers, there started a *Madhyasala* in Nettur in 1852. This was the first middle school in the district. Those who had completed four years in this school would be considered for becoming *Upadesis* and masters. Those who had interest to become *Upadesi* would be

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p.104

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁰⁰ Ibid,105

²⁰¹ Ibid, p.234

sent to the Mangalore monastery and those wished to become teachers would be sent to the training schools.²⁰²

They also tried to distort history according to their interests.

The textbooks like 'The Malayalam Country and history' (1869) included distorted historical writings. For instance, it states that most of the native people had lost their belief in false gods and idolatry. They accepted their religion due to the fear of others.²⁰³

The textbook on Indian history was one abridged by Marsden, who describes that law and order was established in India by the British.²⁰⁴ The educational activities of the Missionaries, dominated by their religious ideals, were opposed by the dominant classes of traditional society later. This opposition was not organized in a systematic way. The theosophists and other nationalists began to propagate the concept of national education.

By the end of the century there had been a religious revivalism among the Hindus and the philosophers like Vivekananda inaugurated a counter religious movement in the western society declaring Hinduism as the mother of all religions. The waves of this new spirit echoed everywhere in India. The Missionaries' attitude towards the new situation had been profusely recorded in their tracts and reports.²⁰⁵

It is relevant to go through the role that mass education played in society of late 19th and early 20th century.

²⁰² *Malayala Basel Mission Sabhayude Charithrasamskshepam*, Vintage Books, Calicut, 1989, pp.24-25.

²⁰³ R.Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram*, Prabhat Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1978, p.9

²⁰⁴ K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p.105

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.106

When Moorkoth Kumaran joined as teacher in the Basel Mission school in 1884, Panangadan Raman, B.T, was the head master of the school, he was a *Thiyya*.²⁰⁶ It would have been impossible for a *Thiyya* to become a teacher in other schools. Kumaran joined as teacher in the St. Joseph European Boys' school in 1897. He worked there for about two years.²⁰⁷

As a result of the propaganda by the Missionaries, several schools were established in Malabar and south Canara. There was a movement for the intellectual uplifting of the *Panchamas*. A religious revival had also taken place among the castes like the *Thiyyas*.²⁰⁸

Their works to educate all; their kind approach towards the people attracted many, especially the lower castes. Many people were converted to the Christianity. The converted people never had the restrictions of the non-converted. The untouchability was not followed. They could walk along the road without the fear of polluting the upper castes. They could even go near the temples. They could also enter the post office and schools. This attracted many people to the Christianity. The activities of the Missionaries gave the people the air of freedom.

In the factories of the Basel Mission most of the workers were belonging to the backward classes. They were not allowed to walk on the road or use the public well. Education was almost denied to them. The Missionaries exploited this atmosphere and converted them to the Christians.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Moorkoth Kumaran*, p.37

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.65

²⁰⁸ K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p.100

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.115

They were responsible for the education and some economic elevation of the lower castes. It is to be remembered that they could achieve even this limited success only in the teeth of opposition from higher castes whose interests the princely rulers were anxious to safeguard.

Thus it was due irresistible pressure was built from the Christian Missionaries, the residents and the Madras Government that the native rulers were forced to meet the demand of the Missionaries partially.²¹⁰

The educational activities of the Missionaries attracted persons belonging to such communities mainly because of the social emancipation that it guaranteed to them.²¹¹

It is obvious that the western education gave momentum to the social reforms.²¹²

Robin Jeffrey comments thus:

“As converts were better educated and slightly more prosperous, they became increasingly resentful of the traditional inferiority which they were still legally required to observe. They flouted the *Sirkar* enforced caste law and turned to the European Missionaries for support. This was usually provided. Alarmed and appalled at such illegal pretensions, high caste *Sirkar* officials intensified their repression; this further outraged the Missionaries and committed them to the low caste cause. The conflicts between high and low caste pretensions reached a climax in the breast cloth disturbances in 1859.”²¹³

The society began to challenge the traditional culture of India. This would either destroy the Indian culture or a new culture would emerge out

²¹⁰ N.I.E.P.A, A History of Educational Development in Kerala, p.106

²¹¹ Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala, p.13

²¹² A. Sreedharamenon, *Kerala Samskaram*, p.230.

²¹³ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance in Kerala*, p.54

assimilating the western culture. This was a crisis. This was the situation in the 19th century.²¹⁴

The main features of the Missionary education can be summarized like this:

1. Mass base was there. The Protestant Missionaries mainly worked for the oppressed castes, *Shanars*, *Pulayas* and *Ezhavas*.
2. They found educational activities a prerequisite for religious work.
3. The Missionaries asserted the right of oppressed classes for modern education; the Mission schools were the only new style of schools where the oppressed classes had access.
4. Conversions and primary education were linked with Missionary led movements against other features of the Hindu society such as unouchability and distance pollution; agrarian slavery and upper caste prohibitions on women of lower caste wearing clothes above the waist.
5. They brought girls of the lower castes to schools.
6. Although the classes were based on the Christian theology, there was a secular component in school studies as well.
7. The medium of instruction was vernacular.
8. They started the first institutions of elementary technical training or craft schools.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum, 1984, p.521

²¹⁵ V.K.Ramachandran, *Kerala's Developmental Achievements: A Review*, I.G.I.D.R, New Delhi, 1978, pp.50-62.

Since the main purpose of Missionary activity was proselytization, their educational activity did not, in general, attract the great numbers from the well to do and higher caste sections of the population.²¹⁶

Dr.K.N.Panikkar writes:

“The attempts at cultural and ideological hegemonisation of the colonial state and the activities of the Christian Missionaries had created a feeling of uneasiness among the *Ulema* and those who were depended on religious services for their livelihood”²¹⁷

The high castes were aware of the activities of the Missionaries, and the facilities they offering to low castes. Indeed, some *Brahmins* and evangelists and *Nairs* attended Mission schools, listened to the evangelists and read tracts. But the majority was hostile and suspicious.²¹⁸ In some places the upper castes and classes sent their children to other schools, for they had aversion to the Mission school.²¹⁹ The local press called up on the people not to send their children to the Mission schools, instead wanted to build their own schools.²²⁰

Even though the elite classes wanted to object the evangelical works of the Missionaries, they could not develop any strong or systematic movement in this direction.

The activities pioneered by the Missionaries forced the Government to interfere in the education of the masses. So they paved the way for the system of modern education in Kerala.

²¹⁶ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, *Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala*, p.11

²¹⁷ K.N.Panikkar, *Against Lord And State*, Oxford, p.60

²¹⁸ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance in Kerala*, p.53

²¹⁹ K.J. John (Editor), *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, p.22

²²⁰ K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p.234

Though there was progress in the educational activity, there was no mass literacy at the end of the 19th century.²²¹ The lower stratum of the social ladder enthusiastically welcomed Missionary education. Why were they able to choose the path of modern education ignoring the proscriptions that were laid down by the traditional society?

²²¹ V.K.Ramachandran, Kerala's Developmental Achievements, pp.50-52

Chapter-II

CASTE, COMMUNITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR MODERN EDUCATION

The social situation in Kerala in the beginning of 20th century showed certain features of continuity from the previous century. However, certain aspects of society gradually changed owing to the activities of various agencies. Many community organizations came into being and they tried to renovate the caste-ridden society with their progressive approach. They tried to enlighten the lower castes. There were progressive movements among the upper castes as well. Modern education appears to have played a major role in this process.

In this chapter it is examined how the common people got modern education negating the traditional ethics, and how the conservative elements of the society reacted against these attempts. The struggle of the lower castes for the achievement of modern education is also examined. The modernization attempt within the upper castes is also considered in this study.

The Growth of Community Organizations and Struggle for Social justice.

The agonies of the downtrodden necessitated the growth of movements against social evils like untouchability, unapproachability, prohibiting people from entering temples and public roads and denying access to Government jobs and educational institutions.

M.S.A.Rao thinks thus:

“All over the world the under privileged section, whether they are racial and ethnic minorities or low castes and classes, are organizing themselves to fight against inequalities, the discrimination and deprivation. They often violently agitated for the legitimate share in the economic opportunities, educational privileges and political power.”¹

The Missionaries were the first to raise voice to support social movement like the Breast Cloth Agitation. But the early reforms mooted by the Christian Missionaries, *Aryasamaj* and others did not satisfy the Backward Classes and felt disappointed with the benefits trickled down from the reform movements led by the Western educated, urbanized *Brahmins* and other high castes. Furthermore the Backward Class leaders agitated against the upper castes, which had monopolized the use of scarce resources and benefits.²

It is widely believed that behind every revolution there is an ideological influence. If the *Avarnas* had fought for the right to education and freedom of movement, they must have the belief that they deserved the same rights that their *Savarna* counterparts enjoyed for centuries.³

Robin Jeffrey comments:

“Both the *Syrians* and the *Iravas* were increasingly resentful of the *Savarna* Hindus, especially *Nairs*, in the Government service, and of the civil disabilities which applied in varying degrees to all who were not *Savarna* Hindus.”⁴

In Kerala the people had begun to organize themselves against the dominance of the *Nambudiris* and the *Janmis*. The reverberations of the same could also be felt among the *Nambudiris* as well.⁵ It is obvious that change of

¹ M.S.A.Rao, *Social Movements and Social Transformation...*, p.31

² *Ibid*, pp.9-10

³ N.K.Jose, *Vaikam Satyagraha*, p.175

⁴ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance in Kerala*, p.116

⁵ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1998, p.34

any sort is very painful to many people who have established their own norms, standards and concepts of stability.⁶

So the upper castes were not ready to give up their privileges that they had been enjoying for centuries. Under these circumstances the leaders of various lower communities decided to found organizations to gain what their community had been denied for a long period by the traditional society.

1.The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (S.N.D.P)

Sree Narayana Guru fired the first gunshot against the caste proscription and other discriminations with his founding of the *Ezhava temple* at Aruvippuram. The upper castes were rather infuriated by this provocative act. But when he told them that he had founded an *Ezhava temple*, they had to be silent.⁷

It was written on the walls of the Aruvippuram temple:

"Jathibhetham mathadwesham- ethumillathe sarvarum

Sodarena vazhunna- mathrukasthanamanithu."

(This is the place where there is no caste feeling, or religious intolerance; and it is the model where all behave like brothers.)

There was no caste intolerance in his *Ashramam* (hermitage)

Guru had allowed the *Pulaya* children to join his *Ashramam*. He also had conducted inter-dining (*Misrabhojanam*).⁸ He preached that the *Ezhavas*

⁶ Ivor Morrish, *The Sociology of Education*, London, 1974, p.76

⁷ M.K.Sanu, *Narayanaguruswami*, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1986, p.120

⁸ M.Achuthan, *Swathantrya Samaravum Malayala Sahityavum*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 2003, p.79

should organize themselves and become strong. He also advised them to educate and get cultured. He was also of the opinion that the community should not involve in the production and sale of toddy, which he thought, had lowered the status of the community. His most remarkable advice was to construct schools instead of building temples. For spreading all these ideologies he founded the *Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam* in 1903.⁹

The S.N.D.P Yogam was keen in building schools and other educational institutions throughout Kerala realizing the relevance of education in a society like ours.

The educational activities mooted by the organization were one of the reasons for higher literacy among the people of Travancore and Cochin. A group among the *Ezhava* people was financially middle class and they attained good education. This made them aware of their social and political rights and made them fight against the social disabilities and raise their voice to gain a deserved position in the society.¹⁰

2.Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam

The S.N.D.P Yogam inspired many eminent personalities in forming organizations in their respective communities. Ayyankali was one among them. He founded another organization- *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam* in 1907 for the well being of the *Pulayas*.¹¹

It was quite easy for the Missionaries to convert them into Christianity highlighting the caste evils existing in the Hindu religion. Ayyankali was of

⁹ P.K.V. Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.20

¹⁰ N.K.Jose, *Vaikam Sathyagraha*, p.174

¹¹ P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.21

the opinion that the *Pulayas* and other lower caste people should not change religion instead they should fight and gain the rights that were denied to them. As he was a person with high calibre, he was elected to the Sreemoolam Assembly. There he strongly argued in favour of freedom of movement, educational rights and Government jobs for the community.¹²

As a result of the activities of the organizations such as the S.N.D.P *Yogam* and the *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam* made their communities aware of their rights. They began to go to schools started by the Governments and the Missionaries. As the Governments became less rigid in the caste matters in providing Government jobs, the lower castes too began to accept jobs that had not been given to them for centuries.

3. Atmavidya Sangham

The renaissance movement among the *Ezhava, Nair* communities was very slow in Malabar.¹³ This was sometimes because of the fact that the caste discrimination on the part of the Government was not present in Malabar. As the British had no interest in maintaining the caste hierarchy, the Government machinery was not at all supportive of the rigid caste system. There were lessons in the textbooks against untouchability and other caste discrimination.

In Travancore and Cochin the rulers had supported caste discrimination in an open manner. Hence, caste evils were more openly visible and therefore movements against them had a more aggressive character.

¹² M.Achuthan, *Swathantrya Samaravum Malayala Sahityavum*, pp.85-87.

¹³ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, p.34

The situation was different in the case of Malabar. The S.N.D.P *Yogam* and the *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam* were less active in Malabar. Here the social reform movement was carried out, to some extent, by the *Atma Vidya Sangham* founded by Vagbhatananda in 1917. This organization was more active in north Malabar. It favoured mixed marriage and mixed eating. To spread the message of the *Sangham*, he started a magazine called *Abhinava Keralam* in 1920.¹⁴ He opposed the monopoly of education by a minority group and started a Sanskrit school in 1906 at Calicut, which was open to all communities. The poor were given free education there.¹⁵

He also supported the National Movement. It is believed that Vagbhatananda had a role in making the cultural background for the growth of Marxist- Leninist ideology in Malabar.

There were movements within the upper castes as in the lower communities. The main aim of these organizations was the renovation of their respective communities on line with the modern times. The two predominant communities that organized themselves were the *Nambudiris* and the *Nairs*.

4.Nambudiri Yoga kshema Sabha

The *Nambudiris* were indeed the upper caste. But they had suffered many problems within the community. They were not properly educated. The English education was denied to them. The women members of the community were illiterate.

¹⁴ M.S.Nair, *Vagbhatanandaguruvum Samooha Navodhanavum*, Dept. Of Cultural Publications, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1998, p.31.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.22

The *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 1905:

“Many (The *Brahmins*) are following the blind belief they once had. The Mangalore tiles, which had the English letters on it, are untouchable. They should not be used for the temples and the houses of *Brahmins*, thus say some of the poor *Brahmins*.”¹⁶

Only the elder member of the family was allowed to marry from within the community. All the other men followed *Sambantham*. Some of the members of the community believed that there should be changes in the community according to the change of time.

The *Malayala Manorama* continued:

“They should educate their children according to the need of the time, then this community would develop in many fields. They would be able to protect their property from being taken away from them. It is desirable that the ancient traditions followed by them are modernized and used for the well being of the community.”¹⁷

To find a way to treat the ailing community, some of the dynamic men of the community decided to found an organization.

This organization (*The Nambudiri Yogakshema Sabha*) was founded on the banks of the river Periyar in 1908 during the *Sivarathri*. Kurur Unni Nambudiripad, Chittoor Narayanan Nambudiri and some others were the founders of the organization.

The organization stressed marriage from the same community, widow remarriage, and English education to the men and women of the community and ending the evil of untouchability and unapproachability.

¹⁶ The *Malayala Monorama*, July, 19, 1905.

¹⁷ Ibid

It is interesting to see what The *Malayala Manorama* wrote after a gap of 14 years:

“It is happy to see that this community has adopted the timely change. They (the *Nambudiris*) have accepted the learning of English language a favourable thing instead of considering it a *Mlecha* language. They also had believed that learning of English would make them *Bhrashtans* and the school life with the untouchables would make them stained. But all these have changed a lot.”¹⁸

The organization did not confine itself to the reform activities within the community only. It was a revolutionary organization in the social context of the early years of the 20th century.

On 8th June 1929, the *Mathrubhumi* wrote about the progress of the *Nambudiri* women thus:

“The *Nambudiri* women, who had worn clothes up to their knees, used *Marakkuda* and worn bangles made of bronze, are escaping from these evils. They begin to read the newsletters such as *Yogakshemam* and learn about the outer world. They also think that the unmarried women increase and there should be marriage for all male members from the same community. They conduct *Samajams*. They should be appreciated for the same.”¹⁹

The most important thing to make the community progressive was in achieving good education. V.T.Bhattathirippad had grasped it. This was the reason why he conducted a *Yachana yathra* to collect money for the school.²⁰

The progressive faction also wanted the younger members of their community to go after the modern education so that they could get good jobs other than the traditional ones. The Community went beyond that. It had the first widow remarriage in 1934 negating all the customs prevailing

¹⁸ The *Malayala Manorama*, 8th March 1919.

¹⁹ The *Mathubhumi*, June 8, 1929.

²⁰ Palakeezh Narayanan (Editor), *V.T. Oru Ithihasam*, p.83

in the community for centuries. Umadevi Antarjanam was the bride and M.R.B was the bridegroom.²¹

The aftershocks of this incident were rather strong. The *Raja* of Nilambur was prevented from entering the Guruvayur temple in 1935 and they demanded a letter of consent from the Trustee of the temple-the Samudiri of Calicut. This was a retaliatory move as he had participated in the widow marriage ceremony.²²

It is to be noted that during the *Guruvayur Satyagraha*, the progressive faction among the *Nambudiris* had supported the entry of all Hindus to the temple.

5.The Nair Service Society (NSS)

By the early 20th century, the *Nair* had lost the prominence based on the ascribed right of feudalism and caste.²³ The community felt that it lost the powers, as it was not united. The other communities had organized themselves. So there was a great attempt to found an organization for the well being of the *Nair* community. The earlier attempts to found a strong organization were not fully successful. To make the *Nairs* a strong community to regain the importance once it had enjoyed, an organization was founded in 1914 under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan. The activities of the Nair Service Society brought about the joining of different

²¹ C.Uthamakurup (Editor), *Mathubhoomiyute Charithram*, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, 1998, Vol.II, P.94

²² C.Uthamakurup (Editor), *Mathubhoomiyute Charithram*, Vol.II, P.67

²³ T.J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, Oxford, 1982, p.28

sub castes within the community. Education was one of the areas that the organization had given particular attention.²⁴

The other aims of the organization were:

to bring unity to the *Nair* community, uniformity in the customs and traditions, reform the customs, enhance the educational activities, renovate the *Harijans*, and cement communal harmony.²⁵

The Nair Service Society had struggled its best to end the caste problems within the community and other evils relating to marriage. The most remarkable role played by the N.S.S was the attempt to end caste discrimination.

Mannath Padmanabhan toured all over Kerala at the time of the *Vaikom Satyagraha* to declare that the *Nair* community was in favour of the temple entry of the lower castes. The Government had spread that the upper castes were opposed to the same.

The organizations that came in to being in Travancore were rather communitarian. But at the same time the British regime in Malabar was opposed on the basis of political issues. More over the Indian National Congress had not supported the National Movement in the princely states in early days.

In Malabar the real enemy was not casteism, but the oppressive rule by the British regime. So the national mood and anti British mentality were less in Travancore and Kochi than in Malabar.

²⁴ E.J.Thomas, *Keralathile Samooha Ghatanayum Roopantharanavum*, D.C.Books, Kottayam, 1997, pp.34-35.

²⁵ M.Achuthan, *Swathantrya Samaravum Malayala Sahityavum*, p.81

In Travancore, the *Nairs* were rather community oriented, but at the same time, they were more political in Malabar.²⁶

Struggle for Modern Education.

Many factors were responsible for halting the progress of education in Kerala. Casteism was the most important among them. If the different castes were not allowed to sit or talk together how could it be possible to have education in general schools?

The lower castes were almost sidelined by the upper castes. But with the formation of a number of caste organizations, the social upliftment of the downtrodden was materialized. In Kerala, as we have already seen, there were social movements led by many eminent figures such as Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Chattampi Swamikal, Vagbhatananda etc. They were eager to bring about progressive changes in the society.

The caste structure had successfully blocked any progressive outlook. Education being an important ingredient in bringing about major changes in the society, the lower stratum of the society was deliberately denied this right. The upper castes with astounding powers suppressed them with the iron hand and the traditional code of social behaviour.

All other religions except the Hindus had educational establishments attached to their religious institutions. The non-Hindu communities had their church schools or *Madrassas*.²⁷

²⁶ Hareendranathakurup, *Mannath Padmanāhan Karmayogiyaya Kulapathi*, N.S.S, Perunna, 1997, p.180

²⁷ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, *Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala*, p.5

The Muslims got their initial education from the *Madrassas*, and the Christians from their Churches and the Missionary schools. At the same time the Hindu community was stratified and a greater section of the community did not have access to the majority of the common schools except those run by the Missionaries. Until the formation of the social organizations such as the *S.N.D.P Yogam*, the lower castes had been suffering much from the upper castes in their move for the attainment of education. They had only access to the Missionary schools.

Kumaran Asan laments thus:

“We were prisoners here, the prisoners without committing any crime. The employees now are the children of the then officials or their grandsons. During those days the Government provided education free. At the same time we were driven out of the school.”²⁸

Many of the social reformers were of the opinion that education should be open to all. Chattampi Swamikal was bitterly opposed to the *Brahmanical* domination over education and rituals. He argued for *Vedic* education to be open to all.²⁹

The higher castes were aware of the fact that if the lower castes were educated, they would not come under their control.

K.K.Kusuman writes:

“The higher caste people gradually changed their tactics and began to concentrate their attention on several other aspects of social life. They were opposed to imparting education to the depressed classes. Educational institutions continued to be the monopoly for the higher classes. The children of the backward classes were kept off from these institutions. There were several complaints which caused much

²⁸ Kumaran Asan, *Gadyalekhanangal*, Vol.II, *Asa: Smaraka Samiti*, Thonnakkal, 1982, p.14

²⁹ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism And Social Change the Role Of Malayalam Literature*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1998, p.39

head ache to the authorities and the higher castes this opposition movement gathered momentum under the *Ezhavas*.”³⁰

The *Ezhavas* were a predominant caste in Travancore. But they had to suffer much on their way to achieve modern education. There is an interesting description by P.K.Madhavan in the biography of T.K.Madhavan about caste discrimination that existed then:

“In my class there were a number of children. The teacher was called *Asan*. He used to teach us properly. We were not allowed to mingle with the other children, as they would get polluted. The *Asan* himself observed strict caste rigidity. The punishment was rather cruel. He used to punish the children with a cane. He would beat them until he was tired. No one was allowed to cry loudly. The lower castes in the class were not touched by the *Asan* for the fear of being polluted. So there was a method to punish the lower caste children. The *Asan* would take the cane and throw it towards the lower caste child. This technique was called as *Erinhudi* (beating by throwing the stick). He was an expert in this technique. If he had touched the child, he should have to bathe to cast away his impurity.”³¹

Even the school classrooms were caste ridden. There were different pots for the *Brahmins* and non-*Brahmins* to drink water.³²

Even after the beginning of the activities of Sree Narayana Guru, and the founding of *Ezhava temple* at Aruvippuram, the status of the *Ezhavas* continued to be disturbing.³³

Guru advised his men thus:

“The important temple should be the schools. If you collect money for any purpose, the prime thing must be the construction of schools.”³⁴

The decision by the Government to allow the lower castes to the schools was taken only in the beginning of the 20th century. The teachings of Sree

³⁰ K.K. Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*, p.68

³¹ P.K.Madhavan, *T.K.Madhavante Jeevacharithram*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 1986, pp.24-26

³² P.Narayanan Nair, *Ara Noottantilude*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1999, p.37

³³ C.K.Moosad, *Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan*, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1982, p.52

³⁴ M.K.Sanu, *Narayanaguru Swami*, p.253

Narayana Guru were important in this context. He taught the *Ezhavas* to educate themselves and get enlightened.

Divan Sankara Subbhayyan of Travancore ordered that if the *Ezhavas* really wanted to enter the schools they could begin their own schools. This was a brilliant attempt by him to not to pollute the Government schools. Only two schools were founded following this plan. One was at Paravur and the other at Mayyanad.³⁵ It evidently conveys the message that the Government too had supported caste discriminations. However, in 1907 it was decided to permit the low castes to be admitted in the schools in Travancore.³⁶

In Trivandrum College also the students did not sit together for the fear of being polluted. The *Nairs* sat in one corner, the *Brahmins* in another.³⁷

While studying in Kayamkulam, T.K.Madhavan and others had to walk through the streets. They were about eight students, all his relatives.

They were neatly dressed. The Christians, the Hindus and the Muslims did not like them. They called them *Kottis*, *Chilantis* etc. The experience at school was the same. The students of the other communities were not at all friendly to them. That was the atmosphere at the markets and the English school. This was because of the fact that the school had only recently been opened to the *Ezhavas*.³⁸

Ayyakutty was an *Ezhava Munsiff*. He too had suffered from caste discrimination even when he was a student. Once he had been thrown out of a cart while on his journey to Trichur. A *Nair* police constable pushed out

³⁵ C. Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, Prabhat, Trivandrum, 1999, p.35

³⁶ T.H.P.Chentharassery, *Ayyankali*, p.65

³⁷ C Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, p.217

³⁸ P.K. Madhavan, *T.K.Madhavante Jeevacharithram*, pp.35-36

Ayyakutty and two others from the cart. One of them was beaten up.³⁹ After getting an appointment in the judicial department, even the subordinate staff behaved according to caste hierarchy.

In Kochi the *Thiyyas* were admitted to the schools and were given fee exemption. In Travancore the *Thiyyas* were given no job in the revenue department. In Kochi it was decided that in future only the *Ezhavas* and the *Valas* would be given the job of *Parvathyas*. This was released through a circular.⁴⁰

The Girls' education was also a problem. The *Ezhava* girls had not been permitted to enter the girls' schools.⁴¹

In Malabar the situation was a little different. The *Thiyyas* in Malabar were more in number than any other community.⁴² Even though there was no restriction to the admission of children in Government school, many schools did not follow the guideline.

The Zamorin College, Calicut had not given entry to the *Ezhavas* and other low castes. The only college where the *Thiyyas* had no permission to enter was the Zamorin's College.⁴³

There were reform movements in the Muslim community in Malabar as well. The socio - educational movement in Malabar was begun under the leadership of Sanaulla Makti Thangal, Hamadani Saikh, Chalilakath Kunhahammed Haji (1855-1918).

³⁹ C.Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, p.176

⁴⁰ Kumaran Asan, *Gadyalekhanangal* Vol.II, p.261

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.11

⁴² *Ibid*, p.413

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.415

The method of learning the Arabic books by heart was strongly opposed by Kunhahammed Haji. He called up on the people to learn Arabic as a language and learn it like Malayalam. He tried to rearrange the Arabic alphabet so that one can pronounce it properly. In the schools the habit of using crayons, bench, board, table etc. was begun by him.

He had to leave the Vazhakkad *Madrassa* since he taught Malayalam there as a subject. Chalilakath Kunhahammed Haji, his disciples and children were responsible for introducing modern thought among the Muslims of Malabar. He sent his girl children to the schools and there by played a role which V.T.Bhattatirippad and others played in their respective communities. They had tried to bring their women from the kitchen to the stage.⁴⁴

Sanaulla Makthi Thangal resigned his job and participated in the educational activities. He advised his community to become familiar with the education system of the British and tried to rearrange the education system according to this view. It was due to his propaganda that the Government took initiative to consider Arabic as a subject in the Government Schools.

In Travancore, it was his activity that made the government to post *Muslim* educational inspectors and *Qur-an* teachers.⁴⁵

In those days the *Harijans* were not all admitted in the schools in Malabar. E.K.Nayanar gives the following incident on admission in a school. A few *Harijan* students came to the school with some Congressmen. Nayanar's

⁴⁴ P.K Muhammed Kurhi, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum*, p.186.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.187

father and uncle strongly criticized those who wanted the *Harijan* students to be admitted. The *Savarnas* lost their temper.

They beat the children and warned that if they reached the school they would be killed. Next day, there was a mob in front of the school. M.P.Krishnan Nambiar and K.P.R.Gopalan were among them. They challenged the *Savarnas* to attack the children once more.

E.K.Nayanar's father said:

"Look, what unfortunate things are happening! The *Pulayas* and the *Parayas* are going to learn in schools with our children."⁴⁶

His father lamented:

"It is intolerable. What a hue and cry if the *Pulayas* are driven out of the school! These rascals would ruin the country."

On the third day K.Kelappan brought the children to the school.⁴⁷

The 'father' in this part represents the upper caste belief about the caste rigidity.

Sree Narayana Guru preached that there should be only one religion, one caste and one god but the disciples were against this slogan in practice. Whenever *Guru* wanted to admit the *Pulayas* to the *Ezhava* schools, the leaders of the community opposed it.⁴⁸

The condition of the *Pulayas* and other slave castes was also appalling.

Though they were supposed to be terminally free, injustice and inequality continued. The low classes were denied access to public offices and

⁴⁶ E.K.Nayanar, *Pinnitta Vazhikal*, p.3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.4

⁴⁸ M.K.Sanu, *Narayanaguru Swami*, p.242

educational institutions. The *Pulayas* were unapproachables even in the bazaars and the markets.⁴⁹

In 1915-16 there was a violent incident in Neyyattinkara.⁵⁰ At Neyyattinkara Ooroottambalam, some *Pulayas* went to the girls' high school to admit some girls there with the permission of the department. The *Nairs* physically prevented them. This became violent and the same resulted in rebellion in the taluk and in near by taluks.⁵¹

If one untouchable was admitted to the school, the school would become polluted and thus the *Nairs* would also be polluted. The same day at Ooroottambalam junction, there was a confrontation among the *Pulayas*, *Nairs* and the *Chakkala Nairs*. There was much loss in the strife.⁵²

The struggle for education by Ayyankali reflected the realities of the times. He had to meet the challenges of the upper castes physically. He took a brave decision: If their children were not admitted to the schools, they would not go to the fields.⁵³

Thus for the first time the struggle for the right to education was linked with economic issues as well. When they were not given permission to enter the Government schools, they started schools of their own. The first school for the untouchables began in Venganur, but had only a short period of life.⁵⁴ They could not withstand the pressure from the upper castes. Nevertheless this was a radical event. Till then the schools were started either by the

⁴⁹ K.K. Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*, p.60

⁵⁰ M.K Sanu, *Narayanaguru Swami*, p.235

⁵¹ Kumaran Asan, *Gadyalekhanangal* Vol.II, p.362

⁵² T.H.P.Chentharasseri, *Ayyankali*, p.75

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.66-67

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.52

Government, *Janmis* or by the Missionaries. This traditional code was broken for the first time.

In this context, the Christian Missionaries opened the doors of their educational institutions even to the lower castes. They were aware of the problems of the downtrodden. So they put before these groups the opportunity for education and social equality.

The Missionaries, who had actively taken part in the social and educational activities, changed the society much. The lower castes who took refuge in Christianity and those who refused to embrace Christianity felt great changes in their thought and belief.⁵⁵

The entry of the *Avarnas* was not forbidden in places where the Government restrictions were not applicable like the Missionary Schools, the press etc.

This freedom was an indication of the downfall of the feudalism in Kerala and it was a major factor that facilitated the emergence of Sree Narayana Guru, Dr.Palpu and also responsible for the bringing up of Pandit Karuppan and Ayyankali.⁵⁶

Gradually the Schools were opened for the *Thiyyas* and other communities. They began to learn with increased enthusiasm. The jobs were also open for them.

It is believed that the spread of modern education gave impetus to social revolution.⁵⁷ With the spread of education, the educated middle class

⁵⁵ M.K.Kumaran,R.Sankar,p.49

⁵⁶ K.N Ganesh,Kerala Samoohapadanangal,p.39

⁵⁷ Mannath Padmanabhan,Jeevitha Smaranakal, p.106

dominated the social arena. This was particularly visible in Travancore.⁵⁸ The growth of education of each caste and their ability to acquire Government jobs were complimentary.⁵⁹ The English education and the Government jobs created a middle class also among the *Thiyyas*⁶⁰ as socio-political control of the English made the people adopt the new system of education.⁶¹ The people all over Kerala were attracted towards this new system of education.

In Malabar, majority of the *Nairs* and the *Brahmins* did not go after the English education.⁶² They feared that the destruction of the Hindu society was imminent and with that the destruction of the social, cultural, moral and spiritual values of the society too.⁶³

The activities of the Basel Mission gave the opportunity of all people irrespective of castes to get in to the schools.⁶⁴ They brilliantly utilized the caste proscriptions and tried to convert the people in large scale. The majority of the converts came from the suppressed class. The workers of the Basel Mission factories belonged to lower castes. Due to untouchability, they were not allowed to walk along the main road, use the public well, or involve in other things. Education was denied to them. This advantage was utilized by the Missionaries to convert them to the Christianity.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*, p.231

⁵⁹ Thayat Sankaran, *Bharatiya Vidyabhyasam Charithravum Varthamanakala Prasnangalum*, Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishath, Trichur, 1989, p.14

⁶⁰ K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana prabanthangal*, p.21

⁶¹ M.P.Sarojini Amma, p.83

⁶² K.K.N. Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana prabanthanga*, p.21

⁶³ Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala, p.14

⁶⁴ K.K.N. Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.22

⁶⁵ R. Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanam*, Prabhat, Trivandrum, 1979, p.9

The most important thing regarding the untouchability was proselytization. Nowhere like the Travancore-Kochi had witnessed the large scale proselytization.⁶⁶

M.Sahadevan writes:

“The work of the Missionaries was instrumental in bringing into affect the principle of equality before law at best in respect of dress, in the case of the untouchable and in arousing the consciousness of rights among the low castes.”⁶⁷

To reduce the high castes to the level of the low by bringing the social system crashing down was by no means the Missionary aims.⁶⁸

To protest the clandestine aim of the Missionaries, the upper castes sent their children to some other schools in some places, for they had aversion to the Missionary schools.⁶⁹ Even though the children of the lower castes were admitted to the schools in Malabar, their number was limited. There were very few low caste pupils in the D.M.R.T School at Tanur in the 1930s, even though they had not been denied admission.⁷⁰ They feared the caste Hindus very much. A.C.Kannan Nair writes in 1932 that he went to the Board school for admitting the lower castes. Not even a single child turned up. As the *Harijan* students were admitted many upper castes left the school.⁷¹ This was the response of the upper castes. But it was a temporary phenomenon. Most people began to accept the new atmosphere as desirable.

When the *Thiyyas* took part in the Government jobs, their position of being the untouchables began to subside in Malabar. In the beginning of the 20th

⁶⁶ Mannath Padmanabhan, *Jeevitha Smaranakal*, p.106

⁶⁷ M.Sahadevan, *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making*, p.18

⁶⁸ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance in Kerala*, p.50

⁶⁹ K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism And Social Change In India*, p.106

⁷⁰ Interview with Sri. Assainarkutty, Tanur.

⁷¹ K.K.N. Kurup, *A.C.Kannan Nair Oru Padanam*, Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 1985, p.63

century they had gained the position of the deputy collector or sub judge.⁷² The Government Jobs raised the position of the *Thiyyas*. But it is not correct to say that it succeeded completely.⁷³

The National Movement and the Struggle against Caste evils.

Fight against social discrimination became an agenda of the Indian National Congress only in the 1920s. The activists from the lower castes themselves sowed the seeds of the struggle. If T.K.Madhavan had not raised the issue of untouchability in the Kakinada meeting of the Indian National Congress, there would not be a programme for the congress against untouchability.⁷⁴

Gandhiji was not in a position to approve mixed eating or mixed marriage.⁷⁵ But he was supportive to begin a movement against many caste evils. The Congress grasped the gravity of the situation soon and thus a decision was taken to fight against it. There were organized movements and isolated attempts against caste cruelties.

A. Organized Movements

To end caste discrimination, the Indian National Congress planned a strong movement.⁷⁶ The three *Satyagrahas* spearheaded by the Indian National Congress in this connection received greater attention not only in Kerala but also other parts of the India.

When the Non-Co-operation movement of the 1920s was withdrawn, the Indian National Congress gave importance to the struggle against the caste

⁷² K.K.N. Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.23

⁷³ *Ibid*, p.24

⁷⁴ N.K.Jose, *Vaikom Satyagraha*, p.24

⁷⁵ *Ibid* (preface), Nitya Chaithanya Yati, p.20

⁷⁶ A.K.Gopalan, *Ente Jeevithakatha*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1987, p.35

evils. So Vaikom *Satyagraha*, Guruvayur *Satyagraha* and Paliyam *Satyagraha* were conducted in Kerala. These movements gained maximum attention from the masses. People from all walks of life jubilantly participated in these movements since it was widely believed that social emancipation was the first step towards political emancipation.

1.The Vaikom Satyagraha

In February 1924, there was a meeting of the Indian National Congress in Kollam. The meeting adopted the resolution that efforts should be made to open all the temples to all Hindus; all schools to be opened to the backward castes. It was also decided to fight against any restriction on the lower castes in traveling along the public roads.⁷⁷

The lower castes had not been allowed to walk along the roads of the Vaikom Siva temple. The Vaikom *Satyagraha* was intended to grab this right. To prevent the right to movement for the lower castes, the Government argued that the upper castes were against this.⁷⁸ *Theendal* was considered to be a ritual that the community, the Government and the court had accepted.⁷⁹ This was the conservative 'justification' for the continuance of the system.

Leaders like K.Kelappan, A.K.Gopalan, Krishnapillai etc. led the struggle, which was totally Gandhian in practice. This struggle brought the common

⁷⁷ A.K.Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, D.C.Books, Kottayam, 1986,p.313

⁷⁸ Mannath Padmanabhan,*Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal*,p.113

⁷⁹ N.K.Jose, *Vaikom Satyagraha*, p.83

people together with the Indian National Congress.⁸⁰ The movement was so attention grabbing for the people with the spirit of nationalism.⁸¹

When Gandhiji visited Vaikom, the struggle got a new dimension. When he asked the *Savarnas* that if there was any document to prove that the *Avarnas* could not be allowed in the temples, the Indan Thuruthi Nambudiri and other *Savarnas* quoted the *Sankarasmruthi* by Sankaracharya.

But it was well known that Sankaracharya had not written the *Grandha*.⁸² There were no documents to prove that the temple entry should be denied to the lower castes. At the end of the *Satyagraha*, the Government agreed to open some of the roads around the temple for the *Avarnas*. But in the case of other temples the Government was unwilling.⁸³ In 1924 the political leadership was not in a position to do anything remarkable in this respect.⁸⁴

2.The Guruvayur Satyagraha.

The Badagara meeting of the Indian National Congress passed a plea to all the *Devaswams* and the Hindus to allow all members of the community to enter the temples.⁸⁵ The Bombay session of the Indian National Congress, which was attended by K.Kelappan, gave permission to begin the struggle for the entry of the lower castes to the temples all over Kerala.⁸⁶

The K.P.C.C in 1931 decided to hold *Satyagraha* at the Guruvayur temple where the lower castes were denied access.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.25

⁸¹ A.K.Gopalan, *Ente Jeevithakatha*, p.16

⁸² Kesavan Vydyar, Prologue to *Kshetrapravesanavilambaram Oru Padar.am*, p.18

⁸³ N.K.Jose, *Kshetrapravesana Vilambaram Oru Padanam*, Hobby Books, Kottayam, 1986, p.98

⁸⁴ A.K.Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, p.321

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp.353-54

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.356

The *Satyagraha* was begun on November 1 of 1931. The leaders of the movement were K.Kelappan, Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar, A.K.Gopalan, P.Krishnapillai etc. There was a strong propaganda throughout Malabar.⁸⁷ The significance of the *Guruvayur Satyagraha* is that it was an important agitation by the Indian National Congress after it had suffered setback in the Non Co-operation Movement. There was a referendum in Ponani Taluk to know whether the people supported the movement. The astonishing result was that majority of the people had supported the entry of the lower castes to the temple. The Trustee of the temple, Samudiri, closed the temple to cool the spirit of the *Satyagrahis*. The Indian National Congress had to withdraw the movement without winning the goal, but it brought about tremendous change in the minds of the common people.

The temple entry proclamation by the *Maharaja* of Travancore in 1936 was a milestone in the history of the movement against caste evils. It was a shock treatment to the '*mad house*' of Swami Vivekananda.⁸⁸ The temple entry was not an unexpected event. It happened when no other options were available.⁸⁹

According to him the reasons for the temple entry proclamation were:

1. The activities of the S.N.D.P Yogam and the *Ezhava* community and their protest, agitation and threat.
2. The generosity of the *Maharaja*

⁸⁷ Perunna, K.N Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, P.73

⁸⁸ N.K.Jose, *Kshetrapravesana Vilambaram Oru Padanam*, p.2

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.3

3. The attempt to alienate the *Ezhavas* from the Christian–Muslim nexus.
4. The inclination of the *Ezhavas* toward other religions.⁹⁰

The factors mentioned above might have contributed to the temple entry proclamation in a big way. At the same time the political inevitability can't be ignored. The Government felt that the united movement by the people belonging to every caste and religion would become a threat to the stability of the Government. So the Government put forth the decision to allow entry of all castes in the temples.

Even though the temple entry proclamation was made in 1936, the situation in Kerala remained by and large the same. It was only in 1946 (October 16) that the Lokanarkavu temple was opened for the *Harijans*.⁹¹ On 2nd June 1947 Gandhiji and some *Harijans* entered the Guruvayur temple ending proscription on the lowercastes that existed for many centuries.⁹²

3.The Paliyam Satyagraha

Even after the temple entry proclamation by the *Maharaja* of Travancore, the situation in some places of Kerala was not much different in maintaining caste evils. So *Paliyam Satyagraha* can't be considered less important in the history of the many struggles against caste discrimination.

Even in the middle of the 1940s the roads in front of the Paliyam temple were not open for the lower castes and non-Hindus. A memorandum was submitted to Paliyath Achan. But the response was not at all positive.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p.11

⁹¹ K.K.N.Kurup, *A.C.Kannan Nair Oru padanam*, p.143

⁹² C.K.Moosad, *Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan*, p.133

There was no alternative other than holding a mass movement. C. Kesavan inaugurated the *Satyagraha* on 4th December, 1947. The Paliyath family approached the court. The *Satyagraha* was banned. But ignoring the court order the struggle continued.⁹³ In the struggle M.G.Velayudhan became a martyr in the police atrocity.⁹⁴ The press note issued on March 5, 1948 said that the people of Cochin were not at all interested in the movement and alleged that some people from Malabar were responsible for the trouble.⁹⁵

The Paliyam *Satyagraha* was conspicuous in such a way that it attracted many people in large scale.

The members of the Kodungallur *Kovilakam* also took part in the struggle.⁹⁶ In the freedom movement in Kerala *Paliyam Satyagraha* has an important role as the *Vaikom Satyagraha* and the *Guruvayur Satyagraha*.⁹⁷ But many eminent historians have ignored the relevance of this movement.

They have given greater importance to the *Vaikom Satyagraha* and *Guruvayur Satyagraha* even though both were not successful in a broader sense. But the *Paliyam Satyagraha* was led by the lower castes themselves and was a complete success.⁹⁸

B. Isolated Attempts

Apart from conducting organized mass movements there were also isolated attempts at certain areas against caste pollution. Persons and organizations

⁹³ P.S.Velayudhan, *Ikkanda warrior*, Government of Kerala, 1997, p.85

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.86

⁹⁵ Payyappilli Balan, *Paliyam Samarakatha*, pp.110-11

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.114

⁹⁷ N.V.P.Unithiri, Prologue to *Paliyam Samarakatha*, p.3.

⁹⁸ Payyappilli Balan, *Paliyam Samarakatha*, p.167

took up these struggles. Even though they never appear as important events, they paved the way for many localized struggles.

In those days mixed eating by different castes was not allowed.

But the feast at the time of the marriage of T.K.Madhavan was a mixed one. Many of his *Nair* friends wanted that the feast had to be in that way. They were nationalists.⁹⁹

Palakkad in Malabar was an area where existed strong caste disparities. There were a group of people namely *Nayadis* in Palakkad. They lived in the slopes of the hills. They used to come down for alms. They were the most downtrodden of all the castes. Even sight of *Nayadis* might cause pollution. It was a great sin to see them on certain days. So they cared themselves to keep away from the sight of the *Savarnas*.¹⁰⁰

The *Kalpathi Agraharam* in Palakkad was a strong castle of casteism. Only the *Savarnas* were allowed to enter the *Agraharam* or in the vicinity of it. Activists from the *Aryasamajam* had held a movement against this discrimination without success.¹⁰¹ As a result of the caste evils, many of the Hindus mostly belonging to the backward castes embraced other religions. Many *Ezhavas* were converted to Christianity and Islam.¹⁰²

In north Malabar, the situation was similar to that of Palakkad. In 1928 the lower castes were not allowed to walk along the *Madiyankulam* with an

⁹⁹ C.Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, Prabhat, Trivandrum, 1999, p.222

¹⁰⁰ Kesavadev, *Ethirpu*, p.184

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp.179-80

¹⁰² C.Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, pp.190-91

umbrella. One man was beaten up for doing so. His *Olakkuda* was destroyed.¹⁰³ There were sparks of fury against this atrocity.

In Malabar also the lower castes raised their voice for the right to freedom of movement. In 1927 there was a meeting in Calicut in the chairmanship of Gandhiji. It was held at the Paran Square. An organization namely *Kerala Anthyajodharana Sangham* was founded. C.Krishnan was the president and Kelappan the secretary.¹⁰⁴ There were brutal attacks on them by some anti social elements. As a protest, a meeting was held under the leadership of K. Madhavan Nair. It was decided that the lower caste was to be called as the *Adi Keraleeyar*.

A decision was also taken to form an organization called *Adi Keraleeyar Sangham*. By 1933 the situation was that the *Savarnas* were unable to prevent the entry of the lower caste in some of the temples.¹⁰⁵

Cherukad describes a remarkable incident against casteism. Even though there were temptations, the *Cherumas* were not ready to enter the temple. They believed that the ghosts would kill them all if they polluted the temple. At last Kulavan was ready for that. But when he reached near the temple he lost his courage and sat on the ground. They had to compel him further.¹⁰⁶ He was bathed in the temple pond, sandal paste was smeared all over his body and a new dhoti was supplied. At last he entered the temple; and later a meeting was held in the vicinity. All these activities were conducted by

¹⁰³ K.K.N.Kurup, *A.C.Kannan Nair*, Oru Padanam, p.25

¹⁰⁴ T.H.P.Chentharassery, *Ayyankali*, p.188

¹⁰⁵ C.Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, p.189

¹⁰⁶ Cherukad, *Jeevithapatha*, p.165

Palolli, Pulamanthol Pisharath Kunhukuttettan and one or two *Nairs*. The caste Hindus got infuriated.¹⁰⁷

In Malabar a poor man, Chami said these words, which he would never have uttered about twenty or thirty years before:

“The untouchability will soon disappear, *Thampuran*. Have n’t you heard what the *Swami* has said?”

In addition to this Chami also talked about Kumaran Asan.¹⁰⁸ Even though the Indian National Congress held *Satyagrahas* and other isolated attempts for the entry of the all Hindus to the temples, the status of education of the lower castes, as we have seen, remained dismal. The efforts by the Congress to amass support to fight the caste evils were remarkable. But at the same time there were no organized attempts by the organization to ensure the entry of the downtrodden to the schools all over Kerala. As the Congress did not lead a movement for mass education in Kerala, it was definitely a set back in the attempt to achieve mass education.

We have seen that the situation in Kerala improved much in the approach towards caste discriminations, addressing social grievances and mass education. Among these factors, the influence of mass education was remarkable, since it shaped the soul of Kerala society in the later years. As the study is about Malabar, it is necessary to go deep into the development of education in Malabar.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid,p.76

Chapter-III

PROGRESS OF EDUCATION IN MALABAR

In the last chapter we have seen how education became a matter of contention in Kerala society, and the many struggles that the society had to undertake for the achievement of mass education. In this chapter an attempt is made to examine the growth of education in Malabar and the role of the people in its expansion. The activities of both the Government and the private managements have been considered.

The patronage to higher education by the feudal chieftains was a prominent feature of Malabar. They changed their attitude later with the advent of the British. They lost supremacy and thus obeyed what the colonial masters suggested. They ignored the indigenous education and favoured English education. But the indigenous education did not disappear completely.¹

The British were not at all supportive of the old system of education since it never addressed the needs of the colonial administration. The Government needed English educated people so that they could rule the illiterate masses in a *better* way. So they were interested in imparting English education instead of the traditional one. The British wanted only clerks to form the lowest layer of bureaucracy apart from lawyers and teachers. The achievements of the Kerala society, especially in the field of literacy, were not the contribution of the colonial regime.

¹ N.I.E.P.A, History of Educational Development in Kerala, New Delhi, 1987, p.73

A prominent historian has this view:

"The use of education as a cultural tool for colonial domination is not surprising. Education is a cultural process, which reproduces and disseminates the lived experiences and representations of the people through which the dynamic synthesis of historical reality is constructed."²

The culture of old Kerala had fostered wide spread school going.³ This indigenous system of schooling was responsible for the higher rate of literacy.⁴ But education was provided on the basis of the works that different people had to undertake.

P.R.Gopinathan Nair writes:

"Kerala has had a long and rich tradition of education, language and literature. In the pre-British period, educational facilities existed almost in every village. The higher caste Hindus, like the *Brahmins* and the *Nairs*, had well developed institutional arrangements for educating their children, particularly their sons, the *Brahmins* had their *Mutts*, the rich *Nairs* and the temple castes had their family tutors."⁵

He continues that the former group received higher education in subjects like philosophy, religion, logic, mathematics, medicine and astronomy- all through the medium of Sanskrit language-those lower down learned the arts of reading, writing and arithmetic and also acquired the rudiments of agricultural and meteorological sciences, through the medium of the local language. The latter type of education was intended to help the lower caste people in the practice of their traditional occupation, mainly cultivation of land.⁶

² K.N.Ganesh (Editor), Culture and Modernity (Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam), Calicut University,2004, p.152

³ Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being, Oxford,1993, p.58

⁴ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, Education and Economic changes in Kerala,C.D.S.,Trivandrum,1978,p.29

⁵ Ibid, p.26

⁶ Ibid, p.28

In the descending order of literacy, the position was like this: *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya* and *Ambalavasis* followed by Nayers and then *Ezhavas* and the so-called slave castes. The Christians were, of course, ahead of the Muslims and, in fact, right behind the Nayers.⁷ There were also vast sections of the population at the lowest stratum of society, mostly belonging to the agrestic slave castes, receiving little education of any kind other than that handed down to them from generation to generation by word of mouth.⁸ But there were exceptions in attaining education even among the lower castes. Even certain sections of the backward communities like those belonging to the *Ganaka* caste were educationally advanced.⁹ At the same time the majority of the lower castes could not gain education either due to caste proscriptions or due to their inability to meet the expenses of learning.

Even the social awakening that marked Kerala society in the late 19th and early 20th century left these groups largely unchanged.¹⁰ Although socially exclusive, the system of traditional, caste-based schools existed in villages all over the region.¹¹ The picture changed altogether with the advent of the British. The British regime did not need mass literacy and thus they gave a blind eye towards any attempts in this respect.

The social reform movements destroyed many customs that prevented social and economic mobility; they contributed to in significant measures to the growth of educational activities also. The emergence of cultural organizations with local voluntary and popular bases had helped in

⁷ V.K.Ramachandran, *Kerala's Developmental Achievements*, p.47

⁸ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, *Education and Economic changes in Kerala*, p.28

⁹ M.S.A.Rao, *Social Movements and Social Transformation.....*, p.78

¹⁰ N.I.E.P.A, *History of Educational development in Kerala*, p.18

¹¹ V.K.Ramachandran, *Kerala's Developmental Achievements*, p.55

bringing about positive results of social progress and the gains of literacy among the masses.¹²

The process of rapid educational growth began in Kerala first in Travancore then in Cochin, and very late in Malabar. However, even in Malabar, the literacy rate was higher than in other parts of India during the British period. This was due to the well-developed status of the indigenous education in all parts of Kerala during the 19th century.¹³ The educational tradition influenced by all the three units of Kerala was largely similar in the beginning of the 19th century, in respect of indigenous education, Malabar was a little better than both Cochin and Travancore. However, by the end of the century, Malabar remained where it had been. Cochin and Travancore surged forward, in fact, to the forefront of the educational map of India.¹⁴

It is rather important to examine the status of women education in Kerala.

V.K.Ramachandran writes:

"Kerala got ahead of the other states in respect of literacy since Kerala's culture fostered female literacy. Kerala has a history of matriliney among a significant section of the population and it did not leave a tradition of female section, except among *Nambudiris* and a section of the Muslims. There was never organized social opposition to women's literacy in Kerala."¹⁵

The women belonging to major communities were almost illiterate. The *Nambudiris* and the Muslim women were denied education. At the same time the *Nair* women had excellent education.

The Local Board Act of the Madras Government in 1834 was the base on which the educational activity in Malabar began.¹⁶ During the first half of the

¹² Census Reports, p.149

¹³ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, Education and Economic change in Kerala, p 26

¹⁴ N.I.E.P.A, History of Educational Development in Kerala, p.82

¹⁵ V.K.Ramachandran, Kerala's Developmental Achievements, p.57

¹⁶ Thayat Sankaran, *Bharathiya Vidhyabhyasam Charithravum Varthamanakala Prasnangalum*, pp.171-72

19th century the Missionary schools were the only source of education for the lower castes as well as in the matter of girls.¹⁷

The British Government was of the opinion that it had no responsibility to make education universal from the beginning itself. It said that the people who had interest in education should build schools; the Government would extend small financial assistance. Travancore-Cochin Governments followed this system. The Christian churches were more in Travancore and Cochin than in Malabar and they founded schools and ran the private education.¹⁸ The schools founded in connection with the churches were the first among the number of modern schools.

It was in the last quarter of the 19th century some efforts were made to start primary and secondary schools in Malabar. Christian Missionaries were engaged to establish new schools in different parts of Malabar. At Calicut and Palakkad, Basel Mission started schools. Among the schools started at Malappuram by the Government and another at Kottakal managed by the *Valathali Nair of Kozhikkode Kovilakam* of the Zamorin family.¹⁹ The Roman Catholic Missionaries also established schools among the fishing communities.²⁰

Social consciousness was also a result of the influence of the Missionary activities in the field of education apart from the consciousness of caste discrimination.²¹

As the Government did not show any interest in the mass education due to various reasons, the Christian Missionaries and the private managements

¹⁷ N.I.E.P.A, *History of Educational Development in Kerala*, pp.46-47

¹⁸ E.M.S Nambudiripad, *Communist Party Keralathil*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1986, p.113

¹⁹ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.712

²⁰ V.K.Ramachandran, *Kerala's Developmental Achievements*, p.50

²¹ *Ibid*, p.103

were entrusted with the responsibility of imparting education. So the progress of primary education was very slow in Malabar during this period.

The following were the main causes contributed to the slow growth of primary education.

1. Wide spread indigenous school system ended
2. Local Government and bodies lacked funds for education.
3. The educated classes leaned towards English education than to the primary education
4. The officials of the education department had not realized the importance of the planning the advance of primary education in the forefront of the endeavours.²²

To boost modern education, aid was given to the private managements. This system continued till 1939.²³ These types of schools were called the Grant-in-Aid schools.

The Government extended Grant-In-Aid schools, and the Missionaries established 150 schools for the backward classes by the turn of the century.²⁴ The annual grant given by the Government was not at all sufficient to run the schools. The management had to give remuneration to the teachers from this fund and had to meet other expenses as well. Many schools existed in Malabar were either with single teacher or incomplete.²⁵

²² The Imperial Gazetteer, 1901,p.417

²³ Thayat Sankaran, *Bharathiya Vidhyabhyasam Charithravum Varthamanakala Prasnanagalum*, p.172

²⁴ N.I.E.P.A, *History of Educational Development in Kerala*,p.47

²⁵ P.R.Gopinathan Nair,*Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala*, p.75

Mass literacy requires mass schooling, which began only in the first part of the 19th century.²⁶ But even at the end of the 19th century, there was no mass literacy.²⁷

V.K.Ramachandran aptly comments:

“Mass education can't be that without overcoming the great barriers to mass education in Indian society— gender and caste discrimination and class oppression”²⁸

Wedded to a policy of higher education and indifference to the indigenous education, the British Malabar neither witnessed any significant Government efforts nor that of the Christian Missionaries. Secondly, the British economic policy left the land lords among the caste Hindus to take care of their educational needs in the handful of British schools, established by the Christian Missionaries, while the vast majority of population were the most rack rented in the world and too poor to afford English education.²⁹ The Director of Public Instruction, Madras wrote in his annual report that there was satisfactory progress in the number of educational institutions in Malabar, but a slight decline in the collegiate education due to large failure in the 1903 matriculation examination.³⁰

An important fact is that the lower stratum of the society could never benefit from this type of education system. The representation of various sections of people in the schools was this. The landlords constituted the largest number of scholars 41.3%, coolies 23.9%, traders 12.9%, officials 11.8% and the

²⁶ V.K.Ramachandran, Kerala's Developmental Achievements, p.48

²⁷ Ibid, p.55

²⁸ Ibid, p.56

²⁹ N.I.E.P.A, History of Educational Development in Kerala, p.83

³⁰ Report of the Director of Public Instruction, Madras for 1904-05, p.39

artisans 7.7%. Over 83.6% of the male population in the collegiate and the upper secondary stages belonged to the landlords, trading and official classes.³¹

The Malabar area could boast of its educational status compared to the other districts. Of all the districts of Madras, Malabar had 20% and more of pupils of school going age attending educational Institutions. In majority of the districts in the state the percentage was less than 12.³²

From 1906 onwards the national leaders showed great interest in the education of the people. They formed National Education Commission and began agitation for the introduction of compulsory education. The British Government was against it on religious grounds. They believed that the compulsion would invite wrath of religions such as the Muslims. In 1910 Gokhale introduced a scheme for compulsory education in the Imperial Education Council.³³

In an attempt to spread primary education, it was made free for the girls and for the backward classes in Malabar. A special education officer was appointed. Nearly 30% of the pupils in the schools were girls.³⁴ The average per capita cost of education was 3 to 9 annas³⁵ in the beginning of the 20th century. Even though the situation was favourable, majority of the population did not enjoy any facilities for education and were there fore

³¹ Ibid, p.5

³² File No.A806, RAC,Chart-I

³³ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, pp.34-35

³⁴ Administrative Report of Madras State for 1909-10,p.10

³⁵ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.712

steeped in illiteracy.³⁶ The inherent vulnerability of Kerala society-the caste barrier- was responsible for this undesirable situation.

The Government was well aware of the caste evil in Malabar. So it decided to lift any restriction that prevented the children from attending the schools on the basis of caste. In 1911-12 Government removed restriction in admitting the pupils on the basis of caste.³⁷ The important feature of the thus imparted education was that it did not prevent any persons belonging to any caste from attending the schools. At the same time in Travancore and Cochin the children belonging to the lower castes were denied access to the schools. Though the caste structure prevailing all over Kerala was the same, Malabar was a little liberal in providing education to its people. The authorities were in favour of creating a section of people with the English culture and life.

With the introduction of the Missionary education and the support from the private managements, the modern education began to show significant progress. This is visible in the increase of literacy as indicated in the following tables.

³⁶ P.R. Gopinathan Nair, Education and Economic changes in Kerala, p.28

³⁷ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala, p.33

Table-1Literacy in Malabar from 1891-1951.

Year	Men	Women	Total
1891	22.08%	3.92%	13.00%
1901	17.24%	3.02%	10.13%
1911	22.57%	3.46%	13.02%
1931	22.92%	6.36%	14.64%
1951	47.00%	22.00%	34.50%

Table-2Literacy in Kerala from 1901 to 1951

Year	Literacy
1901	12.35%
1911	15.45%
1921	21.95%
1931	25.85%
1951	47.37%

(Census Reports of relevant years)

These tables reveal the percentage of literacy in Malabar and Kerala from the last decades of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century.

In 1901, literacy in Malabar was 10.1%. At the same time the literacy in Kerala was 12.25%. It is significant that in respect of literacy, Malabar was not much behind when Kerala as a whole was considered. The difference was only 2.22%. In 1911, the difference increases and at last when it reaches 1951, the average literacy in Kerala exceeds Malabar by around 13%. Even though the percentage of literacy shows regular increase, Travancore and Cochin attained further in mass literacy.

In the 1st quarter of the 20th century, Malabar witnessed great progress in the elementary education and secondary education owing to encouragement given by the Madras Government.³⁸

But at the same time these attempts were not at all sufficient to impart education to the majority of the people and thus Malabar lagged behind Travancore and Cochin. The reasons for the same were the following.

- a. Opposition of the Muslims to the modern education
- b. Malabar lacked leaders to promote education which Travancore and Cochin had.
- c. The upper layer of the society benefited by English education in Malabar became instrumental in igniting a national feeling and kindling movement from the caste structure. The mobilization of *Thiyyas* of Malabar against the caste rigidities would not have happened without English education.³⁹

The Government had entrusted the Local Boards with the responsibility of education. At the same time they lacked sufficient funds to support the

³⁸ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malppuram, p.712

³⁹ M.P.Sarojini Amma, Ph..D Thesis, pp.103-104

system. So the Taluk Boards levied education cess under the elementary education act of 1920.⁴⁰

According to the report of the *Mappila* Education Committee, compulsory education was introduced in seven municipalities of Ernad and three of Ponani and one in the Manarghat union, in the municipalities of Calicut, Cochin and Tellicherry. The number of Public Elementary Schools for the *Mappilas* rose from 1239 to 1365 and the strength went up from 86315 to 96794.⁴¹

At this time also the Government never tried to build schools in large scale, instead supported the managements to build them. The Government provided them with some financial assistance, in the form of Grant-in-Aid. The private managements considered the running of school a business from the first decades of the 20th century.

The Malabar District Board founded in 1920 gave impetus to the elementary education and the District Educational Council was formed for making the attempts more rigorous.⁴²

The Government attention to promote Malayalam education began only after 1921. Government of India act 1919 transferred education to the Indians. Primary education was given greater care. District and Taluk Board schools were established in villages and Taluks. Muslims and the depressed

⁴⁰ File No.A825, RAC, pp.5-6

⁴¹ File No.A829, RAC, p.23

⁴² Thayat Sankaran, *Bharathiya Vidhyabhyasam Charithravum Varthamanakala Prasnangalum*, p.172

communities did not take to education early owing to serious economic and social hindrances.⁴³

Primary Education Acts were passed in various provinces and presidencies of the introduction of compulsory education. They were even completed in few-selected urban and rural areas.⁴⁴

As per the Elementary Act passed in 1920 each Local Board formed fund for the elementary education as a result many schools were founded.⁴⁵ The teachers with graduation were selected as Deputy Inspectors and the secondary school teachers were appointed as Junior Deputy Inspectors.⁴⁶ The education cess would be collected from the October 1, 1925.⁴⁷

To strengthen the growth of special night schools, the management of English and higher elementary schools in Malabar district gave more importance in appointing better staff rather than expanding high schools and were efficiently supervised. They not only continued the teaching of 3 'R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) but also taught Hygiene, Civics and Geography.⁴⁸

The Devdhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust also conducted classes at four centres for adult education. They were open to all castes.

There were attempts to promote the *Mappila* education.

⁴³ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, *Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala*, p.75

⁴⁴ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.35

⁴⁵ Thayat Sankaran, *Bharathiya Vidhyabhyasam Charithravum Varthamanakala Prasnangalum*, p.172

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ File No.A832,RAC,p.35

To make the *Mappilas* of this area interested in education and to make them with good manners the following measures were adopted for the *Mappila* schools.

1. The financial condition of the *Mappila* boys and girls schools should be improved
2. The books taught there should contain stories relating to loyalty to the king, patience and communal harmony. This should also be from the religious books of the *Musalman*.
3. To teach reading and writing of Arabic and also to teach the meanings, new exercises should be included in the textbook.
4. The matters relating to the *Musalman*s were to be taught (both in Malayalam and Arabic)
5. By keeping the normal subjects unaffected, a third and fourth subjects should be included in the working hours.
6. The crafts should be taught using different equipment.
8. The poverty-ridden children should be provided with slates, books and scholarship.⁴⁹

It is remarkable that no religious instruction could be imparted in schools.⁵⁰

Due to the increased activities of many agencies mass education rapidly increased during the period from 1921 to 1939.⁵¹ Even though mass education got impetus, fees were levied from the students. Fees were levied by all Board schools from children except from the backward and the depressed classes. All municipal schools were to be accessible to all classes

⁴⁹ Malabar Gazette, 1923, p.2

⁵⁰ Ibid, 1922, p.6.

⁵¹ A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1998, p.151

of children irrespective of caste or creed.⁵² All children irrespective of caste barriers, who won the primary examination, were admitted to the commercial classes at the Government School of Commerce at Calicut in 1921.⁵³

In 1920s there were 0.4 schools/ Sq.mile. About 38.1% of the school age group population attended schools.⁵⁴

The reason why Malabar lagged behind Travancore in 1920s was the spread of education among the *Ezhava* people. Sree Narayana Guru led the movement for educating the masses in Travancore.⁵⁵ At the same time Malabar lacked such a movement. Besides the ideological differences, the Muslims had economic problems to deal with. Most of the *Mappilas* were the tenants or agricultural workers. The major beneficiaries came from the tenants, merchants, Government servants and landlords.⁵⁶

The *Mappila* rebellion of 1921 was a heavy blow for the people of Malabar. Many schools were closed down and free activities were about to end. They feared to open the schools in spite of repeated efforts by the Government. Some schools remained closed in Ernad after the *Mappila Rebellion* and still remained closed.

The endorsement of the Assistant School Inspector was received seeking the direction what action to be taken to against the schools, which still remained closed.⁵⁷ There were also issues relating to the admission of the lower castes to the schools. It is to be noted that many schools were located in such

⁵² Malabar Gazette, 1923,p.7

⁵³ Ibid, p.25

⁵⁴ Ibid, 1922,p.6

⁵⁵ V.K.Ramachandran, Kerala's Developmental Achievements, p.56

⁵⁶ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala, p.75

⁵⁷ Malabar Gazette, 1921,p.20

places where the lower castes could not reach. Some brave steps were taken to ensure the presence of the lower castes at the schools. Some of the schools were shifted to convenient places so as to ensure the entry of lower castes to them.

To make more improvement to the school, the Kunisseri Girls school had been shifted from the middle of the *Brahmin* locality to a convenient place.⁵⁸ Here the word 'improvement' actually means the admission of the oppressed castes. The *Brahmins* would never allow the presence of the deprived classes in their areas then.

All the *Harijan* children under the Board school would be provided with free slates and books.⁵⁹ This measure was taken to help the parents to escape from the burden of buying study materials for the children.

The criterion for recognizing any school was that they should admit all the *Adidravidas* in their schools.⁶⁰ So it was mandatory for the schools to admit the *Adidravidas* and other suppressed communities to comply with the decision of the Government.

By 1951 about 50% of the Kerala population were literate. This was an amazing achievement by a state that suffered much under the yoke of the landlords and the British regime. It is however evident that mass literacy was the aim of the social reformers in Travancore and Cochin. At the same time the social reforms in Malabar were not so popular as in Travancore.

The census report has this to add:

⁵⁸ Malabar Gazette, 1922 January, p.3

⁵⁹ Ibid, June, 1934

⁶⁰ Malabar Gazette, 1935, p.1

"The examination of the process of educational growth shows however, that in Malabar, the policy followed by the British was the same as that, this perhaps accounts for the fact that the difference between Malabar on the one hand and Travancore and Cochin on the other tended to widen during the period 1901 to 51. In contrast to the British policy of neglect of primary education in Malabar, there were positive factors that contributed to the development of education in Travancore and Cochin."⁶¹

Only Malabar and South Canara and southern districts had more than 23% of pupils attending schools (Primary stage) of population strength.⁶²

English had been the medium of instruction in the upper and lower secondary schools from the early stage. The department advised the managers to adopt vernacular as the medium up to 3rd form or the 7th standard.⁶³ In those days learning in English was a symbol of status. So this suggestion was disregarded.

Even in the 1930s the literacy among the Muslims and the other lower castes was much less and negligible among the slave castes. In 1931, the region under this district had 15% of male and 3.35% of female literates.

Out of thousand *Mappilas* 55 were literate; among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes only 10 out of 1000 were literate.⁶⁴

The growth of collegiate education was also to be considered, though their number was less. By the year of 1931, there were 4 colleges, 62 secondary schools including 34 Aided, 4134 elementary schools and 11 training schools in the whole Malabar. Out of the 4134 elementary schools 2548 were under

⁶¹ Census Reports, 1951, p.37

⁶² File No.A806, RAC, Map.III

⁶³ File No.A809, RAC, p.21

⁶⁴ Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.709

private sector and 103 were for the girls. There were 13 special schools, out of which 7 were Aided.⁶⁵

The Government made several attempts to enhance the educational facilities of the Muslims. Many sessional schools were opened for the training of the *Mappilas* and *Musaliyars* from 1932 to 1934.

Proposals were there for the formation of the education committees in the villages. The aims of the committees included bringing of the backward class children to the schools. Steps were taken to increase the facilities of religious instruction in the elementary school for the *Mappilas* by arranging a short course for the training for the *Mullas* and *Musaliyar* for making them qualified as regular teachers to become the staff of the recognized elementary schools. The special training school for appeal teachers at Malappuram was made permanent and improvements and extensions to its buildings completed. The lower training schools for *Mohammedan* mistresses were started in 1928-29.⁶⁶

The Report of the Director of Public Instruction says:

"The chief problem in regard to the education of the *Moplas* is that of wastage."⁶⁷

This indicates that the Government could not spend money allotted for the education of the *Mappilas* in a meaningful way. In other words, the Government failed miserably in attracting the *Mappila* masses towards education.

In the 1930s the policy on elementary education was this:

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.712

⁶⁶ File No.A833, RAC, p.8

⁶⁷ Report on Public Instruction, Madras, 1932,p.34

Elementary education was free and compulsory for boys of school age, free but not compulsory for girls.⁶⁸ Compliance with the Elementary Education Act was made compulsory while selecting the places for the construction of educational institutions. Educational institutions were to be established in such a place that all the people could reach and also be having good light and air circulation as per the Education Rule.⁶⁹ This Act put forth other revolutionary suggestions. As per the Education Rules, the following castes needed only half of the fee- *Girls, Mohammedans, Adidravidas* and all those belonged to the rule 17 (a) of the Madras Education Rules.⁷⁰

An important decision taken during this time was on the naming of the schools. Earlier all the elementary schools under the Board had been called Hindu Elementary School or *Mappila* Elementary School. This was to be changed as Board Elementary School. The decision of the Board was taken on the 26th of October 1936. Elementary schools for all castes could not be called Hindu elementary school. The word Hindu was to be deleted.

The *girls* schools and *Mappila* schools would remain in the same name. The decision was taken on December 4, 1936.⁷¹

Many of the representatives of the District Boards were eager to end the Caste discriminations still followed by a section of the people.

E.C. Kunhikkannan Nambiar raised this question in the District Board:

1. "Whether any rule that denies the entry of the *Harijans* in the schools does exist?"

⁶⁸ The Malabar Gazette, Thalassery Supplement, 1932, p.25

⁶⁹ Ibid, 1931, October, p.1

⁷⁰ Ibid, 1933, September, p.11

⁷¹ The Malabar Gazette, January 1937, p.52

2. "Are there any schools where the *Harijans* are not admitted?"⁷²

The reply he received was that there were no schools in which the entry of the *Harijans* was restricted. An important decision taken during this period was that the schools exclusively for the *Adidravidas* (*Panchama* schools) were to be abolished. All schools under the board were to be open to the *Adidravidas* as well.

Even though the officials were constantly affirming that the entry of the lower castes was not restricted, there existed some schools where they were not welcome.

In Chirakkal Taluk, the Cherukunnu Girls High School and Tiruvattoor Hindu Boys High School, Kooyod, and in Palakkad, the Hindu High School Kollankode and the Girls High School Palakkad were not in places where the Schedule Castes could enter.

All schools, except the Thiruvattoor High school, were shifted to places where they could enter.⁷³ At Naniyur the upper caste Hindus strongly resisted the admission of the *Harijans* to the school. Due to the strong opposition the District Board decided to stop the functioning of the school.⁷⁴

A decision was taken to form committees to bring all the *Adidravida* children to the schools. For this purpose, it was decided to undertake propaganda.⁷⁵ The *Adidravidas*, due to their birth or failure to lead a life, if unable to send their children to the schools, were to be admitted to schools.

⁷² Ibid, July, 1937, p.4

⁷³ The Malabar Gazette, 1935-36, p.26

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.28

⁷⁵ Ibid, 1935-36, p.27

The schools were compelled to bring the *Adidravidas* residing within a distance of one mile. The rule 15 (2) of the Education Rules recommends so.⁷⁶

The description of the *Adidravidas* was:

'Those who follow the Hindu religion and the *Parayas, Chakkilians, Thottiyans, Cherumans, Madigan, Holiyan, Pallan, Valluvan and Malan*.'⁷⁷

The Government took action against those who violated the enforcement of compulsory education. Where there was compulsory education, the parents of the children who violated Rule 49 shall be fined with not less than the least amount and not more than the Maximum amount. Ten *amsams* in Ernad Taluk and three *amsoms* in Valluwanad Taluk followed compulsory education. There were provisions in the Education Act of 1920 for those who violated the norms of compulsory education. In Ponani Taluk Board, fifty three parents violated the provisions. There were cases against them. Forty were warned and nine fined.⁷⁸

In Ernad, sixty eight parents were warned and nine parents fined. In Valluwanad, the poverty-ridden people were not warned.⁷⁹

In 1939, the District Education Council was abolished. The Grant-In-Aid was disbursed through the District Educational Office.⁸⁰ During this period the

⁷⁶ Ibid, March, 1935, p.22

⁷⁷ Ibid, November, 1931, p.3

⁷⁸ The Malabar Gazette, August, 1935, pp.10-11

⁷⁹ Ibid, February, 1935, p.21

⁸⁰ Thayat Sankaran, *Bharathiya Vidhyabhyasam Charithravum Varthamanakala Prasnangalum*, p.172

Government had shown great interest in establishing Aided schools in different parts of the remote villages.⁸¹

The progress in number of schools in Malabar indicates a satisfactory position. (See Table)

Board schools in Malabar

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1921-22	349	62	411
1922-23	358	77	435
1923-24	386	81	467
1931-32	991	319	1391
1932-33	987	289	1276
1933-34	937	288	1225
1937-38			1177
1938-39			1149
1939-40			1066

(Malabar Gazette for relevant years)

The *Adidravidas* had only five schools-three in Chirakkal, one in Ernad and one in Calicut.

A test was conducted to know whether the upper castes would tolerate the lower sections of the society. When the *Adidravidas* were admitted to three Board schools in Valluvanad, the upper Hindus and others left the schools.

⁸¹ Cherukad, *Jeevithappatha*, p.143

The District Board did not change the decision. Later they changed their minds as per the changing time and agreed to what the time demanded.⁸²

As educational activities caught more and more attention in Malabar in the 20th century, the educated group began to play critical role in the society. While the society was running after mass education, the political situation in Malabar was becoming more turbulent. The people were in a do or die struggle to get rid of the alien Government.

⁸² Malabar Gazette, 1935,p.23

Chapter-IV

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR

Efforts for mass education that got momentum in Malabar during the early half of the 20th century corresponded with the spread of political consciousness in the region. As mass education spread far and wide, political consciousness of the people also was on the rise. People from all walks of life began to organize themselves. This chapter has been devoted for the study of growth and development of political awareness among the people of Malabar. The formation of a unit of the Indian National Congress in Malabar, and the growth of it into a mass movement are discussed here. The founding of the Congress Socialist Party, *Karshaka Sangham* and the Trade Unions is also examined.

Before going deep into the situation in Malabar on the eve of the 20th century, how the resistance movements had developed and challenged the dominance of the colonial rule is to be considered.

Malabar was under a number of chieftains before the coming of the British. They quarrelled among themselves for one reason or the other. An attempt to bring Malabar under a unified rule was materialized by Tippu through his invasions, which resulted in many major changes in the socio-economic fabric of Malabar in the dying decades of the 18th century. With the defeat of Tippu in 1792, the entire Malabar came under the grip of the British.

After the defeat of Tippu, the British were free from any serious threat from any part of extreme south. Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja offered another

brave resistance in Malabar against the mighty British Empire in the early 19th century. Even though he was defeated, the spirit he bequeathed has been remarkable. There were also other revolts by Ravi Varma of Padinjare Kovilakam, and several land lords and Chiefs, including Manjeri Kurikkal and Unni Mootha Mooppan. When Wayanad was occupied by the British, the *Adivasis* led by the Kurichya Chiefs rebelled against them. However, all these rebellions were suppressed and the British consolidated their power.

Having gained supremacy over Malabar from the Mysore Empire, the British tried to implement many reforms that totally negated the existing traditional socio-economic relations. The economic exploitation on the part of the *Janmis* increased with colonial support. The colonial system destroyed the traditional political structure of Malabar consisting of *Rajas*, ruling chieftains, *Samantas* or feudal lords and *Naduvazhis* or rulers of the sub districts. They were never concerned about the agonies of the common people and hence the interests of the down trodden were neglected. The Government entrusted the *Janmis* with the privilege of collecting taxes from the tenants. Whenever the Government wanted more money from the *Janmis*, the ultimate sufferers were the poor tenants. This was the situation prevailing in Malabar. As we have already discussed the economic impact of the reforms in the first chapter, the political impact of this policy is given a little space here.

The agrarian discontent was mainly confined to the poor tenants. Many outbreaks resulted in against the ruthless exploitation of the poor peasants. Since the *Mappila* peasants led the movements, they came to be called the *Mappila* revolts. Many uprisings occurred from the middle of the 19th century to the first decades of the 20th century.

All these indicate the fact that there were resistance movements in Malabar even before the dawn of the 20th century. At the same time they were neither united nor properly organized. More over these movements were confined to certain areas only. So it was possible for the Government to suppress them without much effort.

These elements (the Chieftains,*Rajas*,*Samantas* etc.) along with the *Nambudiris* and land owning *Nairs* were consolidated into the class of *Janmis*¹ who became landed proprietors and tax paying farmers with considerable power over tenant cultivators including eviction and re assignment of land to another cultivator.

The colonial administration in 19th century created opportunities for the rise of a middle class. The combination of the social and cultural activities of the middle classes and those of the enlightened sections of the upper class, with the spontaneous discontent of the peasant masses – the combination, very often, in the same persons or group, of the social reformers, the leader of cultural life, the organizer of the caste association- was the initial form in which really National Movement took its first form.²

E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad writes:

“The movement was not yet the National Movement in the real sense of the term, since it was not directed against the national oppressor – the British imperialists- nor was it even a genuine anti feudal movement, since it was not directed against the princely order, nor for the total abolition of the landlordism. It was however, the beginning of the National Democratic Movement, since it united the cultivating and landless peasants with the enlightened section of the feudal, ruling classes.”³

¹ K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p.30

² E.M.S. Nambudiripad, *Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.126

³ Ibid.

The political milieu in India became more vibrant with the formation of the political organization, the Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885. The emergence of the Congress gave the educated Indians a common platform for the first time in India, where they could exchange their opinions and mould their political aspirations.⁴

Even when the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885, the people of Kerala had great interest in it. Many people from Kerala had links with the Indian National Congress. They were T.M.Nair, V.Ryru Nambiar, C.Sankaran Nair etc. In the very beginning, the Indian National Congress was not a popular movement. There was no strong organizational set up for the Indian National Congress. The main activities of the Congress were to pass resolutions, conduct special sessions and annual meetings and submit memorandum.⁵ This was continued for a few decades.

When all other states—including our neighbouring states—were turbulent, the situation in Kerala was this:

While the Bengalis and the *Maratis* and the *Parsis* were strongly participating in the activity of the Congress and even they had been thinking of becoming extremists, and in Tamil Nadu the extremist movements were in full swing under the leadership of Subramania Bharati and V.P.S.Ayyar, politically Kerala was sleeping.⁶ This was not deliberate. Kerala lacked many advantages that the other states had enjoyed. If there was a capital city to attract the educated and new ideologically equipped youth with

⁴ P.K.K. Menon, P.K.K., *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Regional Records Survey Committee, Trivandrum, 1972, p.67

⁵ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.9

⁶ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1997, p.191

Government offices, universities, factories and port the political activities in Kerala would have started earlier.

This is evident, as Kerala had created a Ramakrishna Pillai without all these facilities.⁷

The Early days of the National Movement

Many of the pioneers who led the National Movement had been in Madras or other cities, and early nationalism was mainly an urban phenomenon. A prominent person to take part in the early activities of the Indian National Congress was C. Sankaran Nair. He presided over the Amaravati session of the Indian National Congress in 1897. But even after that the political atmosphere in Malabar was not so ripened for political activities.

The activities of the Indian National Congress began in Kerala when a meeting of the organization was held in Calicut in 1903. But nothing was heard about it till the formation of the First Congress District Committee in 1910 in the British Malabar.⁸ C.Kunhirama Menon was elected as the secretary. However, no serious political activity was undertaken even after the formation of the District Congress Committee.⁹

A Provincial Conference of the District Congress was held at Calicut in 1913. C. Vijayaraghavacharyar of Salem was able to create political stir among the people.¹⁰ His speech was so inspiring.

The real political activity in the name of the Indian National Congress was really started, when K.P. Kesava Menon returned to Kerala after his

⁷ Ibid, p.192

⁸ Perunna K.N.Nair,*Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.12

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ .P.K.K. Menon,*The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*,p.69

education in England. He tried to change the character of the National protest. An organized political protest could only be witnessed in 1916, when he was prevented by the District Collector to use Malayalam for his speech.¹¹ As part of the war activity, some people decided to give *Panakkizhi* to the governor of Madras. The municipal chairman C. V. Narayana Menon convened a meeting in Calicut for this purpose. In the meeting Kesava Menon began his speech in Malayalam. The Collector wanted him to speak in English. Kelappan was reluctant. The Collector stuck to his decision. Most people assembled there boycotted the meeting in protest.¹² This was the first spark of disobedience that grew into a great fire in the political atmosphere of Kerala.

During those days the character of the Indian National Congress was neither radical nor pro- poor. The rich and the *Janmis* were the main supporters of the Indian National Congress then.¹³ Many of the leaders of the Indian National Congress were either former kings or big *Janmis*. Kollankode *Raja*, Mankada *Raja*, Samudiri, Kadathanad *Raja*, Chirakkal *Thampuran*, Nilambur *Thirumulpad* etc. were in the reception committees for organizing the conferences of the Indian National Congress.¹⁴

The accepted policy of the Indian National Congress at this time was to hold annual meetings in taluks, districts and provinces. People with varying shades of political opinions used to meet and pass resolutions unanimously. Those who took active interest in the holding of such conferences were

¹¹ A.K.Gopalan, *Keralam Innale Innu*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 2004, p.43

¹² .Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.13

¹³ A.K.Gopalan, *Keralam Innale Innu*, p.43

¹⁴ .N.E.Balaram, *Keralathile Communist Prasthanam*, Prabhath, Trivandrum, 1973, p.30

mostly members of the affluent and aristocratic families.¹⁵ So there was no space for the grievances of masses in the meetings of the Indian National Congress.

P.K.K.Menon thinks thus:

"The educated class of Malabar, though imbued with the spirit of the Congress and anxious to disseminate its message, were not yet able to exercise much influence on the popular mind as many of them had their own avocations outside Kerala that gave them little opportunity to come in to direct contact with the masses." ¹⁶

In the early decades of the 20th century, the English educated professionals belonging to the upper castes like K.P.Kesava Menon, K.Kelappan, M.P.Narayana Menon, G.Sankaran Nair, Manjeri Rama Iyyer, K.Madhavan Nair and a good number of similar personalities turned out to be nationalists and many of them even bid goodbye to their professions at the time of Non Co-operation Movement. These professionals joined the movement mainly because of their commitment to the motherland and the upliftment of their countrymen.¹⁷

Almost all of them belonged to the professional class especially advocates and the middle class people. Majority of them were upper castes like *Nairs*, *Nambudiris* etc. The organized activity of the Indian National Congress began during this time.

The Home Rule Movement under the leadership of Annie Besant also had started its activities in Kerala.¹⁸ This movement was rather moderate.¹⁹ This was a unified social movement in India. Even though it never had the depth

¹⁵ P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, p.72

¹⁶ .Ibid, p.68

¹⁷ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change :The Role of Malayalam Literature*, p.53

¹⁸ Moidu Moulavi, *Moulaviyude Atmakatha*, p.15

¹⁹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Vekshanathil*, p.193

of the Non Co-operation Movement of the 1921, the Home Rule brought to the people that the political activity was not merely speaking but acting together.²⁰

In May 1916, the first Malabar Political Meeting was convened at Palakkad. Annie Besant chaired the meeting. Kesava Menon put forth the resolution that India be given complete independence.²¹ This meeting was a landmark in the history of freedom struggle in Kerala. It was attended by a large number of people from all parts of Malabar and Cochin.²² In the next year itself, the second District Conference was held at Calicut in 1917, which was presided over by C.P.Ramaswamy Iyyer. Issues like post war reforms, self Government for India, the Arms act, Elementary education, Tenancy question etc. were discussed.²³

The district collector did not permit to make a temporary shed at Mananchira for conducting the second political meeting. The authorities seemed to be restless and so they rejected the plea for holding the meeting at Mananchira. Then the meeting was to be conducted at the residence of K.P. Raman Menon.²⁴

Even during this time, the organization was dominated by the rich. The political meetings were largely attended by the *Janmis* and the rich. The resolutions passed were never progressive in content and language.²⁵

²⁰ K.P.Kesavamenon, *Kazhinha Kalam*, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, p.53

²¹ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.15

²² P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, p.72

²³ *Ibid*, p.73

²⁴ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, pp.15-16

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp.18-19.

In 1917, the Montague-Chelms Ford committee visited India to know about the opinion of the people on administrative reforms. The representatives of the Home Rule led by Annie Besant met him. K.P. Kesava Menon was also a member of the delegation.²⁶

Annie Besant was arrested in the middle of 1917, an event that excited the national feeling of the people of Malabar.²⁷ The response of the people was spontaneous. They protested by observing a *hartal*.

After the First World War, it was clear that the "memorandum" style of functioning would yield nothing for the people of India. Instead, district conferences were to be held and the resolutions should be given as memoranda. A newsletter called *New India* was circulated to give the message of the Indian National Congress to the people. The propaganda reached all over Malabar.²⁸

The Home Rule and the Indian National Congress formulated many activities to spread the national feeling. Branch committees of the Home Rule and the Indian National Congress were formed in several villages in Malabar District.

Many public meetings were held and thus political consciousness was aroused.²⁹

The Third Malabar District Conference of the Congress was held at Thalasseri in 1918 May. It demanded self Government-a Government

²⁶ K.P.Kesavamenon,*Kazhinha Kalam*,p.54

²⁷ P.K.K.Menon,*The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*,p.74

²⁸ E.M.S.Nambudiripad,*Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil*,p.192

²⁹ P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*,p.71

responsible to the people.³⁰ Even in 1918, the kings and the landlords continued to be active in the functioning of the Indian National Congress. The elder king of Chirakkal participated in the Thalasseri conference of the Malabar area in 1918. The district collector deplored this.³¹

The Fourth political conference was at Badagara in May 1919. The meeting was presided over by K.P.Raman Menon.³²

Annie Besant was not in favour of mobilizing massive resistance with the support of the masses. Dr.Besant opined that District Conference should concentrate attention on specific problems of regional interest and suggested improvements on the general system of administration.³³

The character of the National Movement changes.

It was in the years after the end of the First World War that the Indian National Congress shed its reformist stance and acquired the character of a political movement.³⁴ In the process of transition, there was a conflict between the leaders of the Home Rule Movement and the Indian National Congress in Kerala. This conflict surfaced during the Fifth Political Conference at Manjeri in 1920 presided over by Kasthuri Ayyankar.³⁵ This conference was a turning point in the political history of Kerala. The opposition between the moderates and the extremists was so strong that it emerged clearly in the conference.

³⁰ Ibid,p.75

³¹ K.P.Kesavamenon, *Kazhinha Kalam*,p.57

³² P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*,p.78

³³ Ibid,p.72

³⁴ E.M.S.Nambudiripad,*Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.127

³⁵ Perunna K.N.Nair ,*Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*,p.21

The *Janmis* and the vested interests rallied behind the moderates. This was also because a number of activists who joined the Congress came from the ranks of the tenants particularly *Kanakkar*, whose interests were often opposed to the *Janmis*. The peasants and the workers were among the *extremists*.³⁶ A complete independence resolution was tabled in this conference. It also expressed its disappointment on the Montague- Chelms Ford reforms. K.P. Raman Menon proposed and I.A.Subharayar seconded the resolution. Annie Besant pressed to remove the part that the reform was 'unsatisfactory and unacceptable'. The *Raja* of Nilambur seconded. However, the majority was against the amendment by Annie Besant. At last Annie Besant and her supporters left the meeting in protest.³⁷ A strong debate also took place on the *Khilafat* reforms and the problem of the *Janmi* tenancy. It was the last of such conferences.

The following resolutions were passed in the conference:

1. Congratulated Sankaran Nair for resigning from the membership of Viceroy's executive council.
2. Pleaded for the regulation of the working hours in the factories
3. Demanded the prohibition of child labour.
4. Wanted the Government to repeal planter's labour law
5. Freedom of the press should be established.
6. Civil liberties of the people should be protected.

³⁶ Ibid, p.22

³⁷ K.P.Kesavamenon, *Kazhinha Kalam*, p.69

The Manjeri conference revealed the rising tide of nationalism in Kerala.³⁸

After the Manjeri Conference, the Indian National Congress was revitalized³⁹ and it accepted a new face in its organizational activities. The policy of the Indian National Congress became more favourable for popular demands.

The activities of the Indian National Congress gathered momentum by the 1920s. In 1920 in Nagpur, *Swaraj* was declared as the aim by the Congress leaders. The move to form the State Congress Committees including the native states also began. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was formed in 1921.⁴⁰

K. Madhavan Nair was the secretary and U. Gopala Menon the joint secretary.⁴¹

Arrests of political leaders began in Malabar as the Indian National Congress began to pose political demands. K. Madhavan Nair was arrested. And K. P. Kesava Menon stopped practice in Madras and took over the charge of the secretary. He was the first to renounce practice as lawyer, as made mandatory by the Congress.⁴² The politics in Malabar became turbulent. The National Movement began to get more support from the people. Gandhiji arrived in Malabar in 1920 for giving impetus to political activities.⁴³ The arrival of Gandhi was an increased inspiration to the people.

³⁸ P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, pp.79-82

³⁹ E.M.S. Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.195

⁴⁰ Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.23

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.24

⁴² P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, pp.86-87

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.83

In 1921, the first Kerala State Conference of the Indian National Congress was held at Ottappalam.⁴⁴ and decided to make the Non Co-operation Movement a success. At the Ottappalam Conference, a resolution for regulating relation between the landlords and the tenants in Malabar was proposed, but there was great difference of opinion among the members and thus the issue was postponed. The conference hailed the decision of the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress to boycott all the schools by Government or aided by it, instead national institutions were to be established.

The Conference appealed lawyers to boycott practice. It also called up on the people to boycott foreign goods and to encourage *Ayurveda*. It was also decided to contribute generously to the Tilak fund.⁴⁵ The importance of the Ottappalam Conference was that the delegates came from all over Kerala and were not confined to Malabar as they were at Manjeri.

The Non Co-operation Movement was there in full swing; a large number of lawyers had given up practice. As the people belonging to all walks of life thronged the Congress, the organization that had roots only in the cities like Palakkad and Calicut began to have supporters in almost all the villages and towns of the entire Kerala. This clearly indicated the increase in political consciousness of the people.⁴⁶

The cultural advancement and social reform movement got impetus from political movement. The middle class entering the field of political struggle was radical in every respect. What they wanted was not just constitutional

⁴⁴ C.K.Moosad, *Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan*, p.99

⁴⁵ P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, pp.88-39

⁴⁶ C.K.Moosad, *Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan*, p.21

reforms but basic changes in the existing social order. It was a combination of all those factors that together made a real National Democratic Movement - the movement of the entire people for freedom from alien rule; the movement of the peasants for freedom from the landlord exploitation; the movement of the *Malayali* nation for national unity; the movement of the masses belonging to the lower castes, as well as of the progressive men belonging to the higher castes, for major and basic changes in the existing social order; the movement of the intellectuals for the development of modern progressive Kerala.⁴⁷

It was in the princely states of Travancore that the early phase of rise of political consciousness in Kerala, the phase of social reform etc. was stronger and deeper. When the National Democratic Movement entered its second phase, the phase of political struggle, the princely states lagged behind Malabar; it was in Malabar that National upsurge during 1920-21 took stronger roots than either in Travancore or Cochin.⁴⁸

In 1921 February in protest against the arrest of the Congress leaders, there was strong *Hartal* in Malabar. Students boycotted the classes and the advocates the courts. The municipal chairperson C.V. Narayana Menon resigned.⁴⁹ During this time Kurur Nilakandan Nambudiripad was jailed for writing an article in the *Lokamanyan*. This created much uproar in the community.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,p.130

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.131

⁴⁹ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*,p.30

⁵⁰ E.M.S.Namabudiripad, *Atmakatha*, pp.68-69

E.M.S.Nambudiripad writes:

"The Political National Movement in Malabar entered all castes and communities as a matter of fact, the fraternization the Hindus and the Muslims was one of the specific features of the Movement, while the Movement in the states was more or less confined to the Hindus and that, too, mainly to the caste Hindus."⁵¹

The Non Co-operation Movement of 1920 was conducted in combination with the *Khilafath Movement*. The *Khilafath Movement* was very strong in Malabar.⁵² When the *Khilafat* and the Congress united, there was greater unity among the people in showing enthusiasm and dedication.⁵³

E.M.S.Nambudiripad thinks that there were three main reasons for the outbreak of the *Mappila* rebellion:

1. The opposition of the *Kudiyans* towards the *Janmis*.
2. Propaganda of the Indian National Congress and the *Khilafat*.
3. Religious fanaticism of the *Mappilas*.

He concludes that the uprising began from agrarian discontent and became a popular movement but failed to gather momentum due to the incapability of the leadership. The movement did not succeed in gaining any of the goals because of the lack of self confidence among the people. It achieved the character of a communal movement due to the brilliant propaganda by the bureaucracy. The failure of the movement has a message that without a proper organization of the peasants and a good leadership any struggle of

⁵¹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.131

⁵² Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.24

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.25

this kind would succeed. More over a moderate middle class organization could not make the movement a success.⁵⁴

The movement was neither well planned, skillfully led, nor had any agenda. But it was a serious effort against the imperialism. The bravery of the Muslim brothers thrilled many people.⁵⁵

It was a painful fact that the *Kudiyans* belonged to the Muslims and the *Janmis* the Hindus in Ernad. Therefore, the British succeeded in changing the rebellion into *Mappila* rebellion.⁵⁶

After the Malabar Rebellion, no political activity was possible in Malabar. The people were against the Congress every where.⁵⁷

The Muslim population was skeptical towards the Indian National Congress. They believed that they were badly let down by the Congress, when they needed help.

A political stalemate was witnessed in Malabar.⁵⁸ The *Mappila* uprising made it impossible to involve Gandhian style of following in south Malabar.⁵⁹ The Congress leaders were put in Jail; many Congress Committees were dissolved.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Prbhatam*, September 13, 1939.

⁵⁵ A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*, p.18

⁵⁶ C.K.Moosad, *Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan*, p.69

⁵⁷ K.P.Kesavamenon, *Kazhinha Kalam*, p.116

⁵⁸ Perunna K.N., *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.48

⁵⁹ Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well being*, p.118

⁶⁰ K.P.Kesavamenon, *Kazhinha Kalam*, p.125

After 1921, the Congress activity in Ernad taluk was confined only to Ramanattukara. ⁶¹ But it was very important that the message of the Congress and *Swaraj* had spread all over Malabar.⁶²

The Congress got a great blow as it was against its declared goals. They also believed that the Congress or the *Khilafat* would never appear again.⁶³

On April 21 1923, the all Kerala Political Conference was held at Ottapalam under the chairmanship of T. Prakasam. For the first time all the leaders of the Congress were at one dias.⁶⁴ The conference was supplemented by a literary conference presided over by K.M.Panicker. It emphasized the importance of Malayalam language and literature.⁶⁵

Even though the flame of the National Movement still burnt in Malabar during 1922-27, the activities of the Indian National Congress in these years were at a low ebb.⁶⁶ The Congress activities did not attain a mass form since the majority of the commoners stood away from the main stream. However the political Conferences of the Indian National Congress continued.

On April 16, 1927 the Third Kerala State Political Conference was held at Calicut.⁶⁷ It was presided over by B.G.Horniman, the editor of the Bombay Chronicle. The major resolutions passed in the Conference were:

⁶¹ A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*, p.97

⁶² E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.211

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.209

⁶⁴ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.32

⁶⁵ P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, pp.113-14

⁶⁶ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.213

⁶⁷ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.53

1. Pleaded the Government to stop sending of *Mappila* women to the Andamans
2. Sympathised with the freedom movement in China.
3. Appealed the Government to release M.P.Narayana Menon.
4. Demanded legislation for the interest of the tenants.⁶⁸

The significance of the Third Political Conference was that it took major decisions that directly influenced the commoners.

The Fourth political conference too was distinctive with the complete independence resolution. This resolution was passed in the fourth Kerala State Political Conference at Payyanur, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru in May 1929.⁶⁹ The Resolutions of the Payyanur conference were:

- 1.Kerala should be a separate province in future.
- 2.Congratulated the heroes of the Berdouli *Satyagraha*.
- 3.Deplored the deportation of the *Mappila* women to Andamans
- 4.Responsible Government should be established in princely states.
- 5.Complete independence would be the aim of the Congress.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, p.139

⁶⁹ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.59

⁷⁰ P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, p.145

Robin Jeffrey writes about the political mood in Kerala:

"The Gandhian Nationalist Movement emboldened *Malayalis* to challenge the British, use techniques of propaganda and protest culture to Indian in Kerala and caste discrimination constantly. The nationalist fervour of the 1920s and 30s combining with Kerala's social problem, interested personally."⁷¹

Towards Mass Movement.

The All India Congress Committee met in Lahore in 1929 and adopted the resolution for complete independence.⁷² The Civil Dis-Obedience Movement was also declared by it. There was suspicion among the leaders about the possible failure of the movement. Madhavan Nair and Gopala Menon argued that the salt *Satyagraha* should not be held as there would be rebellion as in 1921. However, Kelappan struggled had to get consent of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee in favour of the *Satyagraha*.⁷³ The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Badagara in March 1930 and launched the Civil Disobedience Movement.⁷⁴

However, at the same time, Kelappan wanted that the *Satyagraha* should be held. If the salt *Satyagraha* was not held in Kerala, it would be highly disgraceful, he said. A resolution in this respect was proposed and was accepted. Kelappan was given the leadership to conduct the same.⁷⁵

When the *jatha* was about to start, Madhavan Nair made a speech congratulating the *jatha* and he donated Rs.500/-⁷⁶

⁷¹ Robin Jeffrey, Politics, Women and Well-being, p.118

⁷² P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.147

⁷³ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.217

⁷⁴ P.K.K.Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, p.181

⁷⁵ A.V.Sreekanta Poduval(Editor), *Athyuthara Keralam swathanthryasamarathil*, p.52

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.54

A procession on foot from Calicut to Payyanur started on April 13, 1930. Many receptions were there. Gandhiji also congratulated them.⁷⁷ The Payyanur journey of Kelappan commenced the salt *Satyagraha* in Kerala. Muhammed Abdu Rahiman, P.Krishnapillai and R.V. Sarma led the movement at Calicut. They had to suffer much at the hands of the police.⁷⁸

Kelappan took out March from Calicut to the Payyanur beach to break the salt law; T.R.Krishna Swamy Ayyar led another from Palakkad to Payyanur.⁷⁹

In May, to break the salt law, many assembled in Calicut under the leadership of Kelappan, Abdurrahiman sahib, Krishna swami Iyyer, R.V.Sarma, P.Krishnapillai and Madhavanar. The police lathicharged and many were wounded. Ramankutty Panicker, Kunhiraman Adiyodi and K.P.Narayanan died. They were students.⁸⁰ The law was broken at the Calicut beach. E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad got three year term of imprisonment and a fine of Rs: 100/-⁸¹

The leadership of Gandhi and the Russian revolution, the depression of 1930s led towards a new way of fighting imperialism.⁸² In this context in May 1931, a Political Conference was held at Badagara. Kelappan warned the people from resorting to violence during the Salt *Satyagraha*.⁸³

⁷⁷ C.K.Moosad, *Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan*, p.99

⁷⁸ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, p.133

⁷⁹ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, pp.62-63

⁸⁰ C.K.Moosad, *Kelappan Enna Maha Manushyan*, p.102

⁸¹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Oru Indian Communistinte Ormakkurippukal*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1987, p.50

⁸² K.K.N. Kurup, *Charithra Gaveshanaprabanthangal*, p.61

⁸³ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, pp.140-42

The common people did not fear to face the repressive forces led by the colonial administration. During the Salt *Satyagraha*, the participation of the masses was rather significant. The march to Payyannur to break the salt law proved beyond doubt that people from all walks of life were ready to fight imperialism and for complete independence.⁸⁴

The strike in 1930 was responsible for bringing almost all the people to the forefront of the freedom struggle. This was because throughout India there was a programme before the people. Besides the middle class, the peasants and the workers took part.⁸⁵ The movement had considerable influence in North Malabar, that included Payyanur, and sowed the seeds of a powerful democratic movement in the area.

In 1931, Gandhi Irwin pact ended the salt *Satyagraha*. Then the people were allowed only to hold picketing at the toddy shops. This was only brought to practice in Malabar.⁸⁶

The village political meetings were the salient features of the Disobedience Movement. Before one week, the place of the meeting and the agenda would be declared and the leaders who would take part announced. The police would soon round up the place.⁸⁷

The main feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the participation of the common people in large numbers. This was entirely different from the Non Co-operation Movement of 1920-21.

⁸⁴ P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, p.59

⁸⁵ A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*, p.22

⁸⁶ E.M.S.Nambudoripad, *Oru Indian*

Communistinte Ormakkurippukal, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1987, p.45-

⁸⁷ A.K.Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*, p.31

In 1931-34, during the Civil Disobedience Movement, many youngsters participated. When the movement was suddenly stopped, those who jumped in to the movement renouncing what they once had, became disappointed. They felt unhappy towards Gandhi and his methods.

The second Civil Disobedience campaign in 1932 was only a shadow of the first in Malabar.⁸⁸ Even though the movement had more participation from the masses than the Non-Co-operation movement of 1920-21, it could not boast of being a genuine mass movement because, the majority of the common people kept aloof even during this phase. During 1930-32 the peasants and other people did not participate in the political activities. The middle class youth and students participated in the struggle.⁸⁹

In 1932-34, the Civil Disobedience Movement changed into the individual *Satyagraha*. This brought the message of the Congress to the people. The activists tried to unite the labourers and the farmers to strengthen the National Movement.⁹⁰

After the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Congress leaders concentrated their attention in social activities. The leaders then turned attention towards the position of the deprived classes. In September 1931, the Congress decided to hold picketing at the Guruvayur temple.⁹¹

The Guruvayur *Satyagraha* involved both political and social aspects. The Civil Disobedience Movement could achieve some sort of success. If the Congress leadership was under the old moderate style of functioning, the

⁸⁸ T.J.Nossiter, T.J., *Communism in Kerala*, p.71

⁸⁹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Veeekshanathil*, p.219

⁹⁰ K.K.N. Kurup, *Charithra Gaveshanaprabanthangal*, p.61

⁹¹ T.J.Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, p.71

Civil Disobedience Movement would have had the same fate as the Non-Cooperation movement of 1919-20. A.K. Gopalan has argued that the Congress leadership tried to transform the struggle against imperialism into social reform movements just like anti untouchability etc. But throughout India, a large number of youths and students actively took part in the movement and hence their motive did not succeed.⁹² In December 1933, Gandhi came to Kerala. He was received with much enthusiasm and was given a warm welcome. A huge amount of money was also given to him.⁹³ Suvarna Kumari Menon remembers herself donating a golden bangle to the fund.⁹⁴

The Birth of the Congress Socialist Party.

After the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement movement, the Indian National Congress was invigorated. Even before the commencement of the Civil Disobedience Movement, there had been a number of left wing people within the Congress Party. They were not at all satisfied with the strategies adopted by the Indian National Congress.

In 1934 the Civil Disobedience Movement was stopped. This compelled the youth to lose interest in the programme of the Congress. A progressive group was formed within the Congress. The Leftists held majority in the Provincial Congress Committees that had been reconstituted in 1934.⁹⁵

The withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement disappointed the young men. At Kozhikkode, a new Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee was

⁹² A.K. Gopalan, *Keralam Innale Innu*, p.60

⁹³ E.M.S. Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, p.179

⁹⁴ Interview with Smt. Suvarna Kumari Menon

⁹⁵ Ibid

constituted under the leadership of Kongattil Raman Menon, K.P. Kuttysankaran and A.K. Gopalan.⁹⁶

They believed that the main thing that brought about the failure of the Civil Disobedience was the non-participation of the majority of the peasants and the workers.⁹⁷

The common people never believed that the movement was organized for the protection of their rights. Without the support of these groups, the National Movement would not have any remarkable progress.

With the failure of the Civil Disobedience Movement, peace prevailed all over Malabar. A table and a chair in the corner of the *Mathrubhumi* office was the Congress office.⁹⁸

The paradigm shift that could be witnessed during this period was that the control of the Indian National Congress being captured by a group of dynamic young men from the hands of the so called *Chalappuram Gang*, which was the nick name for the old leadership. They had never tried to bring a movement harnessing the support of the peasants, workers, students and teachers. As these people were marginalized, the upper middle class and the caste Hindus vanguarded the struggle.

Meanwhile the founding conference of the Congress Socialist Party was held in April 1934, at Bombay as a pressure group within the Indian National Congress, which was attended among others by P.Krishnapillai, E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and A.K.Gopalan.

⁹⁶ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.85

⁹⁷ A.K.Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*, p.62

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.68

The Congress Socialist Party was a powerful force within the Congress that pushed through a series of left wing resolutions including rejection of Gandhian methods at the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee Meeting in October 1934.⁹⁹

The left within in the Congress and the Socialist Movement were born in Kerala in Kannur central jail. The person responsible for this happening was a political prisoner named M.P.Thiwari from Bihar.¹⁰⁰

The Indian National Congress stopped the Civil Disobedience Movement from 1930 to 1934, even though it was not successful in attaining independence (that had been the aim of the movement).

This movement has surely given the Congress many fighters. They were ready to rock the foundation of the Colonial Government. Some of the congress leaders believed that no result could be gained through direct fighting violating the Government laws, and it was better to struggle through lawful way in order to help the people. Even Gandhi once said that he had agreed to enter the legislature and the ministry so that it was possible to avoid a blood bath in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The people in the Congress who had the spark of revolution in them were anxiously waiting for a new programme. Many believed that it was not possible to attain freedom by a group of persons going to the jails.

The right wing of the Congress had never given a clear programme to the country. The main activity was *Harijanodharanam* (*Harijan* upliftment). During this time, Nehru was released from jail and he wrote a book –

⁹⁹ T.J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, p.70

¹⁰⁰ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, p.158

"Whither India?" This book contained the plight of the Indian freedom struggle and the need for a new programme. He also wrote that the Indian National Movement was against the Imperialistic regime, which intended to win food and other amenities. The same kind of struggle went on everywhere in the world. This also had to be taken into account while thinking about the freedom struggle. The struggle could also be considered as a move in favour of socialism and freedom. More over he had written that the world was prosperous, but poverty persisted. This should be stopped. He asserted that unemployment and poverty could only be alleviated through Socialism. This invited a strong debate among the Congress activists.¹⁰¹

The Congress state committee of Kerala, after the Civil Disobedience movement, met in the Town hall at Calicut. After the conference another meeting was held by some of the members. They thought about the ideas of Nehru. A decision was taken that the Congress Socialist Party Kerala should be founded. There were many among them who had been jailed during the movement. K. Kelappan was also there. Most of the Congress activists believed that Socialism be adopted. But at the same time leaders like K.Raman Menon did not participate. Chandroth Kunhraman Nair proposed the need of such a party. A committee was formed in which C.K.Govindan Nair was president and P. Krishna Pillai secretary. It must be noted that the assembled members did not have any clear idea about Marxism Leninism or about the responsibilities of the Socialist Party.

The reasons why they joined together were:

¹⁰¹ P.Krishnapillai, *Sakhakkale Munnottu*,Chintha, Trivandrum,1998,p.'72

1. The Congressmen in Kerala believed in revolutionary activities.
2. The inactivity should be done away with. Hence a new programme was necessary. For that Acharya Narendradev, Jayprakash Narayan etc. met in Patna and declared the formation of the All India Socialist Party. The Bombay session of the Indian National Congress also hailed the formation of the All India Socialist Party.¹⁰² In May 1934, the Congress Socialist Party came into being.

E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and others worked within the Congress as extremist group. ¹⁰³ The gap between the two groups increased in the Shoranur session of the Indian National Congress in 1934.¹⁰⁴ In October 1934, the left wing leaders dominated Kerala Provincial Congress Committee.

The so-called *Chalappuram gang* persuaded the *Gujarati* merchants to stop funding the Congress. Their aim was to paralyze the activities of the Congress.¹⁰⁵

The Congress leaders began individual *Satyagraha*. But the common people did not give any attention to it. So it did not have much effect in Malabar.¹⁰⁶ During 1935 Rajendra Prasad visited Kerala to raise funds for the Indian National Congress. He addressed as many as 57 public meetings. Whenever any leaders of the Indian National Congress found their way to Kerala, they were given great welcome.¹⁰⁷ The moderates in the Congress went on with

¹⁰² Ibid, p.72

¹⁰³ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.85

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.86

¹⁰⁵ E.M.S. *Atmakatha*, p.251

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p.178

¹⁰⁷ P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, p.394

the traditional Gandhian style of functioning like preaching of *khadi*, picketing of toddy shops etc. People had mocked at *khadi* once. But by 1936-37, they began to co-operate and use the same. There was picketing throughout the day. There were cases against the activists. The leadership was in the hands of the middle class educated group.¹⁰⁸

The Congress Socialist Party in a year established Committees in almost every village in Malabar outside the *Mappila* zone¹⁰⁹ and tried to broaden popular support. In 1936, the Congress working committee memberships split equally between left and right.

The president post was abolished and Raman Menon became general secretary. The Socialists were allowed to have a free hand on the labour front.¹¹⁰

The second Congress of the Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.) was held in January 1936. It endorsed the proposition on Marxism and also decided to admit Communists as its members.¹¹¹

The Socialist ideology began to receive serious attention from the common people in a large scale. In Malabar, Socialism developed within the organizational framework of the freedom struggle in Travancore and Cochin along with the struggle for responsible Government.¹¹²

The "Starvation Procession (*Pattini Jatha*)" led by A.K. Gopalan in 1936 was a unique incident in the history of the National Movement.

¹⁰⁸ A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*, p.28

¹⁰⁹ T.J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, p.72

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.73

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p.75

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.77

Apart from the goal of winning freedom, the Indian National Congress had taken no other steps to alleviate the grievances of the common people.

The right wing leaders of the Indian National Congress were against untouchability and other social evils. But they never opposed the caste system prevailing in the state. They never fought for getting reasonable price for the agricultural produce or for getting wages to the peasants at a higher rate.

Even though some resolutions were passed in the conferences, they rested in the paper. The people were starving. Thus the procession was most timely to open the eyes of the Government. It had great impact on the people in Malabar and many areas of Tamilnadu.¹¹³

In July 1937 C. Rajagopalachari - led ministry assumed office in Madras. Malabar was represented by Kongattil Raman Menon.¹¹⁴ When he died, E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad was elected.¹¹⁵ He was a well-known leftist by then. Within the Congress, there appeared the socialist ideology and the seeds of democracy. They believed that the Congress led by Gandhi would not be able to rally the majority of the people behind him against the British to achieve freedom; for which a more left leaned programmes were necessary.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ E.M.S.Nambudiripad,*Atmakatha*,p.253

¹¹⁴ Perunna K.N.Nair,*Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*,p.93

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*,p.94

¹¹⁶ E.M.S.Nambudiripad,*Atmakatha* p.165

The success of the left wing was when the Congress Socialist Party regained control of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee in 1938 and E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad was elected as the General Secretary.¹¹⁷

The seeds of Communism had already been sown in the minds of the people. The Communist group worked in the Congress Socialist Party led by E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and P.Krishnapillai. They preached the ideology of Communism. Many people were attracted towards it.¹¹⁸

During 1938-39 the Congress in Malabar was a typical example for how united the organization was against the imperialistic administration.¹¹⁹ By then there were three factions within the State Congress Committee-The Right wing (The Gandhian), the Left led by the Communists and the national Muslims under the leadership of Muhammed Abdu Rahiman. As the second and the third groups decided to work together, they got majority in the elections to the KPCC in January, 1939.¹²⁰

In 1939 there was a meeting at Bakkalam presided over by Muhammed Abdu Rahiman. The right wing of the KPCC boycotted the meeting. The meeting called up on the people to reject the idea of Federation. In the Malabar District Board elections the right wing tried to defeat the KPCC candidates.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ T.J.Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, p.74

¹¹⁸ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.94

¹¹⁹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.251

¹²⁰ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.405

¹²¹ .Ibid, p.406

Dr.K.K.N.Kurup writes:

“Where there was no proper National Movement, the peasant movements had been in a weak position. The nationalist and peasant movements helped the growth of the Communist Movement”¹²²

By 1939, Communist cells existed in Calicut, Ernakulam, and Trivandrum and the party co existed in many parts of Malabar with the local congress organization. Immediately after the Wardha session of the All India Congress Committee, 90 *Malayali* Congress Socialist Party members met separately at a village near Tellicherry, in Malabar on October 1939 to transform the Kerala Congress Socialist Party to Kerala Communist Party of India.¹²³

Throughout Kerala the Communist Party workers had earned a reputation even among their political opponents for their sincerity and simplicity¹²⁴ In their own way they had lived an ascetic life.¹²⁵ There is an argument that the break up of the joint family system was certainly a factor in the social experience of that generation of young men who provided the leadership of the emergent Communist Movement in the 1930s.¹²⁶ By 1939, the communist activities gained momentum in major towns of Kerala .¹²⁷ In the 10th Kerala State political Conference held at Kottakkal in 1940, there was a compromise between the two factions and included four right wing members in the KPCC executive. On September 15, 1940 the KPCC decided to observe anti oppression day opposing the central leadership. There were clashes between

¹²² K.K.N. Kurup, *Peasantry Nationalism and Social Change in India* ,p.128.

¹²³ T.J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, p.83

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p.93

¹²⁵ *Ibid*.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.66

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p.83

the police and the people at Thalasseri, Mattannur and Morazha. The High Command intervened and a Committee was constituted led by Pattabhi Sitaramayya to look into the matter. The KPCC was dissolved and an ad-hoc committee was formed.¹²⁸

The Communists and the Congressmen seriously differed on the idea of supporting the British during the Second World War. The Communists at first opposed the war and the stand taken by the British Government. But when the Soviet Union was attacked, they changed their stand and supported the Government in fighting a war against the Fascists. Many of the Communists joined the army and fought. In the villages anti-Jap programmes were conducted. The Government lifted the many restrictions on the Communists. But even the strong supporters of the Party could not swallow what the leaders told them. At the same time the Indian National Congress was against the war that was to be fought on the side of the British.

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee decided to launch individual *Satyagraha*, which the leftists strongly opposed.¹²⁹ Anti war slogans were shouted and then the Individual *Satyagraha* started. About one thousand men were arrested in Malabar alone.¹³⁰

The activities of the Communists during the period can be summarized thus:

1. It made the Congress a strong and popular organization
2. It helped to extend the influence of the organization to the princely states

¹²⁸ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, pp.406-407

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.101

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.103

3. It founded different unions among the peasants, teachers and students.¹³¹

During the Quit India Movement Kelappan, Madhava Menon and many others were arrested.¹³² but after the August struggle, they were released. The Congress organizational work started again.¹³³ As Abdurrahman Sahib came out of the prison, the political activity in the state became strong.¹³⁴ K.Kelappan made an important ideological declaration in a book titled '*Congressum Communisavum*' (The Congress and the Communism)^h he wrote that Congress did not like the slogans and speeches that promoted the struggle between the different classes. The Congress was also opposed to the policy spread by the Communists that the *Janmis* and the rich should be eliminated. There was serious difference between the Congress and the Communists in that matter.¹³⁵

He also wrote that the revolution by the proletariat and the Government by them would not yield good governance. The Congress believed in peaceful transformation. The aim of the Congress was to attain freedom through peaceful means.¹³⁶ The Congress stood for the peaceful co existence of different classes.¹³⁷

During the Quit India struggle, the Congress, and the Socialists and the Communists followed different strategies. The Congress Socialist Party and then the Communist Party tried to bring about a different method of approaching the people and they tried to bring the message of the National

¹³¹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, p.225

¹³² Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.109

¹³³ Ibid, p.123.

¹³⁴ Moidu Moulavi, *Moulaviyude Atmakatha*, p.171

¹³⁵ K.Kelappan, *Congressum Communisavum*, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, Calicut, 1948, p.22

¹³⁶ Ibid, p.23

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.31

Movement to the villages.¹³⁸ While the former involved in independent movements, the Congress Socialists and the Communists launched mass struggles including different mass organizations such as the Peasants, workers, students, teachers etc. The mass base of the National Movement was thus broadened. The Communists and the Socialists proved the potential of the common man whom they could depend on. All these movements brought political awareness to the people. Each and every member of the society was part of the ongoing political struggle.

The founding of National Schools

Parallel to the political struggle, there were efforts by the political leadership to interfere in the field of education, for they felt that education was an important tool to spread the national feeling. As a result many National schools came into being. The aim of these schools was to facilitate education realizing the Indian culture and tradition.

The call for founding of National Schools was well heard in Kerala. On line with the Wardha model, a school was started in North Malabar-the *Vijnanadayini* School at Vellikoth. It became a centre of nationalist movement.¹³⁹ It began functioning in 1926. At *Vijnanadayini* the children were taught Sanskrit, English, Malayalam and History. The Headmaster was P.Kelu Nair. Other teachers included V.M.Kunhambu Nair, V.M. Krishnan Nair, T.Kunhiraman Nambiar, Kottayil Kelu Nair, E. Raghava Panicker and Damodara Datta.

¹³⁸ K.K.N.Kurup, *Charithra Gaveshanaprabanthangal*,p.69

¹³⁹ A.V.Sreekanta Poduval(Editor), *Athyuthara Keralam Swathanthrya Samarathil*,p.110.

They taught without any remuneration. The spinning of *khadi* and the anti untouchability movement and other creative programmes of the Indian National Congress were the main activities there. Due to these activities, this school became a centre of the National Movement in northern Kerala. K.A. Keraleeyan, Gandhi Krishnan Nair, Vannan Ambu etc. were the products of this school¹⁴⁰ K.Madhavan was also a product of this school.¹⁴¹ Instead of praising the king, the students there sang *Vande Mataram*. The curriculum was arranged in such a way that every body would have a love for the mother land. They gathered funds for the Berdouli *Satyagraha* by collecting *Pidiyari* (handful of rice).¹⁴² The collection was done singing the *Naleyane nattil*, the song composed by the students of Nileeswaram Rajas High School.¹⁴³ On March 18, 1932 *Pattabakki* was played at the Vellikoth school that contained strong political message. In the public meeting A.K.Gopalan spoke; A.C.Kannan Nair chaired.¹⁴⁴

Another school of this kind was built in Valluwanad taluk in the 50 cents bought for the purpose at Chundampatta.

The school was called the Labour Welfare School. In 1935 Babu Rajendraprasad inaugurated it.¹⁴⁵

There were attempts to tarnish the image of the National schools. In north Malabar Panathathatta Kannan Nair, the co-operative inspector tried to take children from the Sanskrit school to other schools and also tore the *dhotis* of those who had worn *khadi*. In these circumstances, the school authorities

¹⁴⁰ K.K.N.Kurup, *A.C.Kannan Nair Oru Padanam*, p.126

¹⁴¹ A.V.Sreekanta Poduval, *Athyuthara Keralam Swathanthrya Samarathil*, p.112.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, p.111

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p.113

¹⁴⁴ K.K.N.Kurup, *A.C.Kannan Nair- Oru Padanam*, p.132

¹⁴⁵ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Oru Communistinte Ormakkurippukal*, p.138

decided not to request for recognition of the Government, the committee took this decision unanimously.¹⁴⁶ The National schools produced a number of political leaders for Kerala

Nationalists and Education.

After the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, the entire area was in fear. This atmosphere attracted the attention of many leaders. They wanted a series of relief measures to be undertaken to reconstruct the district. The activists of the Servants of India Society took a leading role in the reconstruction. G.K.Devadhar, who was a leader of the Servants of India Society, visited Malabar. He was much moved by the impact of the rebellion on the poor people of Malabar.

Devadhar and his colleagues toured many places throughout the country and collected about ten lakh rupees for taking up various relief measures in Malabar.¹⁴⁷ They visited various places in Malabar and understood that the basic thing that the people lacked there was education. With proper education, the superstitions and other communal problems could be ended, they believed. A Trust was constituted at Calicut for eradication of the social evils and for imparting education to the illiterate masses Malabar. The trust began four schools in Malabar. They were at Tanur, Nediyrippu, Manjeri and Quilandy. The school at Gopalapuram, Quilandy was for imparting education to the students belonging to the backward classes.

¹⁴⁶ K.K.N.Kurup, A.C.Kannan Nair *Orupadanam*, p.105

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Assainarkutty, Tanur.

The main activities of the D.M.R.T were to fight against the social evils and also to spread education to the down trodden.¹⁴⁸ The National Schools spread the spirit of nationalism which inevitably led the masses, especially the peasants and the workers, towards attaining political consciousness.

The Peasantry and Political Consciousness.

To get support from the masses, the Congress Socialist Party and then the Communist Party organized different sections of the people who were the sufferers of exploitation by the Colonial regime.

Malabar had witnessed agrarian unrests even from the 19th century. The *Mappila* uprisings were mainly intended to solve economic problems. But the unrest was greater with the dawn of the 20th century. There were a number of taxes like *vasi*, *nuri* etc. levied by the *Janmis*. The *Janmis* and the Government together exploited the peasantry with cruelty.

During the dawn of the 20th century, the agrarian classes joined the National Movement and played pressure tactics on the Government to see tenancy legislation enacted for Malabar.¹⁴⁹ The *Janmis* looted the agricultural produces under the pretext that the tenants failed to pay *Pattam* or the *Janmi's* share. The peasants were a marginalized group until the National Movement gathered momentum. The Indian National Congress gave little attention to the downtrodden classes in the early period of the National Movement, as the upper middle class led it. They could not understand the pulsations of the marginalized sections. But after the formation of the

¹⁴⁸ Kunhali, V (Editor), Kerala Society Historical Perceptions (T.M.Vijayan, The DMRT and its functions in Malabar), pp.134-41

¹⁴⁹ .K.K.N.Kurup, Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India, p.35

Congress Socialist Party within the Congress, the situation changed dramatically.

Dr.K.K.N.Kurup writes:

“Those who took part in production were organized on the basis of class and they spread the national consciousness at all level. This was the plan of the Congress Socialists. So the peasant movement and the political consciousness entered simultaneously.”¹⁵⁰

The leaders were of the view that the national struggle should be revamped covering various sections of the common people. The interests of these people should be put forth and given prime attention. Continuous famines and depression had been the problems of the peasants. When they were told about the political and social rights that were waiting for, they got much elated.

The people’s struggle against the imperialism and its main pillars-the land lords-was the history of political renaissance in Kerala.¹⁵¹

The common people had gained social consciousness to some extent from the activities of the social reformers. Sree Narayana Guru and others were in favour of the liberation of the people from the bondage of casteism and also were in favour of providing educational and social rights to the backward classes.

In Malabar Vaghbhatananda played a major role in propagating the need for ending caste discriminations. He further demanded even for political rights. He was a major factor behind the politicization of the common people in north Malabar.

¹⁵⁰ K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.63

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*,p.61

Many of his (Vaghbhatananda) disciples like T.V.Ananthan, M.T.Kumaran, T.V.Kutty joined the National Movement and were arrested. He supported Gandhi during the Civil Disobedience Movement. He was in favour of temple entry for all irrespective of caste identities. He chaired the first meeting of the *Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham* in 1936.¹⁵²

The *Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham* worked in Chirakkal taluk, centred at Karivellur. T.T.Krishna Poduval and others began this movement. The aim of the organization was to end poverty and increase production. A.V.Kunhambu, M.P.Appumaster etc. gave this organization a political dimension and working plan. This organization was the forerunner of the *Karshaka Sangham*.¹⁵³

The first days of the *Karshaka Sangham* in the words of K.A.Keraleeyan:

"I met him for the first time in Karivellur, Manakkad. I was there to conduct activities of *Karshaka Sangham*. Kunhambu had just come from North India. He was a freedom fighter. He had run a night school at Malkad. From that night school, the seeds of the *Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham* could be found.

When I went there, Kunhambu was holding a chalk piece and was standing near the black board. There were letters on the board. I also sat there. There were a number of younger and elder people in the class who did not know how to read and write. They were very much interested in the class. Besides teaching the letters, Kunhambu taught them the happenings all over the world. All those sat in the class became strong participants of the political struggle in Karivellur."¹⁵⁴

The seeds of political education was sown in the minds of these classes and which produced many peasant leaders. Some of them became shining figures in the political realm as well.

¹⁵² Ibid,p.53

¹⁵³ Ibid,p.63

¹⁵⁴ M.N.Kurup,A.V.Kunhambu, Prathibha Books, Mavelikara,2000,p.81

With the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, a number of progressive people joined together and founded the *All India Kisan Sangham*. Swami Bhrahmananada, Karyananada Sarma, Mussafir Ahammed, Acharya Narendra Dev, Rahul Samkriyayan, Indulal Yajnik etc were the founding members of the organization.¹⁵⁵

The manifesto of the meeting clearly indicated that the aim of the movement was to get freedom from the financial exploitation; the peasants and the workers and the other exploited group had to get complete economic and political power. The activities of the union were aimed at getting political and economic rights and freedom from all types of exploitation.¹⁵⁶

Under the chairmanship of A.K.Pillai, the first meeting of *Chirakkal Taluk Karshaka Sangham* was held at Parassinikkadavu in November 1936. In 1937, *Akhila Malabar Karshaka Sangham* was established under the presidentship of P.Narayanan Nair. K.A.Keraleeyan was elected as the secretary.¹⁵⁷

Those who led the peasant movement were political leaders as well. Krishna Pillai, K.Gopalan, K.A.Keraleeyan, K.P.R.Gopalan, Vishnu Bharathiyan, A.V.Kunhambu, V.V.Kunhambu, E.K.Nayanar and A.Kunhikkannan were some of them.¹⁵⁸

These political figures virtually alleviated the belief among the peasants that the spirit of the National Movement and the interests of the peasants were different. They began to think that their interests depended on the success of the political struggle that had been going on.

¹⁵⁵ K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.63

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p.64

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.66

The *Karshaka Sangham* spread the message among the people against the Land Lordism, Imperialism and Capitalism.¹⁵⁹

The activities of the *Karshaka Sangham* were far and wide. It linked the interests of their groups with those of the main stream. Thus Imperialism and Capitalism became the enemies of the poor peasants. Kunhambu intensified the activities of the *Karshaka Sangham* and the educational activities alike.¹⁶⁰ To link their grievances with the existing political system, political education was given to the peasant masses.

Literature was also supportive of the peasants in educating them to attain their rights. Literature fomented the growth of National Movement and growth of class organization in Malabar.¹⁶¹ *Pattabakki*, *Rakthapanam* etc. propagated the ideology of the working class.

Another remarkable thing is that the peasant movements were led by political figures. Kunhambu taught the peasants and the youth about the political situation in Malabar, Travancore and Cochin. *Pattabakki*, the famous play written by K. Damodharan was played at many places in Karivellur. An *Adhyayana Samajam* was also conducted. He participated in the summer school at Mankada, which was a Muslim dominated area. The slogans like 'nquilab Zindabad' and 'Congress Zindabad' were shouted. The Muslim agricultural workers participated in the *jatha* that welcomed the 'students' to the school.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ P. Narayanan Nair, *Ara Noottantilute*, p.116

¹⁶⁰ M.N. Kurup, *A.V. Kunhambu*, p.94

¹⁶¹ Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.12

¹⁶² M.N. Kurup, *A.V. Kunhambu*, p.124

Classes for the elder people known as the *Vayojana classes* were started by the *Sangham*. The political situation and the condition of the peasants were taught in these classes. They also started *Vayanasalas* and *Sthree Samajams* which were known as *Mahila Sabhas*.¹⁶³

Here is an example how the common man reformed with the activities of the *Karshaka Sangham*:

Alora Krishnan joined the *Karshaka Sangham*. He was the worker of a *Janmi*. He joined the night classes conducted by the *Karshaka Sangham*. He learned the basics of reading and writing. He became one of the leading public speakers of the *Karshaka Sangham* in about 1½ year. He even wrote poems.

The *Janmi* was surprised to see all this. He exclaimed that he did not like the *Sangham* but it was interesting to see that the little fellow in his house had learnt to read, write and speak in public and lead the people of the village, even though he was speaking against him.¹⁶⁴

From 1939 to 1942 the slogan was 'Let *Janmism* and the British Government perish; do not help the wars; don't join the army, Inquilab Zindabad.'¹⁶⁵

It was not accidental that when the Indian National Congress began individual *Satyagraha* in 1940, many violent peasant struggles occurred. The *Karshaka Sangham* believed that struggles were to be conducted to attain their rights that were denied to them for centuries. As a result of this belief many peasant struggles occurred all over north Malabar. The Kayyur riot and the

¹⁶³ K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.75

¹⁶⁴ A.K.Gopalan, *Keralam Innale Innu*, p.76

¹⁶⁵ K.K.N.Kurup, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthangal*, p.75

death of a policeman in Kayyur was a turning point in the history of the *Kisan Sabha*.¹⁶⁶

The many peasant struggles took place in places like Kayyur, Karivellur, Morazha were led by the Communists. In the Morazha case, K.P.R.Gopalan was sentenced to death. The political consciousness of Malabar rose to its maximum to get the safe release of the *Karshaka sangham* leader. He was set free after people from all over India pressurised for his release. Gandhiji also intervened. The peasant union brought the spirit of the freedom struggle to the minds of the common people.

The Working Class and Political Consciousness.

The working class had been politically inert before the dawn of the 20th century. Since the Indian National Congress had no activities to mobilize the working class, they stood aloof from the national mainstream. But the railway strike of 1928 heralded a new attitude among the working class.

There were no centralized trade unions during this period.

With the 1928 strike of the railway employees the first trade union in Kerala was founded. 1930-32 when the Civil Disobedience Movement was in full swing, the labour class had its rejuvenation. They supported the movement. They began to conduct such moves as their own.¹⁶⁷

The period from this struggle witnessed many unions coming to the field. Between 1928 and 1930 at places like Alappuzha, Calicut and Kannur Trade Unions were founded for the first time in Kerala. The Provincial

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p.79

¹⁶⁷ P.Krishna Pillai, *Sakhakkale Mummottu*, p.383

Congress Committee that had the domination of the Left in 1935 passed many resolutions for the cause of the peasants and the labourers.¹⁶⁸

By 1931 there was a union called *Vadakke Malabar Thozhilali Sanghatana*. In September 1932 the first anniversary of the union was celebrated at Calicut under the leadership of U.Gopala Menon. Mostly the handloom workers attended the meeting. The urgent resolutions relating to the rights of the workers passed, along with them, political resolutions were also passed. With the repeal of the Civil Disobedience movement, the working class movement became strong.¹⁶⁹

With the founding of the Congress Socialist Party in Malabar, it stressed the need for uniting the workers, since the Socialist revolution could only be manifested through the efforts of the working class.

Almost all the towns in Kerala witnessed the founding of trade unions.

The Socialists within the Congress led all these movements. E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and P.Krishna Paillai were the founding leaders of the trade unions in Kerala.

The first organized strike of the working class in Kerala was in 1934-35. This resulted in the increase in membership of the trade unions in Kerala. The organizers of the struggle reached every nook and corner of the factories or small scale working areas with the message of the red flag.

¹⁶⁸ A.K.Gopalan, *Keralam Innale Innu*,p.56

¹⁶⁹ P.Krishna Pillai, *Sakbakkale Munnottu*,p.383

The effort was to organize the labourers to fight against the imperialist regime and favour the freedom struggle.¹⁷⁰

When the Congress Socialist Party started functioning in Calicut, there was a trade union office. There was also a night class for the working class. P.Krishna Pillai, P.K.Balan, H.Manjunatha Rao and P.K.Ramunni Nair led the classes. The basics of trade union culture and that of socialism, the importance of anti-imperialist struggle were taught. In 1938 there was an attempt to raise this night class in to a trade union school.¹⁷¹ Political education was thus imparted to the working class.

On 26 May 1935 the *Samastha Kerala Thozhilali Sammelanam* was held at Calicut. From that meeting the working class began to interfere in the political affairs of the state with increased enthusiasm.¹⁷²

In 1935 there was a strike at Feroke. The factory owners had to reduce the working hours to 54 hours in a week as per the law. But to evade this, the factory owners reduced the wages for half a day. This brought about wide spread protest and strike. They also raised other demands as well. At last K.Kelappan intervened and an agreement was reached.¹⁷³

On February 9, Manari Appu, the trade union activist was expelled from the Thiruvannur Cotton Mill. A strong strike was organized. The socialists came for help. The strike was won.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ A.K.Gopalan, *Keralam Innale Innu*, p.56

¹⁷¹ T.Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram*, Prabhath, Trivandrum, 1979, p.70

¹⁷² P.Krishna Pillai, *Sakhakkale Munnottu*, p.383

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ T.Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram*, p.67

On November 11, 1935 there was another strike in the Cotton Mill. The workers demanded the recognition of the union, stoppage of the contract system, *bata* should be given to those who did not enjoy it, no cleaning of the machine would be done without proper wages. The strike lasted two months.¹⁷⁵

By the 1930s the character of the National Movement changed. It became somewhat radical involving all sections of the masses. The National Movement in Kerala had become a working class movement by the labouring forces. This shows the contrast of the National Movement in the 1920s and 30s. In the early phase, the educated middle classes who had dedicated themselves to the cause of freedom dominated it. But in the 1930s apart from them, a large number of peasants and workers, who later became members of the Communist Party, joined the freedom struggle.¹⁷⁶

An attempt to unite all the trade unions in Kerala was made in 1935 under the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party. The party wanted to bring the working class to the mainstream of the freedom struggle. In the same year the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala was also founded. The labourers and the common people jointly revolutionized the political history of Kerala.¹⁷⁷

A number of workers from all over Malabar participated in the meeting. P.Krishna Pillai was behind this move. N.C.Sekhar, K.K.Warrier, P.S.Nambudiri, K.P.Gopalan, P.K.Balan, A.K.Gopalan, E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and R.Sugathan participated in the meeting. Among other resolutions, there was a plea to the workers that they should take initiative

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p.69

¹⁷⁶ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature*, p.55

¹⁷⁷ T.Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram*, p.57

in the political struggle for independence. Complete freedom would be the ultimate aim of the Union.¹⁷⁸

From then on the political struggle in Kerala involved increased participation of the working class. The trade unions imparted political consciousness.

In the political struggle the labour class began to play a leading role in the Kerala society.¹⁷⁹ The politically motivated members of the working class behaved vigorously to bring about radical changes. When the Congress came to power in Madras, the workers were so jubilant.

In September 1937, there was a declaration of rights by the working class in Kannur, Thalassery, and Calicut. More than ten thousand workers participated in the procession in Calicut.¹⁸⁰ It was a remarkable event.

There were a number of trade unions in Malabar. Most of them were led by the Socialists.(Appendix-I)

Almost all of them belonged to the members of the *beedi*, coir and factory workers.

The night classes and the meetings of the trade unions and the political interpretations by the leaders equipped the working class with a new awareness that eventually led them towards the ultimate goal of winning freedom. The colonial regime, the leaders explained, would only bring famine, poverty and wage cuts. A Government by the Indian people would only guarantee an elevated position to the working class.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid,p.72.

¹⁷⁹ P.Krishna Pillai, *Sakhakkale Munnottu*,p.57

¹⁸⁰ T.Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charithram*,p.88

While the working class and the peasants were organized on the basis of class, some other unorganised groups were also there. The political leaders did not give them much attention in the beginning. They later redefined the political structure of Malabar with their indelible presence. They were the Teaching Community and the Student Community.

Chapter-V

THE TEACHING COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR.

The struggle by different sections of people for social, political, economic and educational rights was rampant in the early part of the 20th century. In this chapter the activities of a major and influential group - the teaching community - in the 20th century Malabar is being examined. Their life, political leanings and participation in the Freedom Struggle are examined here. Above all an enquiry is made into the process of teaching and how it influenced the student community and eventually, the society.

As we have already pointed out, the role of the British in imparting mass education was negligible. The colonial Government was not interested in encouraging mass education. They did not spare any money to introduce a uniform education that was available to all sections of population, since they had plans only to exploit India financially. They thought that those who received proper education would be equipped with new ideals; the British Government feared this. Moreover, the educational activity of a Government, which was not accepted by the people, would have no effect.¹

At the same time it is rather interesting to look into the role of the so-called educated class in India.

¹E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Sampoornakritikal*, A.K.G.Patana Gaveshana Kendram, Trivandrum, 1999, Vol.II, p.51

Aparna Basu writes:

“The educated Indian did little to reform the education system as they were its products and were conscious of the benefits they derive from it.”²

The educated Indians enjoyed the privileges that education provided. At the same time they did not take up the responsibility of educating their fellow beings. The educated Indians and the British Government ignored education of the masses alike.

Teaching Community in Malabar: Life and Work.

Most of the people in the traditional society were illiterate. So the presence of a literate person in the society was inevitable. People depended on him to read and write. He had high position among the people. Every body respected him. In most cases, the literate person in the village was the schoolteacher.

As mass education was not at all the aim of the colonial regime, the teaching and learning activities did not receive any serious attention. We have seen in the previous chapters that the Government virtually stood away from the responsibility of imparting education. It entrusted many agencies with this responsibility. As teaching and learning activities were given little importance, the teaching community was marginalized altogether.

In the beginning of the 20th century, majority of the teaching community in Malabar belonged to peasant families, and many of them were *Kudiyans* of the *Janmis*. The families of the teachers were so poor that they wanted to earn as much money as possible to support the poverty stricken family. The

² Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India(1898-1920)*,Oxford,1974,p.236

traditional sources often failed to provide income to make their both ends meet. The majority of them belonged to the Hindu Community.³

They were never rich. The rich and the upper class never accepted the job of teachers.⁴ They formed the literate group among the poor. People became teachers because a small regular income was better than nothing at all. Since many teachers came from families that had rights on land, the steady salary from teaching, added to a small income from land, allowed families to lead a moderate life.⁵

Even though the traditional Kerala Society was strongly opposed to women's employment outside the household, many women had taken the job of teachers in the beginning of the 20th century. They violated the proscription because of the fact that though a woman teacher was not the sole earner of a family, her earnings supplemented the family income.⁶

Even unqualified men were recruited for the job. The teachers inducted in this way were not considered equal to others. They were divided on the basis of educational qualifications. The teacher who had passed fifth standard, without teacher training was called Lower Untrained Teacher; if trained, they were appointed as Lower Trained Teacher.⁷ Those who passed eighth standard or third form were called Higher Untrained Teachers, and if trained, they were called Higher Trained Teachers. Those who passed

³ Interview with .Assainarkutty,.Tanur.

⁴ Interview with Ms.Suvarna Kumari Menon.

⁵ Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being, p.69

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, p.70

S.S.L.C, but not trained, were called Secondary Untrained. Salary also was according to qualification.⁸

Classes from one to five were called Lower Primary, and from six to eight Higher Elementary. Primary Education was for eight years this system continued till 1957.⁸ Certificates for the fifth and sixth standards were given to the students.⁹

A large number of people took up the job of teachers in the 1930s because in 1930s Malabar witnessed grave unemployment problem. The introduction of the Public Service Commission made it even worse. The examination was according to its pleasure. People failed to get in to Government service. Many took refuge in private schools. So a large number of them, who were affected by economic crisis, became teachers in Aided Elementary Schools.¹⁰

In early days, in Malabar, the running of school was a business.¹¹ The private managements accepted the Grant-In-Aid from the Government. They gave the salaries of the teachers after receiving the annual Grant-In-Aid. Many of the managers gave only a small amount to the teachers as salary and they withheld the rest. The managers often required teachers to sign receipts for larger sums than they were actually paid.¹²

⁸ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*, (T.C.Smaranika), T.C.Foundation, Kannur, 1999, p.41

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.thesis, Calicut, p.8

¹¹ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*, p.41

¹² Robin Jeffrey, *Politics Women and Well-being*, pp.68-69

The Grant- In- Aid was not received properly. Only after 17 or 18 months the Grant- In- Aid was given. If the authorities were not satisfied with the functioning of the school, the Grant- In- Aid was denied.¹³

The schools were almost Aided Schools. The teachers were paid as per a Grant- In- Aid code that came into force even before the Minto- Morley reforms. The salary amount of the teachers was given to the school managers. The annual Grant- In- Aid cheque would be highly confidential. It could not be made public. The managers were given full right to appoint, dismiss or punish the teachers.¹⁴

Many teachers had to work in the houses of the school managers because the salaries were given according to the pleasure of the managers. The ire of the managers would inevitably lead towards non-receipt of the salary or drastic reduction in it, and a dismissal at any moment. Teachers and managers had servant- master relationship.¹⁵

To begin a Higher Elementary School, one trained teacher was necessary. So he got more salary than his colleagues received from the Government.¹⁶

By the 1930s teachers were caught between Government and the managers of the private schools. Seeking to curtail increasing expenditure, the managers were anxious to pay the teachers as little as possible and were also keen to pay irregularly.¹⁷ Many managers were also *Janmis* in villages and some of the teachers were *Kudiyans*. There were instances in which the

¹³ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*(T.C.Smaranika), p.42

¹⁴ M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil.Thesis, p.98

¹⁵ Ibid, p.13

¹⁶ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam* (T.C.Smaranika), p.41

¹⁷ Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being,p.68

salaries of the teachers were taken from them as rent arrears. This resulted in many unruly scenes in schools.¹⁸

These forms of ruthless exploitation by the managers have been described by many writers. The *Janmi* dared to do whatever he wanted to do with his school.

He would declare that if the school did not run according to his wishes, he would close it down.¹⁹

S.K.Pottekkat describes the painful life of a 'typical' private school teacher in his celebrated short story-'Inspection.' (1940)

The character of the story, Appunni master, is very poor. He is one of the puppets among the 14000 and odd Aided schoolteachers in Malabar. He passed the 8th standard about fifteen years back and joined in an Elementary school at a salary of Rs.7/- per month. After eight years, he got an opportunity for getting teacher's training. Then he took up the job in the Karimuringapuram Higher Elementary School. He worked there for five years. During that period he got married. His wife gave him four children. At the time of the delivery of the last baby, he had no money with him to meet the expenses.

More over the baby was suffering from severe fever. He had no money to consult a doctor. He had not been receiving salary for months. In the next day itself he approached the school manager for help. The manager was not in a position to help or pretended to be so. At last he got Rs.3/- from the manager, but it was not enough for him.

¹⁸ M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil.Thesis, p.113

¹⁹ Cherukad, *Atimakai Swathanthrar*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1978, p.37

The manager said: "I shall give the rest, when the Grant is received."

No body helped him in this crisis since all the people -even the children- knew about the condition of an Aided schoolteacher. He was a debtor. The grocer, the proprietor of the textile shop etc. were waiting for the grant.

He would console them: "Let the Grant come."

There was an inspection in the school that day. He ran after the children because his job depended on the number of children attending the classes.

Inspection!

The manager, Ramakkurup had two *manjals* one was an ordinary and the other was something special. The latter was used only to bring the inspector to the school once a year. On the *manjal* it was written- 'God save the King' and 'Welcome' on silk.

During the inspection, Appunnimaster could not perform well. He was ill.

After the inspection two things happened:

He was dismissed from service; his ailing baby died.²⁰

Cherukad gives another touching description about a schoolteacher in his famous short story-'Absent.'

Koman Nair master explains the Head master of the school why he could not attend the school the previous day:

"I had kept Rs.10/- from the last Grant after dismissing the debtors. I gave the amount to somebody who went to Calicut for buying an umbrella. They replied that no umbrella could be bought for that amount. At least Rs.25/-was needed for an umbrella. I waited for it till yesterday. Yesterday I went to the *Pana* and ordered

²⁰ S.K.Pottekkatt, Complete Short Stories, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, 1978,p.313

two palm leaf umbrellas. I was absent because I had no umbrella to use since it was raining yesterday.”²¹

The school inspectors were the officers who could enhance, reduce or withhold the Grant-In-Aid to the schools. His pleasure would decide the fate of the teachers working in a school. If there were no sufficient children in the school during his visit, the Grant-In-Aid might be cut. So the managers would give great respect to the school inspectors. Various ranges were also fixed like the Hindu Range and *Mappila* Range. There were inspectors for each range. Both the managers and the inspectors threatened the teachers. The teachers had no right to sit before the inspectors; they had to stand until he left. Some of them had tested the knowledge of the teacher. No appeal was allowed on his decision.²²

The Grant-In –Aid system also was defective. The salaries of teachers in the 1920s were:

Lower Trained Teacher salary (5 th standard + training)	Rs.09
Higher Untrained 8 th standard	Rs.09
Higher Trained 8 th standard +training	Rs.12
Secondary Untrained 10 th standard	Rs.12
Do 10 th standard+training	Rs.16.67 ²³

The Government schoolteachers had job security, leave benefits and

²¹ Cherukad, *Cherukathakal*, Current Books, Trichur, 2001, p.29

²² M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.thesis, p.13

²³ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*(T.C.Smaranika), p.42

favourable working conditions. Board schools too had better conditions.²⁴

The salary of teachers in Government Schools in 1923.²⁵

<u>Boys</u>	<u>Trained</u>	<u>Untrained</u>
Lower Elementary	20-1-30	Rs. 15
Higher Elementary	25-1-50	Rs. 20
Secondary	35-35-1.5-50- -1-60	Rs. 25
<u>Girls</u>		
Lower Elementary	22.5-1.5-45	Rs. 20
Higher Elementary	27.5-1.5-50	Rs. 25
Secondary	45-3-90	Rs. 30

But in the Aided Elementary schools, there was no regular form of scale of pay.²⁶ The salary and service conditions had no uniformity under different agencies.²⁷ The job safety of the teachers was also a big question. They were not appointed as permanent employees. So the situation was so poor for the teachers. Even when the National Movement was in full swing during the 1930s, the Indian National Congress took no effort to better the condition of the working class. As far as the poor teacher was concerned, the *Janmi*-Government nexus was much oppressive. So the teachers could not expect any favour from the Government.

²⁴ M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, pp.9-10

²⁵ Malabar Gazette, 1923, p.2

²⁶ M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, p.10

²⁷ Ibid, p.9

Politicization of the Teaching Community.

A strong political movement had developed in Malabar during the first decades of the 20th century. As a major literate class, the teachers were the integral part of the village life. They could be seen as activists of the freedom struggle, social and health services, despite their agonizing life.²⁸

A.K.Gopalan writes thus in his autobiography:

“The life of teacher was miserable. Poverty, helplessness and disappointment haunted them. But later they rewrote history. They became idols of self respect, nationalism, courage and public service.”²⁹

Many teachers had strong links with the Indian National Congress, but they never openly admitted it. They were afraid of the fury of the Government and the school managers alike.

At Tanur there was a Higher Elementary School with classes from 5 to 7. The brother-in-law of V.T.Bhattathiripad was the head master for some period. Some of the students used to visit him. He was a Congress supporter. When Mahatma Gandhi was arrested, there was a procession. Assainarkutty spoke (he was a student then) on the occasion. Three students participated in the procession. The teachers had favoured the same, but they did not take part.³⁰

In 1927 on his way to Mangalore Gandhiji was given a warm reception by the teachers and the students of the Rajas High School, Gandhi gave a compliment written by his own hand.³¹ In those days ‘*God Save the King*’

²⁸ Thikkodiyan, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, Current Books, Trichur, 1996, p.129

²⁹ A.K.Gopalan, *Ente Jeevithakatha*, p.15

³⁰ Interview with Assainarkutty, Tanur

³¹ Nileswaram Gramapanchayath *Vikasana Rekha*, pp.14-15

slogan would be exhibited on all walls and windows of the schools. The photo of the King, decorations etc. were also there.³² The school was supposed to be a place where the supporters of the colonial regime were brought up.

By that time there were no unions for the teachers and the students. In the anniversary celebrations of the schools, the students would speak about the glory of the British Government. There was no scope for talking about political issues.³³ But political consciousness of the teachers could well be witnessed even before the beginning of intensive political activities in Malabar. During the Non Co-operation movement of 1920, the participation of the teachers was less. But some found their way into the movement. Many took part in Civil Disobedience Movement.³⁴ (Appendix-II).

A remarkable event took place during the Civil Disobedience Movement was in 1932. E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad was arrested, when he was in the St.Thomas College, Trichur. M.P.Paul, who strongly criticized the inactivity of the college authorities in the college magazine, was dismissed by the college authorities.³⁵

This was a very significant event, since the teachers were considered to be slaves and also was supposed to be hapless creatures. They knew no other jobs than teaching. They had no rights to complain or protest.

³² Thikkodiyan, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, p.110

³³ Interview with Sri. Assainar kutty, Tanur

³⁴ M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.Thesis,p.18

³⁵ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Oru Communistinte Ormakkurippukal*,p.42

In those days the schools directly run by the Government were less in number. Fisheries schools and labour schools, and a few Government schools were there. The municipalities, Boards and persons had run schools. Twenty pupils had one teacher. The teachers had direct link with the parents of the students.³⁶

Gradually the teachers moved towards the National Movement,³⁷ as they began to engage in political activities. Many teachers were jailed for various reasons. When they came out, they realized that the private management was the only weapon in the hands of the British imperialism. So they were more attracted towards the National Movement. But the teachers' movement gained greater momentum only with the formation of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party.³⁸

The teachers were very much inclined towards the Congress Socialist Party because it took up the demands of the peasants, industrial workers, teachers and the students alike. So it was quite natural that these groups came forward to supporting the Congress Socialist Party. The Socialist ideology was getting keen attention all over Malabar. The Government got infuriated.

The Government began to consider the teachers a dangerous group due to various reasons. Their frustrations coupled with their broader general knowledge, made them pivots in politics.³⁹ The developments in the Soviet Union and the struggle for democratic changes made them more powerful.

³⁶ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*(T.C.Smaranika), p.42

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.Thesis, p.19

³⁹ Robin Jeffrey, *Politics Women and Well-being*, p.69

At the same time most of the teachers were fearful to support the National Movement. This was due to the fear of being dismissed from schools. They wanted their jobs so dearly.⁴⁰ So only a minority among them came out to speak about the political situation.

There were meetings at D.M.R.T school, Tanur opposing untouchability and other social evils. At the same time no word was uttered about the Government or the British. Even though some of the teachers disliked the Government, they never dared to speak it in public. The teachers never spoke about the National Movement or its impact. The parents were responsible for any political awareness among the students. Majority of the teachers normally kept away from politics even at their homes. It is also important that there was no organization for the teachers then.⁴¹

But there were exceptions as well. M.P.Govindamenon, the history teacher who taught E.M.S.Nambutirippad, would link the history classes with the anti-British feeling and the National Movement. He also provided the students with proper books to get knowledge about politics and the National Movement.⁴²

The more the atmosphere became tense, the more the teachers became interested in politics. They wore and spread *khadi*, which was considered to be a symbol of patriotism. When the D.M.R.T. School was established at Tanur, *khadi* was popularized. The teachers themselves gave the same to the students.⁴³ In Trichur, M.P.Paul and Narayana swami used to come to the

⁴⁰ Interview with Ms.Suvarna Kumari Menon

⁴¹ Interview with Assainarkutty, Tanur

⁴² Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha EMS*, Sakthi Publications, Perinthalmanna, 1990, p.140

⁴³ Interview with Assainarkutty, Tanur

college wearing *khadi*.⁴⁴ P.Raman Nair master wore only *khadi*.⁴⁵ Rama Poduval and Raman Nair master were supportive of the National Movement.⁴⁶ In the Native School, Vallikkunnu, Unnikrishnan Master was a strong Congressman.⁴⁷ C.K.Gopalan remembers that C.P.Kunhiraman Master was the first to introduce the Indian National Congress and Gandhiji to them (in north Malabar). He always wore white *khadi*. Another teacher who had strong link with the National Movement was Ramar Kurup Master. He had once lost his job for taking part in a *jatha* and shouting slogans. He had to go to jail for that.⁴⁸

Teachers Unions and Radicalization of the Teaching Community.

In 1906 the South Indian Teachers Union was founded (S.I.T.U.). Its branch was founded in Malabar as well. Teachers from the primary classes to the colleges were members of the union. Those who had interest in the field of education could also be the members.⁴⁹

This Union had no links with the National Movement. More over it had not expressed interest in political matters. The teachers unions founded later in Malabar were definitely the products of the National Movement.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha EMS*, p.155

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.111

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ Interview with Pannatt Kunhiraman Nair

⁴⁸ C.K.Gopalan, *Quit India Samaravum Njanum*, Freedom Fighters, Kerala, 2000, p.32

⁴⁹ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam* (T.C.Smaranika), p.43

⁵⁰ M.N. Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.Thesis, pp.66-67

The first attempt to found a Union for protecting the rights of the teachers was in 1931, a teachers' organization was founded in Ponani taluk, Manappuram, this was the first Teachers Union in Malabar.

The oppression by the Government and the school managers was so brutal that the teachers wanted to tide over this crisis. They got impetus from the political movement that was sweeping all over India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

From the mid 1930s, vigorous teachers' unions spread new ideas and forms of protest to distant corners along with the National Movement.⁵¹

It was in 1934, the Malabar Elementary Teachers' Union decided to fight for the legitimate rights. The union raised its voice against bribery and torturing.

About 70% of the teachers were of the opinion that they should join the union. The second place after Ponnani to form the union was Chirakkal.

In February 1935 the first conference of the Malabar Aided Teachers Union was held at Tellicherry.⁵²

The union put forth two demands:

1. Salary should be given every month.
2. Job security should be ensured.⁵³

⁵¹ Robin Jeffrey, *Politics Women and Well-being*, p.70

⁵² P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam(T.C.Smaranika)*, p.43

⁵³ *Ibid*, 44

Then the Union activities were begun in Kurumbranad (Badagara and Quilandi) Kottayam (Tellicherry), Valluvanad (Perinthalmanna and Ottappalam) at last in Calicut where the salaries were very low and were not given properly. The number of schools was also less in Calicut.⁵⁴ The Government saw the organization by the teachers and their politicization a serious offence. So prohibition orders for the teachers not to participate in the political movement came in to force. On 06-06-1934, the Government issued orders against teachers, working in Government Aided Schools, forbidding them from contesting elections. The municipal council of Cannanore passed resolution requesting the authorities to withdraw the order. The Government replied that the decision had been taken after thorough studies hence, the Government was not ready to reconsider.⁵⁵

This was an organized attempt to depoliticise the teaching community. The teachers, who took part in the political activities, were asked to explain the reason. If the reply was not satisfactory, their certificates were suspended.⁵⁶

The most remarkable progress of the Teachers Unions witnessed after the formation of the Congress Socialist Party. The Congress Socialist Party wanted to mobilize all sections of people. As most of the teachers were aware of the developments in the Soviet Union, they were much elated when a political party was founded with revolutionary ideas.

The primary teachers were also organized by the Congress Socialist Party during 1935 to 1940. A.M.S.T. Union grew as part of National Movement.

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Malabar Gazette, 1939, pp.16-18

⁵⁶ T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, *T.C.Smaranika*, p.37

Some of them were the Congress activists in the villages.⁵⁷

The Government teachers had no right to organize or raise their voice against. Those who had any indirect link with the Union were dismissed.⁵⁸ So majority of the Government teachers were silent during the National Movement. Another major retaliatory measure was about the Grant-in-Aid. The Grant- In- Aid could be stopped if the teachers participated in political activities.⁵⁹ P.C.Raghavan Nair master was expelled from the school for participating in the political activities.⁶⁰ M.V.Chandumaster was a teacher of the Kottakkara Girls High School till 1935. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, he shouted the Gandhian slogans along with the students and held a procession. In 1936 he was dismissed from service and the school was stopped.⁶¹

The people began to support the teaching community, since they were fighting against an alien Government. In 1936, T.C.Narayanan Nambiar was the Head Master of Kannadipparambu Elementary School. He was also the Teacher's Union president of Chirakkal taluk and the secretary of the Malabar Union. The manager of the school served dismissal notice through the police. The notice was later withdrawn, when the teachers and the local people strongly protested.⁶²

The teachers who took part in the social reform movements were also punished. Ramunni Ezhuthachan, who made the low castes bath in the

⁵⁷ M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.thesis, p.18

⁵⁸ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*(T.C.Smaranika), p.43

⁵⁹ M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil. Thesis, pp.63-65

⁶⁰ Kakkodi Grama panchayath *Vikasana Rekha*, p.6

⁶¹ Panangad Grama panchayath *Vikasana Rekha*, p.20

⁶² T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, *T.C.Smaranika*, p.36

temple pond, had to flee following threat on his life. He was expelled from the Peringode School.⁶³ The Malabar Aided School teachers conducted bitter struggle for his intake. They held a procession in protest.

Achutha Warier, who gave a reception to the procession, was dismissed from the school. He was the craft teacher of the school.⁶⁴In 1936, the Congress ministry was formed but the teachers had no benefit. The teachers in villages were spreading the message of the Congress.⁶⁵

By 1936 teachers unions were formed in all taluks except Wynad.⁶⁶ The teachers of the Kottayam union imbibed the spirit of the National Movement and also were against untouchability. Finally they founded A.M.A.S.T.O in their fight for the legitimate rights of the community.⁶⁷

As the left wing in the Congress was a strong group with socialist ideology, majority of the teachers favoured it. In 1937 there was an ideological split in the union, the left and right leanings. T.C. Narayanan Nambiar was a supporter of the Socialist Congress. He wrote an article in the *Prabhatam* that the teachers should be part of the anti imperialistic movement. This conception became controversial. But the executive committee of the union accepted this view. In the election of 1936, the union issued a statement that the people should support the Indian National Congress.

⁶³ Nagalassery Grama panchayath *Vikasana Rekha*, p.7

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.8

⁶⁵ T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, *T.C.Smaranika*, p.35

⁶⁶ M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.Thesis, p.58

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.55

They explained that the Congress should come to power to end poverty. If poverty could be alleviated, education would be better.⁶⁸

The teaching community believed in vain that their grievances would be met favourably with the coming of the Congress Government. But the experience was otherwise. *Rajaji* Government in 1937 did not like teachers in political and cultural activities. The objective of the Government was clear. It wanted to curb the political freedom of the teachers.⁶⁹ In 1939 an order was promulgated in which it was clearly observed that the participation of teachers in the political activities was more in Madras than in other states. Thus there existed many problems, the Government believed. So an order banning the teachers participating in the political parties, such as the Indian National Congress was invoked.⁷⁰ In spite of repeated warning by the Government, many teachers continued to take part in the elections.

There rose a question in the Malabar District Board meeting 1940 about the participation of teachers in the elections:

“Are there any employees of the Board contesting the elections?”

“Some teachers from Cherukunnu School and from some Elementary Schools of Thalipparambu, Tirur, Kattumunda and Wandoor contest elections.”⁷¹

By then the schools had become centers of political activities. Most of the meetings of the Indian National Congress were in schools. The furniture and other facilities of the schools were used for this purpose.

⁶⁸ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*(T.C.Smaranika), p.44

⁶⁹ M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.Thesis,p.62

⁷⁰ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam* (T.C.Smaranika),p.45

⁷¹ Malabar Gazette, 1943, p.5

There were many questions in the District Board regarding the political activities of the teachers:

"Is there any order by or decision by the president to ban the use of buildings and furniture of the Schools for political parties?"

"Yes"

"Was there a meeting of the Congress party at Araekode Mappila School?"

"There was one meeting"

"A Congress meeting?"

"No" (Qn.225) ⁷²

The teachers also were part of struggle against social evils such as bribery and other bureaucratic atrocities.

Another question in the Malabar District Board meeting was:

"In the Kallyasseri Board Higher Elementary School anniversary under the Chairmanship of the president on 13-04-1940, was there a song sung by children instigated by the Head Master about the bribery of the Kallyassery Police?"

"Don't remember." ⁷³

The Congress meetings were held in Valapattanam Mappila Higher

Elementary School and Perinthalmanna Board High School, ⁷⁴

Many of the women teachers were also politically conscicus.

Roda, Mistress of Chalath Board Higher Elementary School, joined the Congress in 1937 and began to wear *khadi*. For that the Girls' range School

⁷² Malabar Gazette, 1940, pp.15-16

⁷³ Ibid, p.317

⁷⁴ Ibid, 1939,p.8

Assistant Inspectress of Kannur, called her to the office and talked in a harsh manner for wearing *khadi* and working in the Congress Party. ⁷⁵

These atrocities were discussed in the District Board meeting. The irate members questioned the Congress ministry for being punitive towards the teaching community.

"Many teachers suffer a lot, even though the Board is ruled by the Congress. The proud teachers are being humiliated."

"Is there any restriction to *khadi*?"

"No." ⁷⁶

There were also reports about the teachers acting against the spirit of national feeling.

"The *Mathrubhumi* reported that the head master of the Cherukunnu High School removed the Gandhi cap of a student by force."

"At Kallyassery, the Head Master of the school removed a stone laid by the Congress President Babu Rajendra Prasad?"

"No knowledge." ⁷⁷

As the retaliatory measures of the Government continued, the teaching community was also on a way to protest. The certificate of P.R. Nambiar was debarred and thousands of teachers held a protest rally in Kannur.⁷⁸ Many of the teachers had the same fate. When they were dismissed from the schools many schools were founded with the help of the local people.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.3

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, *T.C. Smaranika*, p.37

K.P. Padmanabhan, the secretary of the teachers union, working at the Madathil elementary school in Quilandy was dismissed from the school.⁷⁹ Another school was started in the vicinity of the old school with the help of the local people.⁸⁰

The *Janmis* and the police tried to suppress the movement of the teachers. When they failed in their attempt, they brought down the schools. P.Narayanan Nair describes about demolition of a school by the *Janmis* and the police. The peasants made another school nearby and the teachers were also posted.⁸¹

These incidents indicate the popular support to the teaching community. The people were also aware of the fact that the teachers too had the right to form unions and fight for their right and, both of them were fighting the common enemy- imperialism.

On 28, September 1939 a *harthal* was observed in Chirakkal. Many teachers participated in it. They were dismissed from service. There was strong protest among the teachers.⁸² The teachers could not strike altogether as they never wanted to obstruct the learning process at school. So they decided to boycott the *Gurujanasamajam* (the Saturday meeting). One Saturday of every month would have such a meeting; the deputy inspector would preside over the meeting. The meeting would end with the speech of the inspector about the activities that were to be done in the school.⁸³ The *Sanian Sabha* (*Gurujana*

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ P.Narayanan Nair, *Ara Noottantilute*, p.120

⁸² T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, *T.C.Smaranika*, p.38

⁸³ Thikkodiyar, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, p.130

Samajam) was boycotted in some places.⁸⁴ In many places the boycott was complete; in some other places picketing was held. The certificates of many teachers were suspended following this incident.⁸⁵ *Thikkodiyan* was dismissed for being with the strike.⁸⁶

In those days about 90% of the teachers were the members of the Teachers' Union.⁸⁷ This indicates the trust of the teachers in the union. The teachers' union activists were aware that they were holding some kind of freedom struggle. P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar declared that they were inaugurating a second generation in the freedom struggle.⁸⁸

Though the resignation of the Congress ministry due to political differences put an end to the fight against the Government, the teaching community believed that the real winning of independence only would solve their problems. Then the struggle was directed against the British. They never wanted to disturb the learning process.

The people supported the strike since it was against the British Government. Many teachers were jailed. The Government wanted to withdraw the strike to make an atmosphere for discussion. The strike was withdrawn and a discussion was held. Many favourable decisions were taken by the Government for favour of the teaching community. The Grant- In- Aid would be given four times a year; The Education Department was given the privilege to take action against the manager who withheld the salary of the teacher; the teachers who were jailed were brought back and job security

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.133

⁸⁵ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*(T.C.Smaranika), p.45

⁸⁶ Thikkodiyan, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, p.141

⁸⁷ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*(T.C.Smaranika), p.45

⁸⁸ Thikkodiyan, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, p.130

was partially established; the system of serving notice to the teachers before three months of dismissal was brought in to practice.⁸⁹

Participation of the teachers in many struggles was more evident in the 1940s.

Here are some questions asked in the Malabar District Board meeting about the political stance of the teachers. The questions that rose in the Board meeting:

“The *Mathrubhumi* of November 15 had brought about a problem in the Chavakkad High School?”

“Yes.”

“On 05-12-1940 Chavakkad, there was a meeting of teachers and students.

The Chairman spoke in English. Did the translator, E.P.Pillai speak politics?”

“Did he rebuke the Indian political leaders like *Gandhiji* and others?”

“A complaint from some parents and a report of the District Educational Officer received in this connection.”⁹⁰

The teachers were also behind the complaint. They instigated some of the parents to do so.

Even though all the demands of the teachers were met by the 1940s, the District Board acknowledged the presence of the Teachers Unions. The opinion of the Teachers Unions was sought while taking important decisions.⁹¹

⁸⁹ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*(T.C.Smaranika), p.46

⁹⁰ Malabar Gazette, 1941,p.24-26

⁹¹ Malabar Gazette, 1940,p.5

Meanwhile both the police and the Congress politicians regarded most of Malabar's teachers as Communists or allies of the Communists.⁹² They were threatened under the pretext that they were Communists. The teachers, who were not liked by the managers, were rebuked as the Communists and were punished either by dismissing from the schools or by putting in prison.⁹³ It was only after the strike in 1940 that the primary teacher began to be considered very strong⁹⁴ and his voice was heard with some respect.

The teaching community also believed that the interest of the nation was more relevant than their own interest.⁹⁵ So their activities became more political. The teachers had no hesitation to participate in political struggles and to go to the jails. From June 6, 1940 T.C.Narayanan Nambiar was in jail as per the National Security Law. In 1942, he was released from jail. He soon realized the absence of a strong organization among the teachers in Malabar. So he convened a meeting of the representatives of the taluks.⁹⁶ In 1942, P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar was also put in jail following his participation in the Quit India struggle.⁹⁷

From 1942, Congress, the Communists and school management competed for the loyalty and obedience of both the teachers and students. Schools, which most *Malayali* children attended by the 1940s, became centres of political conflict and public challenge.⁹⁸

The Teachers Unions took up other social activities in large scale.

⁹² Robin Jeffrey, *Politics Women and Well-being*, p.69

⁹³ Cherukad, *Muthassi*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1989, p.157

⁹⁴ P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam (T.C.Smaranika)*, p.43

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.45

⁹⁶ T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, *T.C.Smaranika*, p.38

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.39

⁹⁸ Robin Jeffrey, *Politics Women and Well-being*, p.69

The teachers Union founded night schools and reading rooms in Malabar. P.R.Nambiar, T.C. Narayanan Nambiar, P.M.Kunhiraman Nambiar, Vallathol Damodaramenon, and V.Ramunni were the leaders. They became full time political activists.⁹⁹

The teachers had participated in Quit India Movement as well(Appendix-III). Morazha, Kayyur peasant movements also had greater participation of the teachers.¹⁰⁰

In brief, the teaching community could be categorized into four distinct groups considering their political stance.

1.Those who belonged to this group opposed the political struggle and were supportive of the existing colonial administration. They always supported the Government and tried to dissuade others from being part of the on going political struggle.

2.The second group did not support the existing system but was not ready to express their opinion in public. This group had majority among the teaching community.

3.The third group belonged to the class that opposed the regime and wanted change. They wore *khadi* and read the Congress literature but were not ready to come out in public to lead the struggle.

4.The fourth group was mainly responsible for any political radicalization in the school. They publicly participated in the political struggle and went to the jails. They had great a role in leading the peasant struggles especially in north Malabar. The obvious result of their activities was expulsion from the

⁹⁹ Narayanan Nair, *Ara Noottantilute*,pp.120-21

¹⁰⁰ M.N.Padmanabhan, *Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar*, Mphil.thesis,p.68

schools and forfeiting of the certificates. However, this group was a minority among the teaching community. They started schools with the support of the local people, when they were expelled from the schools.

Even though ^{some of} the teachers belonging to the last two groups tried to mobilize the minds of the children towards making them politically conscious, the textbooks and the curriculum were improper to satisfy this purpose.

The Textbooks and Education at School

The Missionaries were the first to introduce textbooks in Kerala. They realized that it would be a real problem since there were no textbooks in Kerala. They soon introduced textbooks so that the teaching would no longer be hazardous. Hermann Gundert of the Basel Mission was the man behind the introduction of text books in Kerala. Unlike other parts of Kerala, the British directly ruled Malabar. So they really wanted to introduce a system of education in which a message to consolidate the rule of the western life and Government in the territories conquered by them. Even though proselytization was the hidden agenda of the Missionaries, they really put forth a system, which contained all the ingredients of modern education. Now that the Government wanted to escape from the burden of education, they depended mainly on the Missionaries to create the '*Brown Europeans*'.

The consolidation of the British hegemony in Malabar had its impact on education as well. The textbooks were made in such a way that they were in favour of the western culture. The situation prevailing in Kerala also was much favourable.

The textbooks thus introduced never had uniformity, as they were not similar in various schools all over the Malabar region. The Department of Education approved textbooks and never tried to circulate them, instead they were printed and circulated by the agencies like Basel Mission. Individuals like Karimpuzha Ramakrishnan and T.P.Varghese wrote the textbooks thus circulated. The education department approved these textbooks.

The content of the textbooks were more or less same in the primary classes. The lessons in Malayalam had a number of poems, essays and stories. The poems were of Kunjan Nambiar, Cherussery, Poonthanam and Ezhuthachan. Most of the poems were rather devotional. One poet appears in the same textbooks more than once. Kumaran Asan was the modern poet who appears predominantly in the textbooks.

The textbooks did not contain any radical ideas. But they included strong messages. Many of them contained sharp criticism on caste system prevailing in Kerala in its most notorious rigidity. One such poem was *Brahminyum Pulayasthreeyum (The Brahmini and the Pulaya Woman)*. This poem has a strong message against the undesirable caste system. Once a *Pulaya* woman and her son were going to the market with bundle of logs on their heads. After some time the child got tired and he wanted to drop it down somewhere. But at the same time, the mother never allows it since the area was under the control of the *Brahmins* who would never come near or touch the low castes. However, the child was unable to hold it any longer. At last the mother allows him to put it somewhere. All of a sudden a sharp shouting was heard saying that how a *Pulaya* woman dared to do such an anti religious thing. So saying the *Brahmini* took the bundle of firewood

away. The *Pulaya* woman cried for mercy saying that the firewood was their food for the day. The lady showed no kindness and the poor woman and her children were deprived of their food for that day.

The poet curses thus 'don't cry sister; let her take it since it would help her to burn the fires of the hell when she reaches there.'¹⁰¹

The struggle for independence and its reverberations can never be seen anywhere in the textbooks. The major historical figure who appears in the various textbooks is the Maratha warrior Shivaji. In more than one textbook he appears with much glory.

The teachers, who wanted to get a patriotic lesson from the textbooks, were unable to find one.

The History textbooks were rather similar. They never contained what they really had to. The textbooks had descriptive lessons about the Indian History beginning from the *Vedic* era to the modern day of the *Mahajana Sabha* or the Indian National Congress.

While describing about the Indian National Congress, the author of the text has shown much care in not going to the extreme. The description is rather simple and never stresses the role of the Organization in the ongoing Freedom Struggle. The teachers really had chances here to elaborate the distinctive position of the Indian National Congress, which was holding a do or die struggle with the colonial power. But they were frightened as they belonged to the most fragile group of the social hierarchy. The job security was also a concern.

¹⁰¹ *Bhashavilasini*, Standard V, 1939.

See what the textbook has said about the Indian National Congress:

“In the early times it had lawful speeches and activities hence the Government was in favour of the organization. Later it changed its stand and involved in activities that were unlawful as far as the Government was concerned. So the Government tried to suppress it. The more the Government tried to quell it, the more the organization got flourished. Many people joined it. Many prominent personalities were imprisoned. As there were some changes in the constitution they were released. Then the organization had some say”.¹⁰²

The History textbooks also contained the coming of a large number of Governor Generals and their important achievements from Robert Clive to the last ones.

Another remarkable approach is that the textbook propagated the idea that the *Mappilas* of Malabar were loyal to the Crown except an uneducated minority. They were responsible for the outbreak of the *Mappila* revolts that rocked the Malabar region for more than one century. It also observed that the revolt of 1921 was created by a minority of uneducated *Mappilas*. The *Mappilas* are peace loving, thus explains the textbook.

There is a belief that the *Mappilas* are rebellious and vandals since there have been a number of rebellions in Malabar. This belief is not correct. Like other people, the *Mappilas* are also patriots and loyal to the king. The main reason for some of them becoming vandals is the lack of education and modernity.¹⁰³

It also describes the basic qualities of the citizen—belief in god, loyalty towards the king, patriotism etc. There is a proverb in English highlighting that these are the beginning of learning.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Indian History, Standard V, 1940,

¹⁰³ Malabar *Bhoomisastram*, Standard V, 1929

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

The history textbook for the First Form in 1939 also has the same structure. The first war of independence has been included in the textbook saying that it was the act of rebellion by some of the *Rajas* who had lost their kingdoms. The national leaders were not given respect. The activities of the Indian National Congress are not given any attention; instead, a description of King George and his achievements are given extreme importance. Even though the freedom struggle was in full swing in 1939, no traces of the same could be seen in the textbook. So it is obvious that the textbooks totally ignored any kind of activities related to the National Movement, though they had greater importance. Moreover the Government ordered that the teachers should not take part in the political or trade union activities. The politicization of the teaching community was however made by the Congress Socialist Party and then the Communist Party.

The most significant thing is that the teachers, despite being politically conscious, did not radicalize the school. The school remained what it had been. Many of the teachers were active politicians in the villages and they led many mass movements. At the same time they never tried to politicize the school. The school was a conservative institution, even when the entire country was in political struggle. As the teachers got politicized and they began to interfere in political affairs, the student community too did not lag behind in making their minds in favour of the National Movement.

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Chapter-VI

RADICALIZATION OF THE STUDENT COMMUNITY IN MALABAR

The student community got due importance when mass education was given more attention in Malabar during the 1930s and 1940s. The students were a social group that influenced the society as a whole not only in Kerala but also elsewhere in the world. In this chapter it is examined how the student community developed itself in Malabar into an influential group like the teachers, the peasants and the working class. The politicization and radicalization of the student community, and the struggle for their legitimate rights are also examined.

In those days the educational institutions were conservative in many ways. The main reason for this phenomenon was that the colonial education system was meant to create a class subservient to the British rule. The system did not allow any alteration in its conservative fabric by an external force. To break this equilibrium, immense work had to be undertaken.

The school being a social organization, it had to accept the pulses of social and political changes of the society. The radicalization of Kerala society took place in the 20th century and it disturbed the equilibrium that it had been maintaining for many centuries. Consequently this affected the school system as well.

This was a result of the activities undertaken by many educated men. What they did was that they interpreted the society with a new perspective. They

utilized education as a means to understand the problems of the common people.

As we have already discussed literacy was a fundamental feature of Kerala's political culture; a crucial element in the creation of the public opinion and essential to the consciousness of individual and political rights that was a conspicuous feature of social and political life in Kerala.¹

At the same time it was not the picture when the whole country was considered. The British completely neglected the spread of primary education among the masses. Thus, even after almost 150 years of the British rule, only 12.2% population of India could become literate. Consequently, whatever social change occurred during this period also remained confined to this small urban upper and middle classes.² Only a minority enjoyed the fruits of all development. They acted on the basis of what they considered to be right in their perspective. The Colonial education system was designed in such a way.

The colonial education did not represent the true picture of the Indian life. It had no realistic understanding of the political, economic and social problems of Indian society.³ The system of education followed by Indians was one that the Europeans had left behind. When the educated class in Europe changed from one method of education to the other continuously, the Indians stuck to the systems rejected by them.⁴

¹ V.K.Ramachandran, Kerala's Developmental Achievements, p.45

² B.V.Shah, and K.B.Shah, Sociology of Education, Rawat Publications, p.101

³ Ibid, p.147

⁴ M.K.Gandhi, Education, p.64

A group of prominent Englishmen held that the English education would make the Indian people gladly accept the British rule.⁵

The ultimate aim of the British was, no doubt, to consolidate the colonial rule in India for which they wanted to use education a tool.

So the British rulers did not make the education system in consonance with the needs of the Indian people. They developed it to suit their own political, economic and administrative motives.⁶ Thus it perverted Indian history and tried to obstruct the development of Indian Nationalism.⁷ The education system by building up an educated elite and neglecting popular education helped to preserve and strengthen the barrier between upper classes and the masses. The use of English raised the class barriers even higher.⁸ Any how the British succeeded in creating a class of westernized elite and white collar job seekers from among the Indians and in keeping it small and confined to upper and middle classes.⁹ Moreover the colonial education had always provided the idea of cultural superiority of the west.¹⁰ According to A.R.Desai, it was a political necessity for the colonial regime.¹¹

Aparna Basu writes:

“Education forms one distinct component among the various forces which contributed to the growth of political activity in India. It was of particular importance during the first two decades of this (20th) century, when the Indian nationalists were dominated by anglophile politicians who relied on western inspiration for their ideals. In these years the political and social reform movements

⁵ A.R.Desai, *The Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p.141

⁶ B.V.Shah, and K.B.Shah, *Sociology of Education*, p.145

⁷ *Ibid*, p.147

⁸ Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India(1898-1920)*, p.1

⁹ B.V.Shah and K.B. Shah, *Sociology of Education*, p.106

¹⁰ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p.xvii

¹¹ A.R.Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p.141

were limited to the educated Indians in their leadership and sometimes their following.”¹²

But the picture began to change. Soon they stood for western scientific education, freedom of the press and social reforms. They established the ideas of democracy, nationalism and rationalism.¹³

Aparna Basu further comments:

“Many of the social reformers also belonged to the western educated class. Educated one detained the ideals of reform, and those ideals reflected the particular needs of and desires of their supporters, who also came from the educated classes.”¹⁴

But the earliest educated elite produced in Bengal did not constitute much to the growth of nationalist politics.¹⁵ Later in Bengal and Maharashtra one can find a fairly close relation between the growth of English Education and the pattern of political activity throughout this period.

In Madras, on the other hand, though western education had an early start, political organization did not start functioning effectively at a provincial level till about 1915.¹⁶

The three most educationally advanced communities, the Bengal *Bhadralok*, the *Chitpavan* of Maharashtra and the *Tamil Brahmin* had assumed the political leadership in their respective geographical areas.¹⁷

¹² Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India 1898- 1920*, p.189

¹³ K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change: The role of Malayalam literature*, p.23

¹⁴ Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India(1898-1920)*, p.232

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.5

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.231

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.232

The western educated people read the literature produced in different parts of the world. They derived divergent views, as they were capable of understanding the system that existed in many European countries. Hence a conflict became imminent between the dissatisfied section of the Indian society and the colonial regime.

So it was not mere accident that the pioneers and all subsequent leaders of Indian nationalists came from the educated classes of the Indian society.¹⁸ It is assumed that the political development was not uniform all over the country and thus had something to do with the uneven rate of educational growth.¹⁹ The political system of a country obviously influences educational system, and educational system also influences political system. Education plays an important role in political development of a society.²⁰

Realizing this quality of education, the national leaders worked for a national education based on Sanskrit tradition and culture. They also propagated mother tongue.²¹

Political consciousness is not a separate factor in the history of any country. It is not considered in isolation from other historically evolved structure and process.²² What was attempted about was a general assessment of the condition in which the student community in India was formed. These conditions also gave shape to the growth of political consciousness among student community.

¹⁸ A.R.Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p.157

¹⁹ Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India(1898-1920)*, p.5

²⁰ B.V.Shah and K.B.Shah, *The Sociology of Education*, p.120

²¹ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change: The role of Malayalam literature*, p.xvii

²² Manu Bhaskar, *Press And Class Consciousness in Developing Societies*, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi,198, p.27

The college students in India were politically conscious even in the 19th century. In the first meeting of the Indian National Congress many college students participated. Among the two hundred or so present in the foundation ceremony of the Indian National Congress one hundred and fifty were college students.²³ Their wide knowledge gave them better awareness about the situation in India.

The political consciousness was a gradual process in which the print media had a crucial role. Literacy and the print media were responsible for guiding people towards the Nationalist Movement and its constructive programme of transmission of nationalist ideology to the masses.²⁴

Towards the second part of the 19th century evolved out of a conflict between the British imperialism and the literate class especially those belonged to the National Movement.²⁵ As the educated group began to interpret the society and Government according to their perception, the conflict between the two groups became inevitable. This was the condition prevailing all over the country.

The situation in Kerala has also to be examined in this general context. Of all the changes destructive of the traditional order in Kerala, education has particularly been the most important. The state's addiction to education and its achievements in their place most notably in literacy has contributed to its distinctive political culture.²⁶ The districts and castes and communities, which had a lead in English Education, were politically more advanced and the leaders of the new style of politics had been products of the western type

²³Tapas Basu, *Probing in to the History of Indian Student Movement*, p.20

²⁴ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social change: The role of Malayalam literature*, p. XVI

²⁵ Tapas Basu, *Probing in to the history of Indian Student Movement*, p.11

²⁶ T.J.Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, p.23

of education.²⁷ The gap between Malabar and Cochin and Travancore in respect of literacy widened during the period of British rule in Malabar.²⁸

It was only from the second decade of the 20th century that education made marked progress in Malabar. Those who got educated in the higher institution of learning imbibed the spirit of democracy and equal citizenship rights.²⁹

The division of Kerala into Kasaragode, Malabar, Travancore and Cochin prevented the growth of nationalism. The growth of western education and the emergence of new middle class was a late development in this region.³⁰ But with the gradual spread of education, political awareness of the populace also increased.³¹

The social and political growth necessarily related to the growth of education. The illiteracy and the resultant ignorance of the masses had inevitably obstructed social and political and economic progress.³²

Since education in Kerala was what we have already seen, the British Government was frequently alarmed at the spread of extreme political ideas among the educated Indians, which they imbibed from the political literate of Europe due to the knowledge of English.³³

²⁷ Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India (1898-1920)*, p.231

²⁸ V.K.Ramachandran, *Kerala's Developmental Achievements*, p.57

²⁹ N.I.E.P.A, *A History of Educational Development in Kerala*, p.75

³⁰ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam literature*, p.27

³¹ P.R.Gopinathan Nair, *Universalisation of Primary Education*, p.28

³² A.R.Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p.153

³³ *Ibid*, p.157

The British were keen to bridle the growth of political awareness all over India. They saw direct link between English education and the rise of nationalism.³⁴ As in Bengal and other parts of India, English education was a major factor in articulating the political consciousness and nationalism.³⁵ But it was confined to the elite class only.

Till about 1910-15, there was hardly any organized political life at the provincial level.³⁶ The Madras politics, till the first decades of this century, were more localized.³⁷ It was the people of Malabar who confronted the British colonial power directly.³⁸ They had to suffer much at the hands of the British and their allies- the *Janmis* and the bureaucrats. At the same time the people of Travancore and Cochin faced the British indirectly.

The development of political consciousness and nationalism was a slow process in Malabar. The English Education with its cultural hegemony had completed the stratification, emerging from the depressed communities like the *Thiyyas* and on account of their caste grievances, they showed loyalty towards the foreign rule.

Therefore the professional groups and the educated elite in areas like Kannur, Calicut and Thalassery became an inseparable part of comprador petty bourgeoisie even in the *khilafath* and Non Co- Operation movements.³⁹

³⁴ Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India*, p.9

³⁵ *Ibid*, pp.4-5

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.221

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.190

³⁸ V.K.Ramachandran, *Kerala's Developmental Achievements*, p.68

³⁹ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social change: The role of Malayalam literature*, p.35

Politicization of the Student Community.

Politicization of the Kerala society happened in different ways.

In Malabar it was the secular national movement that had politicized the people but in Travancore, this process was undertaken by the caste oriented reform movement.⁴⁰

The students began to involve in political activities even from the very first decades of the 20th century with the announcement of the Non Co-operation Movement. Moulana Yaqub Hassan, K. Madhavan Nair, Gopalamenon and P.Moidu were arrested. A strong *hartal* was observed in Calicut in protest. Students boycotted the schools and the colleges as a spontaneous response.⁴¹

The call of Gandhiji to students to boycott the schools-Government or aided by the Government- and the people their jobs by the Government had tremendous influence. Many students enthusiastically responded.

K.P.Kesava Menon portrays one such student:

“During the first phase of the Non Co- operation movement, a young man came to the Congress office, one day. He was a student in Bombay. He had left the college to join the political activities .The same person who was clad in shirt and coat was no one else Mr. K.Kelappan.”⁴²

Many college students had shown great interest in the organizational activities. They stopped their studies and joined the Congress. K.P. Appa Nair, R.V.Sarma, Chathukkutty Nair, Manikkath Gopala Menon, K.V.Balakrishna Menon Mathanni, S.K.Combrabel, Kurur Neelakantan

⁴⁰ N.K.Jose, *Vaikom Satyagraha*, p.77

⁴¹ Moidu Moulavi, *Moulavitude Atmakatha*, p.122

⁴² K.P.Kesavamenon, *Kazhinha Kalam*, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, p.80

Nambudiripad etc. were prominent among them.⁴³ Some of them had even become the presidents of the Indian National Congress later like A.K.Pillai. He left college, when he was a student at the Oxford. He joined the Indian National Congress; he started the celebrated newspaper- *Swarat* from Kollam.⁴⁴

When the Non Co-operation Movement began, Mohammed Abdurahiman was a student in the Aligarh College. He also joined the movement.⁴⁵ He attended the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress as a representative of the students. Moulana Mohammedali sent him to Kerala for political activities in the state.⁴⁶ He came to Calicut and began political activity there.

The student life in Payyannur was the factor that helped Kunhappa (K.A.Keraleeyan) to get attracted towards the National Movement. Payyannur was a centre of National Movement then.⁴⁷ It was during the Simon Commission boycott in 1928 that any activity as part of the freedom struggle took place.

With the demise of Lalalajpat Rai more students came to join the movement and boycotted the schools and colleges. Kunhappa Nambiar was one among them. They led processions at many places.⁴⁸

In the 1928 meeting of the Indian National Congress at Payyanur Keraleeyan

⁴³ Ibid, p.79

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.79-80

⁴⁵ K.P. Kesavamenon, *Kazhinha Kalam*, p.80

⁴⁶ Moidu Moulavi, *Moulavitude Atmakatha*, p.19

⁴⁷ Dr.V.V. Kunhikrishnan, *Keraleeyanum Karshakaprasthanam*, Chinthra, Trivandrum, p.10

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp.10-11

became a volunteer and thus entered in active politics.⁴⁹

The atmosphere in Malabar was so much challenging for a student.

E.M.S.Nambudiripad describes his experience as a student. It was during the study of the *Vedas*, he happened to hear the names of Annie Bessant, Tilak and Gokhale. The name of Gokhale was especially well known.⁵⁰

E.M.S.Nambudiripad joined school in 1925. The atmosphere in the school was quite new. He had to mingle with the children belonging to the low castes. They were sardonic at him. He studied for three years in the Perinthalmanna Board School. The school life was almost against casteism and other religious discriminations. This co-operative mentality gave fuel for the social activities in his later life.⁵¹ The school provided an over all new milieu. Some of the teachers were in favour of providing political education to the children.

Once Govinda Menon (He was the teacher at the Board School, Perinthalmanna) was taking a lesson, the District Education Officer, Lobo visited the class for inspection. He had strong dislike towards Govinda Menon. Menon continued the lesson. The topic of discussion was the revolutions in France and other countries, which the colonial masters found in vexation. Lobo went back without any comment.

Govinda Menon had given examples, which were really effective. They touched the core of the mind.

While teaching the usage of 'All', E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad answered:

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.12

⁵⁰ A.V.Kunhambu, *Kayyurum Karivellurum*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1986, p.35

⁵¹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, p.74

"All were sad when C.R.Das died."

The teacher was very happy to hear that.⁵²

The ultimate aim of the middle class parents in educating their little ones was to get an employment in the Government service. They also believed that the British were formidable. The downtrodden of the society never had the means to bear the expenses of education.

Even though the situation was quite unsuitable for the students because of the pressure from the parents, teachers and the Government, many of them had strongly supported the National Movement negating the proscriptions built by the conservative elements.

There were boycott of the classes in many places during the visit of the Simon Commission. The decision to boycott the class was taken by some students. But some changed the mind.⁵³ In January 1928, seven students boycotted the classes. They were N.P.Narayanan Nair, A.C.Ponnunni Raja, Krishnan Nair, K.Ayyappan Nair, E.T.Appukuttan, Balakrishna Panicker and N.Sankunni Nair. M.K.Raman, who was a teacher, also took part.⁵⁴

The Head Master of Palur Aided elementary school was P.Gopalan Nair. He was from Pattambi. He lived in the Cherukare Pisharam. He taught the children there and also at the school. He was a strong Congress activist.⁵⁵

Many children had heard about the political leaders and their brave activities in fighting the British domination. In January 1928, S.K.Kombravel

⁵² Appukuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha EMS*, p.113

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 120

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 120-21

⁵⁵ Cherukad, *Jeevithappatha*, pp. 183-4

and Kurur Neelakandan Nambudiripad came to Perinthalmanna. A meeting in protest against the Simon Commission was conducted at the school ground. The responsibility to translate the speech of Combrabel was given to E.M.S.Nambudiripad.⁵⁶

The students of the Municipal High School, Kannur also boycotted the classes. Among them included Pamban Madhavan. A meeting was convened at the Vilakkunthara and a *hartal* was observed in the town.⁵⁷

Besides the teachers, many students had also great interest in the National Movement, they became great friends of E.M.S.Nambudiripad. Students from Mankada Ayiranazhi, Kadannamanna and Ariptra Kovilakams had studied in the school. They had in mind the ideology of the Indian National Congress and Gandhi, especially Ponnuni Raja of Ariptra Kovilakam, N.P Narayanan Nair and Subramanian, though they were not belonging to the *Kovilakam*. They used to meet in the library and discuss the movement against the British all over India. All these meetings and reading made *Kunju* (E.M.S.Nambudiripad) a new person.⁵⁸

Cherukad describes the political situation in Valluwanad and the way by which he was attracted towards the Indian National Congress.

“We had read the *Mathrubhumi* even in those days and discussed matters appeared in it. Slowly Pulamanthol village Congress committee came in to existence. Poverthi Ezhuthachan, the founder of Vilayur *Vidhyabhivardhini* Sanskrit School, was also a member of the Pulamanthol Congress Committee.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha E.M.S*, p.74

⁵⁷ A.V.Sreekanta pothuval, *Athyuatharakeralam Swathantrya Samarathil*,p.43

⁵⁸ Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha E.M.S.*,p.111

⁵⁹ Cherukad, *Jeevithappatha*,p.138

Till then the institution had accepted the Grant- In- Aid and was conservative in every respect. The students with moustaches had studied there. They spread the message of the Congress outside the school, thus they revolutionized the school. V.P. Balakrishnan Nair, the teacher In charge of *Sahityasamajam*, was younger to me. He taught history in the sixth and the seventh standards. He tried his best to inject patriotism to the minds of the students.⁶⁰

In 1928, while A.V.Kunhambu was at the Payyannur High School, he came to contact with the political movement. He became a volunteer at the Payyanur meeting of the Indian National Congress.⁶¹

M.S.Devadas describes thus:

“As far as I was concerned, I never had interest in learning subjects for the coming examination but I found great interest in reading the news of the political struggle taking place in different parts of the country. I was much elated.”⁶²

At the Municipal High school, Kannur, the Gandhi cap of a student was forcibly taken away by the head master. But the parent of the student served a notice to the head master that if he would not give the cap back, legal measures would be taken against him. The head master then gave the cap back. This was an interesting episode in the National Movement.⁶³ All over Malabar, the participation of the students was less. But it was only a beginning.

Generally, it was the calm period before the students jumped into the mainstream political struggle after being inspired by the prevailing situation

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.166

⁶¹ A.V.Kunhambu, *Kayyurum Karivellurum*, p.14

⁶² M.S.Devadas, *Jeevithathinte Thalukal*, Chintha, Trivandrum, pp.110-111

⁶³ V.R.Menon, *Mathrubhumiye Charithram*, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, 1998, Vol.I, p.266

in Cochin and Travancore. The storm of protest had not appeared in the schools and colleges hence the approach of the Government and police were not much oppressive.⁶⁴

It is however important that there were no student unions to impart the spirit of political awareness in an organized manner. All the activities were undertaken in the name of the Indian National Congress.

During the Civil Disobedience Movement a great number of students jumped in to political struggle. The procession of the students usually started from near *Manikantanal* in Trichur. They would round the town and ended from where it began. They sang the patriotic song *Pora ...Pora...Nalil Nalil...* written by Vallathol Narayana menon. The procession comprised mainly of the college students. The people exclaimed how freedom could be attained through the processions of the students.⁶⁵

The students also sold *khadi* visiting each and every house in Guruvayur.⁶⁶ Those who spoke on the occasion declared that the youth were not ready to suffer the slavery any more; they would struggle and win independence.⁶⁷ Some of them were directly linked with the Indian National Congress. It was a privilege for a student to get permission to attend the meeting of the Indian National Congress then. As he got a ticket to attend the Madras session of the Indian National Congress, E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad became a representative at the age of 18. At many places the students passed the total independence resolution. On 26 January 1930, the resolution for

⁶⁴ Thikkodiyan, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, p.96

⁶⁵ Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha E.M.S*, p.196

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid

complete independence was signed by E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and others.⁶⁸

The Salt *Satyagraha* was an important incident in the history of student community in Kerala as a number of them took part in it ignoring the many hurdles. But the Indian National Congress was very cautious in admitting students to the movement. Gandhiji was opposed to the students to participate in the strikes. So the leaders sent many of the students back.

The St.Thomas College, Trichur was a centre of intellectually advanced students like E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad, V.R.Krishnan Ezhuthassan and P.Sankaran Ilayathu. They had formed *Vidyarthisamiti*.⁶⁹In April 1930, students struck work in connection with the *Uppu Satyagraha*. Many went to Calicut to participate in the *Satyagraha*. M.S. Krishnan Nambudiri was one among them, but he was sent back saying he had not attained age enough to participate in the movement.⁷⁰

The leaders of the Indian National Congress told the students that the time to join the struggle for boycotting the schools and colleges had not come and so they were sent back.⁷¹ In March 1931, during the time of the intermediate examination, processions were conducted almost every evening in Trichur. This was in protest against the assassination of Bhagat Singh. The assassination of Bhagat Sing and others caused great pain for the students.⁷²

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.197

⁶⁹ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.165

⁷⁰ Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappadatha E.M.S*, p.196

⁷¹ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, p.133

⁷² Ibid, p.103

The northern part of Malabar also was under the fever of freedom struggle. A.K.Kunhirama Poduval and Kunhiraman Adiyodi were brought to the Congress by Ganesa Pai, and they were students then.

The former was sent to Payyanur and the latter to Calicut. This measure was taken to equip the K.P.C.C office with people. K. Balan and K.Abdulla were suspended from the High School saying that they had sung the *Vande Mataram*. They were taken back after A.K.Gopalan and others strongly protested.⁷³ Kunhiraman Adiyodi took part in the salt *Satyagraha* as well.⁷⁴

T.C.V. Kunhirama Poduval was taken away by the police and was brutally assaulted as he participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and shouted the slogan *Bharat Mata Ki Jai*. He lost his teeth in the police attack.⁷⁵

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-1933 drew students in to the main stream of political organization such as the Congress and the Socialist, but it also promoted the founding of the students organization.⁷⁶

Many students took part in the activities after boycotting the colleges. They reached the seashore to participate in the protest movement.⁷⁷

During the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru the students of the schools boycotted the classes and held protest rallies at Payyannur.

T.C Kunhappan Nambiar, Kuppadakkan Kunhiraman Nambiar, R.Narayana Poduval, N.Subramania Shenoy and Andhra Kannappoduval were expelled

⁷³ A.V.Sreekanta pothuval, *Athyatharakeralam Swathantrya Samarathil*, p.64

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.63

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.64

⁷⁶ Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-being*, p.64

⁷⁷ Moidumoulavi, *Moulaviyude Atmakatha*, p.136

from the school. But all these actions brought about the opposite result. They became more and more attracted towards the National Movement.⁷⁸

In 1930, the Madras Governor was to visit the St. Aloysius College in Mangalore. The college students were prepared to face the situation in a 'befitting manner'. Sadananda Shetty, Abdulkareem, A. Achuthan etc. wore Gandhi cap and reached the college. Those who wore the Gandhi cap were attacked by the Circle Inspector of police and were dismissed from the college. But the Chief of Education K.P.G. Menon swore that he would wear only *khadi* in future. Achuthan also vowed that he would never take up any job under the British.⁷⁹

As the students were not given permission to visit Gandhi on his way from Mangalore, the students under the leadership of P.Kunhiraman Nair boycotted the classes and met Gandhi. This was a remarkable incident.⁸⁰

In 1931^{November} many women in Calicut decided to hold a procession in protest against the cruel treatment of police on woman *Satyagrahis* in Bombay.

There were orders of prohibition. They peacefully violated the orders and were arrested. The schools and colleges observed a *hartal* on the 17th. Not a student of the Municipal Girls' School at Chalappuram, Calicut attended the classes. They held a procession, which was led by Jayalakshmi.⁸¹

The influence of political leaders especially Gandhiji was significant.

P.C.Kuttykrishnan(*Uroob*) describes how he met Gandhi during his school life:

⁷⁸ Payyannur Nagarasabha *Vikasana Rekha*, p.136

⁷⁹ A.V.Sreekanta pothuval, *Athyuathara Keralam Swathantrya Samarathil*, p.19

⁸⁰ Ibid, pp.21-22

⁸¹ P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, pp.215-17

"I was studying in the 8th or 9th standard in the A.V. High School, Ponnani. Then the news was spread that Gandhiji had come to Guruvayur to camp there. I walked almost sixteen miles to reach the place where Gandhiji had been camping. There were guards to restrict the entry. Nobody was allowed to go in. At that time a team from Srilanka came to visit Gandhiji. There were five members in their group. They had visiting cards. Gandhiji gave permission to see him. I entered the hall as one among the group."

He continues:

When I entered the room Gandhiji looked at us and asked 'I see you are not five: you are six' he stared at me and asked who I was.

I replied: 'I am a student, *Bappuji*.'

'What brought you here?'

'I came by walk from sixteen miles away to worship you.'

I fell at his feet. He was so kind to bless me. Then he looked at me and gave this admonition:

'Mr. Student, never trespass in your life.'⁸²

Cherukad has this to add about his school life:

"Gandhi comes!"

"One day Sekhara Pisharody told us. He came to Kerala in connection with the Guruvayur *Satyagraha*. There is a reception for him at Pattambi tomorrow. Though a Head Master can't tell this, still I recommend that all of you may go and see the great man."⁸³

The following day he collected four *anas* and went to Pattambi to see Gandhiji.⁸⁴

The students voluntarily attended the political activities and they were about to become an important factor in determining the direction of the

⁸² *Grandhalokam*, Kerala Grandhasala Sangham, Trivandrum, Sept., 2004, p.15

⁸³ Cherukad, *Jeevithapatha*, p.166

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.167

National Movement. Keraleeyan participated in the *Guruvayur Satyagraha*. In January 1932 after the school was opened after the Christmas, E.M.S.Nambudiripad jumped in to the freedom struggle. The students as a whole boycotted the classes. They left the college after meeting the students, who boycotted the classes.⁸⁵

The *Guruvayur Satyagraha* had great impact on the students. Meenakshi, Madhavi, Padmavathi etc. (they were students then) had visited the camp of the *Satyagrahis*.⁸⁶

The school authorities in some places strongly forbade their students from participating the political activities. When Babu Rajendraprasad came to Chundampatta, Kuttikrishnan Nair went to see him. He had to stop his school education for this.⁸⁷

When P.C.Joshi and E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad were going to Pattambi by car, many students gathered there and presented jasmine buds put in vaseline bottle to Joshi.⁸⁸

The political atmosphere got turbulent and the people especially the youth were put in prison. The educational status of the prisoners indicates that there was an increase in the education among the prisoners from the early years of the 20th century to the middle of the century.

⁸⁵ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Atmakatha*, p.147

⁸⁶ A.K.Gopalan, *Ente Jeevithayatra*, p.50

⁸⁷ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Oru Indian Communistinte Ormakkurippukal*, p.41

⁸⁸ Cherukad, *Jeevithappatha*, p.489

By 1930s 90% of those jailed were below 30 and had good education.⁸⁹

(Appendix-IV)

Radicalization of the Student Community.

Till the 1930s there were no student unions in Malabar. The students took up political activities of the Indian National Congress and thus there were no independent unions for them. During this period the students were recruited as volunteers for the activities of the Indian National Congress.⁹⁰

The national daily *The Mathrubhumi* sowed the seeds of patriotism in the young minds.⁹¹ Many were attracted towards the political movement as they read the *Mathrubhumi*. Thikkodiyan became aware of the Civil Disobedience Movement when he began to read the *Mathrubhumi*.⁹²

While Keraleeyan was studying in Tanjore, somebody informed the principal about his link with the Congress, and they were preparing to oust him. He knew it well before and left the college otherwise they would have dismissed him.⁹³

When the report came about the arrest of Madhavan Nair, U.Gopala Menon and others, the students from the Native High School, Calicut took out a procession. It passed in front of the Samudiri College. Many students joined them. All of them shouted '*Madhavan Nair Ki Jai*' and '*Gopala Menon Ki Jai*'. As they reached near the Malabar Christian College, a large number of students followed them.

⁸⁹ Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-being*, p.64

⁹⁰ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Student Movement-Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.4

⁹¹ Dr.V.V.Kunhikrishnan, *Keraleeyanum Karshaka Prasthanavum*, p.10

⁹² *Ibid*, p.10

⁹³ *Ibid*

They at last reached near the town police station and were about six hundred. This procession was in violation of the Government orders.⁹⁴ It was a great success and a brave attempt by the students. The students from the fifth standard to the fourth form of the Madrassathul Mohammedan High School came out of the class to protest the arrest of the leaders. The students from the Chalappuram Girls High School, Calicut boycotted the classes and held a procession.⁹⁵

When Yaqub Hassan, Gopala Menon, Madhavan Nair etc. were released from jail, a reception was given to them at Thalassery. A.K.Gopalan and others jumped out of the schools and pulled the vehicle in which they were travelling. The teachers punished them.⁹⁶As part of the political Conferences of the Indian National Congress there were students meetings as well. An attempt to found a student union was made by the Congress Socialists.

While in Travancore a strong movement was on against the *diwan* rule, a Student Union was founded in Malabar. In 1936, an effort was made to convene a meeting of all the Student Unions working all over India. In that meeting the All India Students Federation came into being. The same year the Calicut based Calicut Students Union was also formed. Parallel to this the Muslim students in Calicut published a manuscript magazine namely *Vidyakusumam*. They at once became the members of the Students Organization. This union was entirely confined to Calicut.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Thikkodiyan, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, p.11

⁹⁵ The *Mathrubhumi Daily*, July, 9, 1930

⁹⁶ A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevithakatha*, p.13

⁹⁷ C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidyarthi Prasthanam*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1991, p.18

In 1937 the first conference of the A.I.S.F was convened, which was presided over by Soumyendra Nath Tagore. A charter of rights was agreed in the conference.

They were:

- 1.The retention should be dispensed with
- 2.Cruel punishments should not be continued
- 3.Library and laboratory facilities be improved.⁹⁸

Then the Malabar regional meetings were conducted in Malabar. In Thalassery an all Malabar Student's Conference was held. Battliwalla, who was to preside the meeting, was arrested on his way on 2nd October 1937. A strong protest movement was started for getting his release.⁹⁹

Robin Jeffrey says:

"The whole experience of being a student changed people; they became simply improved version of their elders, but people with different ideas about right conduct and public organization."¹⁰⁰

The students began to feel that they had a greater role to play in the political sphere for which they got inspiration from the situation in Malabar.

When Kelappan was the president of the District Board, some students hoisted the national flag at the Payyanur High School. They were suspended at once. A strong protest was raised against this illegal activity. The suspension was owing to their initiative to found a unit of Students'

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.19

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Robin Jeffrey, Politics, Women and Wellbeing, p.59

Federation.¹⁰¹ Kelappan was totally opposed to the idea of the Student Unions and their participation in various political movements. There was a strong argument between E.M.S. Nambudiripad and K.Kelappan through the *Mathrubhumi* in which Kelappan strongly objected the founding of student unions. E.M.S. Nambudiripad argued that the students themselves should safeguard their interests, and for that purpose student unions should be formed.¹⁰²

In 1938, the All Kerala Conference of the A.I.S.F was convened in Palakkad under the leadership of Nariman. The third conference was in Calicut in 1939.¹⁰³

In 1938, in the Madras conference a strong difference of opinion was emerged between Masani and M. Farooqi which caused a split.¹⁰⁴

But the activities of the Federation went on.

Three types of activities were to be implemented:

1. Anti imperialistic propaganda to be beefed up.
2. Make the college and school students politically conscious.
3. Become more active among the masses.¹⁰⁵

Political classes were conducted for students. Political leaders were invited to schools and colleges and arranged their speeches. In 1938, during the Christmas vacation, the Federation activists selected some villages for their

¹⁰¹ C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidyarthi Prasthanam*, p.20

¹⁰² E.M.S.nambudiripad, *The Mathrubhumi* , October, 21,1937

¹⁰³ C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidyarthi Prasthanam*, p.20

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp.20-21

activity among the masses to boost the anti imperialistic mood of the people. Students from the colleges of Tellicherry, Calicut and Palakkad participated in these activities.¹⁰⁶

In 1939 Gandhi started individual *Satyagraha* in protest against the decision of the British Government to drag India to the Second World War. Students also took part in the anti war activities. In different colleges in Malabar there were vigorous anti war meetings in which Mr.Mohan Kumaramangalam took part, who was the son of Subbarayan, the then education minister of the Madras state.¹⁰⁷

In 1941 Hitler attacked Russia. The war became anti imperialistic. The Patna session of the A.I.S.F. discussed the change of policy.

The Kerala branch of the A.I.S.F. tried to get the loyalty of the students in Kerala in favour of the Soviet Front. Meanwhile Gandhi declared Quit India struggle in 1942.¹⁰⁸

Even though the Congress Socialist Party and the Communists were not at all in favour of the Quit India struggle, a large number of the students participated in it. During the August Struggle, students held processions in Trichur. Students from the *Vivekodayam* High School, C.M.School, St. Thomas College and Malayan college took part. Many schools were closed for weeks. The students struck work and went to the home of the dead to hold *Satyagraha*. The police lathicharged and many girls were also wounded.

¹⁰⁶Ibid, P.20-21

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pp.21-22

¹⁰⁸ C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidhyarthiprasthanam*, p.22

Kallyanikutty, the daughter of late Kongattil Raman Menon was one among them.¹⁰⁹

On 2 October 1942, the children of the Nileswaram Raja's School celebrated Gandhi's 74th birth anniversary by hoisting the national tricolour. When they were about to sing *Vande Matharam*, the Puthukotta Sub. Inspector, who was already in position, attacked the children in a brutal way.¹¹⁰ For this incident Naranthatta Kunhambu was jailed for about six months and was expelled from the school.¹¹¹ On 2 October 1942 on the *Gandhi Jayanti* day students from Thalassery and Kathirur shouted *Quit India, Bharath Matha Ki Jai* and boycotted the classes. O.G. Balagopalan, Thayat.B.Sankaran, M.P. Govindan, K.M. Balakrishnan Nambiar, M.C.V. Bhattathirippad, Holi Balakrishnan, A.M.Viswanathan and Sadananada Mallar were the leading personalities in the struggle. Most of them were expelled from the school. They also suffered cruel assaults and were put in jail. The action taken by the Government could not desist them from political activities. P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar conducted secret trips to spread the importance of the August struggle in the minds of the students and the common people.¹¹²

On August 12 1942 a *hartal* was observed by the students of the Rajas High School in protest against the arrest of Gandhi, Azad and Nehru.¹¹³ On August 26, children did not go to school.¹¹⁴ They voluntarily kept away from the school. On the same day the children of the Rajas High School hoisted

¹⁰⁹ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.165

¹¹⁰ K.K.N.Kurup, *A.C.Kannan Nair Oru Padanam*, Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 1985, p.125

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p.126

¹¹² A.V.Sreekanta pothuval, *Athyuatharakeralam Swathantrya Samarathil*, p.86

¹¹³ K.K.N, *A.C.Kannan Nair Oru Padanam*, p.124

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*

the national flag. One student, Sreedharan Nair was arrested.¹¹⁵ The police attacked the students even in the hostel, as they had hoisted the national flag. About six or seven students were expelled from the school.¹¹⁶

In 1946, in a bid to protest the arrest of Sankaranarayanan Thampi, the *Malabar Vidhyarthi Federation* decided to hold a protest march. Curfew was clamped in Palakkad. E.M.S.Nambudiripad participated in the meeting. Krishna Kurup, who was studying in the Purameri High School, also took part. In Kochi, there was *lathi* charge and Krishna Kurup was wounded and was arrested. In protest the first book down strike was taken place at Purameri school.¹¹⁷

During the anniversary celebrations of the Neeleswram Rajas High School, the Kasaragode Munisiff was in the chair.¹¹⁸

After the *Vande Matharam*, Munsiff shouted "God save the king...."

No response was there from the audience. They shouted back "*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*" ... and "*Bharata Matha Ki Jai.*"¹¹⁹

In 1947, India won independence. No change in the situation of the students could be felt in addressing their demands. The promises remained unfulfilled. Strikes were held against these policies. The aims of the strike were to end detention and also to bring down the fees. To make it real the students of the Malabar area struck work on November 18, 1947. The *Vidhyarthi Federation*, *Muslim Vidyarthi Association* and *Vidyarthi Congress*

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.127

¹¹⁶ K.K.N.Kurup, *A.C.KAnnan Nair Oru Padanam*,p.125

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.64

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

participated. All these organizations held the first combined strike.¹²⁰ In November 1947 throughout Malabar, the strike was held. There was a lull in the activities of the federation till 1951. The Communist party and many other organizations were banned during this period and a cruel oppressive rule followed.¹²¹

Student protests almost ritualized by 1948,¹²² since the Government were not at all positive in finding a solution to their demands.

The students in Malabar were really on the path of struggle, when they realized that the interests of them really depended on the winning of independence from the colonial administration. In the beginning of the National Movement the Indian National Congress was not in favour of mobilizing the student community.

The real attempt to organize the student community was done by the Congress Socialist Party and then the Communists. They understood the potential of the student community and tried to mobilize them. There was a row between K.Kelappan and E.M.S.Nambudiripad on the issue that whether the students should be politicized. The former was of the opinion that the children should spend their time in learning activities but the latter was on the contrary. He supported the political activities of the students. But even after the formation of the student unions, the student movement was not led in an organized way. But many had jumped into the political struggle. (Appendix-V)

¹²⁰ C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidhyarthi Prasthanam*, p.29

¹²¹ Ibid, p.34

¹²² Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-being*, p.65

There were many external factors that inspired the students to involve in the ongoing political movement. Many of the student activists could not continue school education, for they were expelled for being with the political struggle. Any study regarding the student movement is rather incomplete without considering the factors that stimulated them to engage in the struggle against the tyrannical forces.

Chapter-VII

THE ROLE OF LETTERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR.

There was no public platform for the people of Malabar to discuss matters of public importance before the 20th century. The first and important realm for open discussions was developed when the lawyers of different courts began to assemble. They freely talked about all matters that they thought relevant; some of the matters were of public importance. In *Sarada*, a novel by Chandumenon, there is a description about the club of the advocates and the matters of discussion.

Another major public space for discussion was opened up when many newspapers began their publication. They discussed vital issues of the masses. The fore runners of the Malayalam dailies had their role in developing a public space for discussions among the masses.

The first of these newspapers was *Keralapatrika* published by Chenkalathu Valiya Kunhrama Menon. This was founded in Calicut in 1884 as weekly newsletter. The editor of the newspaper had participated in the conferences of the Indian National Congress. He was the secretary of the Indian National Congress for eight long years.

Once he was fined Rs.51/-¹ for criticizing the Government. It had criticized the drain of wealth from India to England.²

Another important newspaper that put before the people issues of public importance was *Mitavati* by C.Krishnan. It reported the events in the First World War much better than any other newspaper. *Mitavati* had argued much for the betterment of the backward classes. It had criticized the Indian National Congress that it had no programme for the backward classes. He also blamed the leadership of the Indian National Congress being an upper caste organization.³ He strongly supported the *Vaikom Satyagraha* and warned the Governments that there would be upheavals like the Russian Revolution, if the Governments tried to keep the people in slave like condition.⁴ He also called up on every community to hold political activities.⁵

The *Mathrubhumi* was considered to be the nationalist newspaper. It provided the people with a political path in the national struggle. Most of the political figures in Malabar were linked with the activities of the *Mathrubhumi*. K.P.Kesavamenon, K.Kelappan, K.Madhavan Nair, Madhavanar, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad etc. were prominent figures.

They tried to bring before the people issues that were very much important in the perspective of political activists. The editorials of the *Mathrubhumi* were politically stiffened for brainstorming the masses. Mass reading of newspaper was begun after the founding of the *Mathrubhumi* in 1923. It published articles of political importance to bring them before the masses.

¹ G.Priyadarsanan, *Kerala Pathra Pravarthanam: Suvarnadhyaangal*, Current Books, Trichur, 1999, pp.1-3

² Ibid, p.11

³ Ibid, p.142

⁴ Ibid, p.148

⁵ Ibid, p.158

The *Mathrubumi* published special issues on major political events. There was a *hartal* supplement following the Simon Commission boycott on 3rd February. It called up on the people to make the boycott a success.⁶

The *Mathrubhumi* wrote:

“Nobody knows how long the Civil Disobedience movement will last. But it is the duty of the people of Kerala to support it with money and prayer. It also brought to the people the Salt *Satyagraha* in a touching manner.”⁷

The *Mathrubhumi* inspired the people with emotional events took place during the political struggle. The story of A.V.Kuttimalu Amma, who went to the prison with her two-year-old baby, evoked strong feeling among the people. It also reported about the magistrate forcefully taking the *tali* off of Mrs.Prabhu.⁸

Politically the *Mathrubhumi* was with the National Movement. The preaching of this newspaper was considered to be a political activity. People discussed the topics published in the national dailies and formed their opinions. Till the birth of the *Mathrubhumi*, the reading of newspaper was confined only to the upper sections of the society. It changed the reading habit of the people in a positive way.⁹

The *Mathrubhumi* also initiated a literary movement in Malayalam for inculcating the spirit of Nationalism.¹⁰ The series of articles written by K.Kelappan and others, Particularly criticizing the social evils, superstitions and orthodoxy, contributed to the philosophy of Indian Nationalism.

⁶ The *Mathrubhumi*, February 2, 1928.

⁷ Ibid, April 11,1930.

⁸ *Mathrubhumi*yute *Charithram*, Vol.I, p.349

⁹ Ibid, p.119

¹⁰ Ibid, p.50

These tracts and the articles were highly instructive and the term *Mathrubhumi* formed to be a synonym of Nationalism.¹¹

Following the path of the *Mathrubhumi*, another newspaper –*Al-Ameen* was published from Calicut in 1924 under the leadership of Mahammed Abdurahiman. It began as tri-monthly. The main aims of the paper were making the people aware of importance of independence and self-reliance. It also equipped the people with political and administrative awareness.¹²

Al-Ameen was a sword against injustice and atrocity. It was responsible for making the world known about the facts relating to the Malabar Rebellion of 1921.¹³

Prabhatam was another newsletter that spread radical information. The *Prabhatam* began in 1935 from Shoranur as fortnightly edited by E.M.S.Nambudiripad. It contained the ideology of Socialism. Keraleeyan and P.Krishna Pillai also had helped him.¹⁴

Many articles in the *Prabhatam* were critical of the Government and its policies. There appeared an article in the *Prabhatam* a strong criticism of C.P.Ramaswami Ayyar against his oppressive rule. It instigated the people to hold strong stand against such oppression. This article was written by P.Krishna Pillai.¹⁵

There were strong criticism about the policies of the Indian National Congress and the relevance of Socialism. E.M.S.Nambudiripad,

¹¹ Ibid, p.127

¹² G.Priyadarsanan, *Kerala Pathra Pravarthanam: Suvarnadhayangal*, p.199

¹³ Ibid, pp.204-207

¹⁴ Ibid, 126.

¹⁵ The *Prabhatam*, March 27, 1939

A.K.Gopalan,P.Krishnapillai etc. wrote many articles in the *Prabhatam* to make the people favour the Socialist ideology.

Besides the *Prabhatam* and the *Mathrubhumi*, the *Malayala Manorama* also played a role in the field of social reform movement. The *Malayala Manorama* wrote many editorials about the temple entry of the *Ezhavas*. It also wrote that since the *Ezhavas* began to boycott the temples, the income of the temples drastically decreased. It strongly recommended that the *Ezhavas* were to be admitted to the temples.¹⁶ It also brought to the people about the rights of the women.¹⁷ All these newspapers provided enough matters for the people in meddling the affairs of the society.

Public Speeches and their influence.

An important medium of imparting the political ideas was public speeches by eminent politicians. Many of the important personalities have recalled their experience of being spell bound by eminent speakers. Ikkanda Warriar remembers great speeches by Bupendra Basu, Surendranath Banerjea, Srinivasa Sastri etc. in the Madras Session of the Indian National Congress in 1914. All these speeches pulled him to accept the path of politics in his later life.¹⁸

V.Karunakaran Nambiar remembers an important speech by M.P.Damodharan, which was in 1941 at Thalasseri. The Individual *Satyagraha* was announced. He decided to perform the *Satyagraha* in the open field just before his house. There were thousands assembled to hear what he had to say.

¹⁶ The *Malayala Manorama*, October 21, 1921

¹⁷ Ibid, July 12, 1919

¹⁸ P.S.Velayudhan, *Ikkanda Warriar*, p.6

The speech was like this:

“Our beloved *Panditji* has been under rigorous imprisonment for four years. The judgement was made by the Kharakhpur Munsiff. This issue came up in the British Parliament. The Secretary to the Indian affairs replied that Nehru could appeal in the Higher Court. Yes, Nehru has given appeal not in the lawless British Court but to the conscience of the Indian people. The judgement on his appeal is being written by the old hands in Wardha; I am a letter in that judgement.”¹⁹

The police who were camping there arrested him on the spot. V.Karunakaran Nambiar observes that if M.P.Damodaran had called up on the people to go to the jail, about ten thousand of them would obey, so magical was his speech.²⁰

M.N.Kurup describes another incident in the biography of A.V.Kunhambu that goes like this:

When Kelappan reached Trichambaram, the atmosphere there was that of a celebration. Kunhambu and Krishnan reached there. There were thousands of people assembled to hear what Kelappan would say. He spoke about National freedom, *Harijanodharanam* etc. in simple language and with great enthusiasm. Kunhambu then decided to become a Congressman.²¹

The importance of the public speech was that even the ignorant person could understand the political situation in a vivid manner. So many leaders were engaged in public speeches in the villages to amass the support of the masses. A.K.Gopalan was one among them.

¹⁹ Karunakaran Nambiar, *Chinthakal Spandanangal*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1991, pp.93-94

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ M.N.Kurup, *A.V.Kunhambu*, p.35

The Founding of Reading rooms and Politicization of the Masses.

As the National Movement got momentum and mass education was given much consideration by the nationalists, many *Vayanasalas* and libraries were begun. They played a greater role in developing the political background favourable for radicalizing the masses and giving an impetus to the National Movement.

We have discussed more than once that the knowledge of the letters had been the monopoly of the upper sections of the society. So the common people had no role to play in the world of letters.

In Kerala some people had shown much interest in collecting books and reading them. Many of the prominent *Taravadus*, houses of feudal lords and palaces had good libraries. But this fortune was confined to a minority group. This was quite natural because the majority of the people did not have the knowledge of the letters. When they attained education, the picture changed amazingly. The acceptance of the English education and the knowledge about the libraries functioning in the western countries brought about the idea of public libraries.²²

There were a number of libraries and reading rooms in the beginning of the 20th century. But a deliberate attempt to build them for a specific purpose began only with the National Movement.

The first public library in Malabar was founded in Thalassery in 1921. The second one was built in Calicut in 1924. Another was started in Kannur in

²² Kerala Grandha sala Sangham, Trivandrum, Grandhalokam Supplement, 1971, p.21

1927. Even before the founding of these libraries, there were a number of small libraries in the villages but they did not live long owing to various reasons.²³

The caste restrictions were prevalent in almost all parts of Malabar and thus the entry had been purely on the basis of caste consideration. But this picture began to change later.

In 1928 a library was started at Vellinezhi. There were no caste restrictions in the entry.²⁴ Till then there were no serious attempts to found libraries.

An organized move to build libraries officially in Malabar was begun when Sivarama Menon was invited to Malabar by the District Board in 1931.²⁵

By the end of 1930s the Peasant Unions were founded out of what began as groups of peasants reading together. In order to teach the masses any ideology, the presence of reading rooms was important, the leaders of the Peasant Unions believed. So reading rooms became such a vital part of the new political culture.²⁶ The more the people became interested in learning the letters, the more they became attracted towards reading books and attaining knowledge.

Due to the increase of literacy, people began to read more and more. There was a competitive mood among the people in constructing reading rooms and libraries.

²³ Ibid, p.22

²⁴ Vellinezhi Gramapanchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, p.11

²⁵ *Kerala Grandha sala Sangha*, Trivandrum, *Grandhalokam* Supplement, 1971, p.22

²⁶ Dilip.M.Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India*, p.150.

In 1933, the Mottammal *Desapriya* reading room started functioning. The leader of the reading room was Kunhananthan Nair. They determined to address the problems of the peasants, teachers etc.²⁷ So the people began to show greater interest in the activities of the reading rooms. Reading rooms increased in countryside and towns. Each caste built them. There were 28 registered reading rooms with 2802 members in 1924. The number rose by 1932 to 50 with 6635 members.²⁸

In 1937 K.Kelappan led the first *Malabar Vayana Sammelanam* at Calicut. The *Malabar Vayana Sala Sangham* was organized with E.Raman Menon chairman and K.Damodaran secretary.

All those who led the movement were political activists. So the movement could not go ahead as the leaders were preoccupied.²⁹

Along with the National Movement a strong attempt was made in Malabar to build libraries in large numbers. The political leaders believed that it was their major responsibility. But they could not run them long due to lack of spare time.³⁰

In the beginning of the movement, most of the names given to the libraries were related to the *Puranas*. As the Congress Socialist Party was founded, the activities of the libraries and the reading rooms got momentum. From then on the names of martyrs were also used for naming the libraries and reading rooms.

²⁷ Kannapuram Grama panchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, p.11

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.145

²⁹ *Kerala Gradhasala Asngham*, Trivandrum, *Grandhalokam Supplement*, 1971, p.23

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.37

Sree Harshan was a *Harijan* who had lost his life while he was in Kannur central jail. His name also was given to a library.

In 1935, the Kakkodi *Gramina Vayanasala* was built. In 1937 another reading room namely *Haindava Prarthana Samiti* was also founded. This was more inclined towards the Hindu ideology. The ideological conflict between the two reading rooms continued. As a result the progress of both the libraries was halted.³¹

The reading rooms ranged from buildings made of brick to sheds made of mud with straw roofs sticking the daily newspapers, and sometimes libraries were also founded in similar way. The name of reading rooms reflected three successive historical currents. Those set up by the caste associations had names like *Gramaprasahini* and the *Vidyabhivardhini* at Katirur, which indicated their purpose, were among the oldest. Then the congressmen set up many libraries. They named them after national figures like *Motilal Nehru* (Thalipparamba) and *Sreeharsha*. (Kalliassery).

The others reflected the national aspiration like the one by *Bharathiya* established at Naniyur, which was called *Bharathiya Mandiram*. In later years the reading rooms changed names like *Abu-Chatukkutty*, those who were shot down in a strike associated with the struggle of *beedi* workers.³²

One of the novelties of the organization of the reading rooms was the communal drinking of tea, as one read the newspaper and the others

³¹ Kakkodi Grama panchayath , *Vikasana Rekha*, pp.5-6

³² Dilip.M.Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India*, p.145

listened. Literacy programmes to determine the influence of a newspaper can be misleading, if only because newspapers were read communally.³³

The communal reading of newspaper brought about many remarkable influence among the people. Even the illiterate common man could understand the problems of the people and the country.

The *Mathrubhumi* brought to the people the political activities of the Indian National Congress. The reading habit of newspapers reached to the masses and they began to show leaning towards the political struggle. The working class and others used to read the *Prabhatam*, which provided them with radical ideas. The teashops and the barbershops also provided space for open discussions.

After reading the newspaper aloud, there would be open discussions on politics, war, Government and all about. Politicization of the common man was one of the results of these open discussions. The reading rooms were stocked with newspapers like the *Mathrubhumi* and the *Prabhatam*.³⁴

Through the reading rooms and the tea shops and news papers a whole new world was imagined, and discussion built up a collective memory of organization, strikes and campaign against the land lords as well as the victories of attaining of reduced working hours, more wages and low rent.³⁵ With this knowledge the common men got elated.

Soon these libraries and the reading rooms became the breeding ground of the Indian National Congress and the Congress Socialist Party. An example

³³ Ibid,p.146

³⁴ Dilip.M.Menon,Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India,p.146

³⁵ Ibid,p.147

can be traced from the biography of E.M.S.Nambudiripad. There was a reading room called *Yuvajana Vayanasala* in a building near the school. A hand written magazine was released from the *Vayanasala* namely *Yuva Chaithanyam*. Narayanan was the brain behind the magazine. The founder of the *Vayanasala* was one Kunhikkannan master, who was from north Malabar. He used to give books to the people on the National Movement. He was also a regular reader of *The Hindu* daily.

Rama Poduval and Raman Nair were supportive of the National Movement. They also were from north Malabar. Raman Nair master wore only *Khadi*. They also got some students with full of spirit of the National Movement. The children from the Mankada, Ayiranazhi, Kadannamanna and Aripa Kovilakams were among them. Ponnunni Raja of Aripa Kovilakam was more active. Subramanian and N.P.Narayana Menon also were supporters of the National Movement. They met at the *Vayanasala* and discussed about the National Struggle. These meetings and the reading of various books made E.M.S.Nambudiripad a different man.³⁶

Another description by *Thikodiyan* is apt to be quoted:

“To awaken the conscience of the society, rejuvenate youth with the spirit of freedom, eradicate inequality, a village reading room was decided to be set up. There was also a move to construct a library as well. There was an attempt to reconstitute the ailing Board school. *Kelappaji* decided that the finance to repair the equipment of the school could be found by conducting a drama.”

“When the activities of the *Vayanasala* went on, the youngsters became so happy. A number of people came to the library daily. Many workers also attended the reading room. Kunhikkannan Nambiar, the right hand of K.Kelappan, took the leadership of the youth. The Village rose from slumber. The *Santhana Gopalam*

³⁶ Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha E.M.S*, pp.110-11

drama by Kuttamath was performed. The comedian in the drama, Komu Nair mocked at imperialism."³⁷

Keraleeyan helped the local people to start *Sree Harshan Vayanasala*.

E.K.Nayanar writes:

"The *Vayanasala* was near our school. It was a blessing to me that I could directly go to the library after the classes were over. Almost all the people of the area reached there. One would read the newspaper aloud. Many doubts would be raised from many quarters. The leaders would clear them. Leaders like Keraleeyan would give his opinions. A good political discussion would be there. About 50 people were present there every day. The *Vayanasala* had issued a hand written magazine."

"In 1935, when the golden jubilee celebration of the Indian National Congress took place, a celebration was also held at the *Vayanasala*. The *Vayanasala* drama troop performed the play *Pattabakki*. The *Vayanasala* soon became the center of care of Kalliasseri. A *Kisan Union* was also founded."³⁸

In 1936 the *Pookkanandathil* reading room was established by the *Karshakasangham*. There was a night school in the reading room. The teacher was Kallyadan Kunhikrishnan Nambiar.³⁹

In 1937 at Irinave, the *Sanmarga Dayini Vayanasala* was opened. It decided to strongly fight casteism and untouchability. It also tried to bring the people in to the national mainstream.⁴⁰

In the same year, the *Karshakasangham* leaders started *Desiya Yuvajana Sangham Vayanasala*.⁴¹ In 1939, at Perumbala, the *Vidyarthi Samajam* was founded with a good reading room.⁴²

³⁷ Thikkodiyan, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, pp.27-31

³⁸ E.K.Nayanar, *Samaratheechoolayil*, p.15-17

³⁹ Kannapuram Grama panchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, p.22

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.22

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.12

⁴² Chemmanad Gramapanchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, p.13

The Government soon realized that the growth of reading rooms would be a threat to safeguard the interests of the Government, as these institutions were propagating revolutionary ideas.

In Kannur a number of libraries were founded during the National Movement but the Government banned their activities in 1940. This reveals the importance of the libraries and reading rooms.⁴³

The radicalization of the society was a major task the libraries and the reading rooms had taken up knowingly or unknowingly. The activities of the libraries and the *Vayanasalas* brought about social revolution in north Malabar. They became the breeding grounds for political activists. The *Janmis* and the Government could not tolerate all these.

The libraries had also taken up social activities as well. In 1947-48 about 12 *Harijan* pupils were admitted to the school of Choondayil Namboodiri under the leadership of Ananda Thirtha. In Odayammad School also some *Harijan* pupils were admitted. The caste leaders could not tolerate it. The police tortured the people brutally. The Irinave and Mottammal libraries were torched.⁴⁴ Even though the libraries had no direct link with the activities mentioned, the *Janmis* and their supporters believed that the libraries had played a vital role in spreading the *dangerous ideology* of 'equality to all'. So they were not ready to tolerate them.

In the novel *Muthassi* by Cherukad, there explains how a *Vayanasala* became part of the political movement in a local village much away from the cities and towns. The *Vayanasala* was burned down by the anti social elements

⁴³ Mattannur Gramapanchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, p.7

⁴⁴ Kannapuram Gramapanchayath, *Vikasana Rekha*, p.12

saying that they would not tolerate any Congressman running a dangerous institution in the village. They also were against the Indian National Congress.

The establishment of a reading room and a library was not an easy task. Many selfless men should spend days on end to build a good library and a reading room. The books were to be collected from the people since it was difficult to find money for books and newspapers. Reading newspapers and books, and the discussions in these libraries contributed many leading political figures in Malabar. The library movement got momentum in Malabar only in the 1950s.

Apart from Newspapers, there were a number of books in the libraries that were favourable for the growth of Nationalism in Malabar. The programmes of the Nationalist ideology had determined the growth of Malayalam literature. The literature was converted into a powerful instrument of social change.⁴⁵

The most important literary activists who propagated the spirit of nationalism through their works were:

Vallathol Narayana Menon, KumaranAsan, K.P.G.Nambudiri, Vishnu Bharatheeyan,Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, K.Damodharan ,Subramanian Thirumumbu,Kuttamath etc.

Vallathol Narayana Menon, with his amazing poems exalted the masses. His celebrated poems were *Salutation to the Mother* (1918)

⁴⁵ K.K.N.Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature*,p.51

Peasants Song (1919), My Master (1922) and Higher and Higher (1923) Vallathol Narayanamenon had been the progressive poet of the National freedom and social equality.⁴⁶

The period between 1919 and 1929 was well reflected by *Vallathol* at the same time no poet could reflect the period after 1930-32.⁴⁷

Kumaran Asan mainly preached the folly of caste inequalities. Caste discrimination and the miseries of the common people were his favourite themes. *Duravastha*, *Chandala Bhikshuki* and *Karuna* are his remarkable works. All these speak about the problems of the down trodden and their suffering in leading the life of a civilized man.

K.P.G.Nambudiri was considered to be a poet with strong communist ideology.

His most celebrated song was:

"There is a land called the Soviet,
I am blessed if I could go there."

He provided the Communists with slogans that could touch the heart of the common man

K.P.G.Nambudiri was one of the disciples of G.Sankara Kurup. He too had supported the national mood. While Sankarakurup was along with the common national mood and the Gandhian style of functioning, K.P.G.Nambudiri came out of these influences and became a strong

⁴⁶ E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Marxisavum Malayala Sahithyavum*, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1974, p.38

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.188

supporter of the Left movement. His poems like *Sankethathil*, *Thurunkilninnu*, and *Jawaharlal Nehru* were remarkable.⁴⁸

Though Changampuzha Krishna Pillai had been writing poems that were rather romantic, his celebrated poem *Vazhakkula* has extreme importance. It pictures how the *Janmi* exploited the poor *Pulaya* by taking away the bunch of bananas reared by him. His children were anxiously waiting for the ripening of the banana.

Kuttamath was the teacher of the Raja's High School at Nileswaram.

Sreechakraganam was his most celebrated work. *Santhanagopalam* drama was another major work. His plays were performed in all over Malabar and were appreciated as important ingredient to impart political awareness among the common people.

Amsi Narayana Pillai was a clerk in the Travancore Police Department. He resigned from the post. He wrote the celebrated marching song *Varika Varika Sahajare*In 1930, he conducted a march. All the three Governments banned him because they feared that his march would instigate popular ire on the Government. He was imprisoned in the Viyyur Jail for six months.⁴⁹ P.Kunhiraman Nair is one of the renowned poets of Kerala. He wrote many patriotic songs. *Thookkumarathil* was one written in respect of Bhagat Singh. He was much pained when an attempt was made on the life of Gandhiji in 1934 and he wrote *Mangala pathram*.

⁴⁸ Ibid,p.336

⁴⁹ M.Achuthan,*Swathanthrya Samaravum Malayala Sahithyavum*,p.261

N.V.Krishna Variar had preached the *Swatanthra Bahrat'ham* while he was in exile.

He was a nationalist and a Congressman. Kelappan and V.T.Bhattathirippad were his colleagues. His important works to boost the political consciousness were *Vantippinammaye* and *Karma Sopanam*.

The Role of the Theatre.

The theatre was a powerful means to educate the masses. During the summer and after the harvests the paddy fields became centres of so many meetings of the *Karshaka Sangham* and the Trade Unions.

The anniversary celebrations of many libraries too were marked with the plays. To inspire the people K. Damodharan wrote *Pattabakki* (The Rent Arrears) and *Raktha Paanam* (Drinking of Blood)—both played on many stages. Wherever there was a meeting of the *Karshaka Sangham*, there performed any of these plays.⁵⁰ *Pattabakki* was first performed in 1937 at Ponnani. The exploitation by then *Janmis* was the theme, which was the message of Communist Manifesto.⁵¹ With the performance of the *Pattabakki* and the *Raktha Paanam* embarked on a new era of performance art in which the life struggle of the common people and the workers began to be the subject of writers.⁵²

Pattabakki (The Rent Arrears) described the painful life of the poor peasants. The *Janmis* and the Government exploited their life, work and rights. The ignorant people were thus given political education. These two plays mainly

⁵⁰ K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature, p.106

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Marxisavum Malayala Sahityavum*, p.150

deal with the class relations. The peasant folks were politically educated on the basis of class-consciousness. The situations thus described were part of their day today life. They had been unable to pay the rent fixed by the *Janmis*.

They were driven out of the land, which they occupied for not paying the rent arrears. They could not pay the rent because of poor harvests. The Government and the *Janmis* tortured them without mercy. The message of the theatre highlighted a Government by the working class. This enthused them very much. These plays acted an important role in spreading the Communist ideology in Malabar.

The Sanskrit school at Vellikoth performed plays, which contained the message of Nationalism. *Pakkanar Charitam* and *Kabirdas Charitam*. They were against the caste proscriptions.⁵³ *Bharatha Ratham* was a play written by K.P.Kunhirama Poduval in 1944. When the play was performed in the Calicut town hall, the actors were arrested by the police saying that it contained the message of the Indian National Congress.⁵⁴ P.Kelu Nair wrote *Bhishma Prathijna*, the play that was against casteism. He wrote another play namely *Syamanthakam*. He was one among the organizers of the Payyannur Conference of the Indian National Congress.

Even though the school education provided a strong base for the people to read and express their feelings through writing, it had not provided them a space beyond the textbooks. In this context, the role of the newspapers, reading rooms, libraries, booklets, leaflets public speeches etc. was extremely significant. The schools provided the children with mere literacy,

⁵³ K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature, p.102

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.105

which was necessary for reading what the media had to say. At the same time the political spirit of the people was awakened by these factors. The schools acted as factories to produce literate people. But they were incapable of providing any remarkable contribution to the political atmosphere.

The social evils were discussed in the classrooms and there were messages against them. But they deliberately ignored political issues. The situation being this, the society demanded radical ideas that were not at all available at schools. So there appeared many factors that took up the role of making the people politically conscious. Political consciousness would not have been possible in Malabar, if these factors had not worked.

APPENDICES

Appendix-I

Prominent Trade Unions in the First half of the 20th Century

AITUC (1920)

The Kozhikkode Labour Union (1932) with Manchunatha Rao-President and P.Krishna Pillai-Secretary

Azheekode Neithu Thozhilali Union-Kannur(1934)

Akhila Krerala Thozhilali Sanghatana(1935)-Secretary P.Krishna Pillai

The Beedi Thozhilali Union Kannur (1936-37)

Common Wealth Workers Union (1936-37)

Aikya Thozhilali Union, Badagara- M.K.Kelu- president,P.P.Sankaran Secretary, Chirakkal Taluk Trade Union Council-P.V.Chathu Nair President(1942)

Appendix-II

Teachers who participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (List incomplete)

Appukunhan Adiyodi: He Participated in the *Uppu Satyagraha* and was jailed for 16 months. He also participated in the *Guruvayur Satyagraha*.

Kunhappa Nambiar.P.K: He was a primary school teacher. He participated in *Uppu Satyagraha* and toddy shop picketing the 1930 struggle. At Kuthuparambu he spoke against the Government and was put in jail for 1 year.

Kunhi Narayanan Nambiar Pananthatta: He took part in the *Uppu Satyagraha* with Kelappan. The police beat him.

Kunhiraman Nambiar.K.T: He was a teacher at the *Vijnana dayini* School. He claimed no salary. He was the volunteer captain of the Payyannur meeting

of the Indian National Congress in which Nehru participated. During the *Uppu Satyagraha* he was beaten up and jailed in Vellore for 4 months.

Kunhirama Pothuval: He resigned in 1930 to join the *Uppu Satyagraha*. He was jailed. After that he founded two *Harijan* schools. He was also in the *Guruvayur Satyagraha* and was in jail 4 months.

Krishnan.C.H.: He took part in the Payyanur *Satyagraha* and toddy shop picketing. He got 7 months term in jail.

Govindan Nambissan.V.M: He preached Hindi for which he established a *Hindi Vidyapeedam* at Payyannur. In 1942 he spoke at Calicut and was jailed.

Govindan Nambiar. C.H: He was a clerk. He resigned in 1920. Later he became a teacher in the Rajas High School and Thalasseri Mission School. He was behind the Payyannur Congress Conference of 1928. He tried to bring the teachers and the students to the forefront of the freedom struggle.

Appendix-III

Teachers who participated in the Quit India Movement (List incomplete)

Abu Komath: He made an anti British speech, conducted study classes; he snatched a gun from the police in 1945 and was killed in shooting.

Karthambu: He participated in picketing of the Thalasseri court and was jailed for 9 months.

Kunhambu.K: He picketed the Thalasseri court along with others. He was in jail for 2 months. He spread the Newspaper *Swathanthra Bharatham*. In 1944, he presided over the banned meeting of the Congress at Calicut and was jailed for 2 years.

Kumaran.I.K: He resigned his job in 1940 to join the *Satyagraha*.

Kumaran.M.T: He was a teacher participated in the Quit India Struggle and was jailed.

Gopalan P: In 1940 he participated in the individual *Satyagraha* and was jailed for 40 days. He was later put in jail for 18 months.

Appendix-IV

Literacy among the convicts in various prisons in Madras State

1905—12.30%
 1910—13.58%
 1914—17.25%
 1923—22.61%
 1930—30.62%
 1932—24.48%

(Administration Report of Jails for relevant years. Regional Archives, Calicut.)

Appendix-V

Participation of the Student Community in the Freedom Struggle (List incomplete)

Achuthan Nambiar.P.V: He participated in the *Uppu Satyagraha* while in the Ninth standard. He took part in the picketing of the toddy shops at Calicut. He was put in prison for one week. He also participated in the *Guruvayur Satyagraha* and the Civil Dis Obedience Movement. He was put in jail for eight months.

Ananthan.M: He was a volunteer in the meetings of the Indian National Congress. He preached *Khadi* while he was in School.

Ananthan Nambiar.P : He picketed the toddy shops and the foreign goods shops at Thalasseri.

Appunni Nair.P.C: While in the Vth Form, he boycotted the school following the call of Gandhiji. For picketing the toddy shops he was imprisoned for four months.

Appa Nair.K.P: He participated in the Non-Co-operation Movement while studying in the Brennen College, Thalasseri.

Ibrahimkutty, Payyannur: For participating in the Quit India struggle he was expelled from the school.

Uppy.K: He left the College in 1920 to participate in the Non Co-Operation Movement.

Karunakaran Nambiar.V: He participated in the Quit India Movement and the Student Movement.

Kunhambu Nair.M: He was expelled from the school for participating in the *Uppu Satyagraha* and toddy shop picketing. He was jailed for eight months in 1942.

Govindan Adiyodi.T.N: He was barred from attending the Intermediate examination for wearing the Gandhi cap at school.

Damodaran.M.C: Participated in the Quit India Struggle while doing his Intermediate. He was put in Kannur jail for three months.

Damodhara Sheroy Kottachery: He left the college accepting the call of Gandhiji. He was jailed for six months.

Dr.P.Nanu: He took medical degree from Madras. During the Simon Commission boycott, he participated in the student strike and was jailed for one month.

Narayanan Nambiar.T.C: He was the congress volunteer in 1928. He became a teacher later. He participated in the *Uppu Satyagraha*. In 1935, he was jailed for three months.

Narayanan Nambiar. P.K: He worked as the correspondent of the *Mathrubhumi*. He participated in the starvation march of 1930.

Narayana Poduval.K.V: He participated in the Quit India Struggle. He picketed the registrar office at Thrikkariapur, blocked the mail train in which the leaders were taken to the jails. He was suspended from the school. He got 15 days imprisonment.

Prabhakaran Nair.V: He was an activist of the *Vidyarthi Congress*. Participated in the Quit India Movement.

Madhavan.K: He left the school and joined the *Vijnanadayini* school at Vellikoth In 1928. Jailed for many times for *Satyagrahas*.

Kunhi Rama Poduval.A.K: He left the school while studying for the Intermediate to join the salt *Satyagraha*. He also participated in the Quit India Movement and imprisoned for eight months in the Alipore jail.

Kumaran Nair. P.K.: He participated in the *Uppu Satyagraha* in Kanhanagad while he was a student.

Krishna Kini : He was a Congress activist while he was a student. He participated in the Civil Dis Obedience Movement. He was jailed for a period of 10 months during the movement. He was jailed for 13 months in the Kizhariyur bomb case.

Krishnakumar Nair.P.U: He was a student at the Rajas High school. He participated in the Quit India Movement and was in the police custody for one month.

Krishnan Kalathil: He was expelled from the school for wearing the Gandhi cap. He was jailed for 15 days.

Krishnan Nambiar.M: He was a student at the Rajas High School. While he was in the VIIth Form, he participated in the 1931 struggle and was put in jail for 6 months. He also participated in the Guruvayur *Satyagraha*.

K.A.Keraleeyan

(Kunhappa Nambiar): He was expelled from the *Thanjavour Vidyapeedam* as he participated in the foredoom struggle. Before expulsion he joined the *Vijnanadayini School* at Vellikoth. He participated in the *Uppu Satyahraha*. Later he joined the Congress Socialist Party.

Kombrabel.B.K: He tried to build a National School at Kannur while doing his B.A degree in Mangalore. He became a teacher later.

Komappoduval: He worked in the *Vidyarthi Congress* while in the school. In 1942 he was jailed for blocking the Mail Express.

Koran Nair Nittoor: He participated in the *Kadakam Satyagraha* while he was a student. He was arrested and expelled from the school.

Gopalakrishnan Nambiar.E.K: He was an activist of the *Vidyarthi Congress*. In 1942 took part in the strike and was punished by the school authorities. The police beat him up.

Madhavan Pampan: He participated in the Simon Commission boycott in 1928.He also participated in the *Uppu Satyagraha*.

Madhava Prabhu.N: While in the Rajas High School in the 8th standard participated in the Quit India Struggle jailed for 2 months.

Vasudevan.P: He was a leader of the *Vidyarthi Congress*. Participated in the Quit India Struggle.

Vijayan Nambiar.P.V: While in the 5th standard, he founded the *Balabharatha Sangham*. He was expelled from the Rajas High School as he participated in the 1942 struggle. He picketed the courts and was jailed for 4 months.

Sankaran Nambiar.C.K: While in the Rajas High School, he picketed the toddy shops.

Sankaran Nair.V: He was a *Vidyarthi Congress* activist. He participated in the Quit India Struggle.

Sreedharan.P.P: He participated in the Quit India Movement in the Chirakkal Taluk.

Sreedharan.C.P: He was a high school student. Participated in the Quit India Struggle and was jailed.

Sreedharan Nambiar.K: He was expelled from the Rajas High School as he took part in the Quit India Movement. Jailed for 3 months.

Subramania Shenoy.C.K: He participated in the toddy shop picketing.

CONCLUSION

We have examined the development of education system in Kerala and the growth of political consciousness that was linked with the advancement of education.

Asan Pallikkoodams were the centres of traditional education in Kerala. These schools were the major source of imparting education to the people. The children were given basic education at home. Then they were taken to the *Asan* school for further studies. Only small elite groups were conspicuous beneficiaries from this system of education and the majority was still out of this circle. Many of these *Asan* schools were later converted into modern schools.

Apart from these schools, there were Missionary schools as well.

This new type of school system was a centre where 'modern' subjects like science, mathematics and history were taught. This education was obviously sufficient to create advocates, teachers and other professionals, though they were only a minority among the masses. At the same time the majority of the people were not part of this class. Those who reached England or cities like Madras for higher studies were the first to be attracted towards political activities. Their wide knowledge of the bitter struggle that had been going on in many parts of the world against the colonial exploitation attracted them towards the political movement.

These groups provided Malabar with leaders who pioneered the National Movement there. Among them included A.K.Pillai, K.Kelappan, K.P.Kesavamenon and Mohammed Abdurahiman. Only the persons

belonging to the emerging middle class became political activists in the early stage of the National Movement.

The colonial regime tried to control the educational institutions with a view that they should not produce any radical elements. They changed the structure of these institutions to suit their objective. The education system was supposed to be responsible for producing a colonial society in which the common people would have no say. In short, the consolidation of the colonial rule was the task assigned to the education system.

The colonial masters pretended to be progressive in their unequivocal stand against casteism. They strongly opposed the caste discrimination prevailing in the area through textbooks and other media, for they needed a homogeneous community for the smooth functioning of the colonial order.

The schools were strictly ruled by managers and bureaucrats who had brawny links with the colonial administration. They came to be the inevitable component of the system. The loyalty to the King was an important lesson that these schools imparted. The political activities were not at all tolerated. Those who had any distant link with politics were harassed and expelled from the schools. The students who had any connection with the political activists were sent out of the schools or punished accordingly. This attitude could also be visible in some of the leaders of the Indian National Congress. They could not tolerate the students participating in the political activities.

The report of the Director of Public Instruction, Madras has clearly stated thus:

"The conduct of every student outside the premises of the of the College or School to be noted. Conduct to be noted in the attendance register to forbid use of any book which is objectionable from an educational, moral, political or social point of view."¹

By the 1930s the colonial administration became adamant in its approach towards political activities in schools and colleges.

The Madras Education Rules says:

"No pupil convicted in a court of law for disloyal activities should be admitted into schools without the previous sanction of the Government..... the pupils should not be permitted to attend political meetings or to engage in any form of political agitation."²

So it was almost impossible for a student to be politically cognizant in such a situation.

The general concept about the education system in those days was that it should impart only information. The system used its entire means to educate the pupils ignoring the aptitude of the children. The school became a centre where knowledge of the textbooks was imparted by force. All other activities were not at all part of the school life. The common people accepted this presupposition as well. This was the brilliant plan of the colonial administration to silence the radical sections of the society. They deliberately strived for the universal acceptance of their schemes. So education became separated from society and its experiences. Some teachers, who had the sparks of national feeling in them, might have inspired their students with the spirit of nationalism, but it happened mainly out of the academic ambience.

This was essentially because of the menace by the Government.

¹ Report of the Director of Public Instruction, Madras, 1900, p.1

² Madras Education Rules, 1930, p.99

The Madras Education Rules clarifies:

"No manager or staff or of the establishment are permitted to take part in political agitation directed against the authority of Government or to inculcate opinion tending to excite feelings of political disloyalty or disaffection."³

Thus we can consider, without any ambiguity, the school being a conservative institution throughout the colonial period, not a liberating influence. Any progressive shift was deliberately bridled.

In this context it is apt to quote what Antonio Gramsci says:

"The traditional school was oligarchic because it was intended for the new generation of the ruling class, destined to rule in its turn: but it was not oligarchic in its mode of teaching. It is not the fact that the pupils learn how to rule there, nor the fact that it tends to produce gifted men, which gives a particular type of school its social character. This social character is determined by the fact that each social group has its own type of school, intended to perpetuate a specific traditional function, ruling or subordinate."⁴

The majority of the people in Kerala were ordained to become subordinate.

The education system under the colonial regime was liberating only in the field of literacy, which on the other hand, indirectly prompted the growth of radical political influence later. Those who changed the society with their revolutionary ideals were not at all the supporters of the colonial mode of education.

The spread of mass education in Kerala in the early decades of the 20th century was a process in which Sreenarayana Guru, Ayyankali, Vagbhatananda, the S.N.D.P etc. played a vital role. They were not at all inspired by the ideology of the modern colonial education, but by the social and political necessities of their respective social groups. They influenced

³ Ibid

⁴ Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, International Publishers, New York, 1978, P.40

the society in a big way providing greater opportunities for the people belonging to all sections of the society.

The literate class as a whole did not participate in the National Movement or any other political struggle. Many took up jobs in the Government departments and kept away from the main stream. This group had majority among the educated people and appeared to be the supporters of the colonial haven.

The literate class were able to attain language skills, dialogical methods etc. They could write poetry, conduct speeches and hold discourses, write articles on various subjects of their interest etc. It is true that there were literary clubs in some schools but their role in generating social or political consciousness also was very limited. These activities were taken place mostly outside the school environment and created an open space for discussions, which paved the way for founding organizations like the CSP, CPI etc. The school had no role in this process rather than providing the knowledge of letters.

In this context it is rather weak to argue that the education system unleashed the spirit of political consciousness. Hence it is sagacious to arrive at the conclusion that the process was done by those who had left the school after their studies. If the educated people only had participated in the political struggle, it would not have been a mass movement. They alone could not have shouldered the cumbersome task of leading the political movements. The uneducated masses too were an integral part of the social and political struggles. Many of them jubilantly jumped into the kiln of political struggle, for they had become political. The question of how they became politically conscious despite their educational backwardness is rather pertinent.

As there had been open spaces for getting information regarding the political and other issues, the illiterate masses were much attracted towards the movement. Public meetings, *Jathas*, public speeches, dramas, public reading of newspapers etc. were some of them. The common people accrued energy and confidence from these forces to face the new realities. Thus they became the vanguards of the National Movement, Peasant Struggles and the Working Class Movement.

The role of literacy and education ended with the creation of a public space for the members of the society to express their feelings, anxieties, ideas etc. freely. General politicization of the people of Malabar was done in this public space. If the public space had not arrived, no politicization would have occurred.

GLOSSARY

<i>a..aa</i>	:The first two letters of Malayalam alphabet
<i>Adidravidas</i>	:The aboriginal tribes of Kerala
<i>Adhikari</i>	:Person who has the authority to control a particular area especially collection of revenue and maintaining of law and order.
<i>Adivasis</i>	:The aboriginal tribes
<i>Agraharam</i>	:The village of <i>Tamil Brahmins</i> .
<i>Aksharasankhya</i>	:Number converted to a letter of the alphabet
<i>Ambalavasi</i>	:Temple servants
<i>Antharala</i>	:Castes just below the <i>Brahmins</i>
<i>Ariyittuvazhcha</i>	:The coronation ceremony of Kings
<i>Aasan</i>	:The teacher in an indigenous school(<i>Pallikkoodam</i>)
<i>Ashramam</i>	:The place where the saints live
<i>Avarna</i>	:The lower caste
<i>Bhrashtan</i>	:The outcaste
<i>Brahmin</i>	:The upper caste in the caste hierarchy
<i>Brahmini</i>	:The <i>Brahmin</i> woman
<i>Chandala</i>	:The lower caste
<i>Chathurvarnya</i>	:A system of caste hierarchy
<i>Cherikkal</i>	:Land under the control of the king
<i>Cheruma</i>	:A slave caste
<i>Chilanti</i>	:The spider
<i>Enchuvadi</i>	:Basic mathematics
<i>Erinhadi</i>	:Beat by throwing a stick
<i>Ezhava</i>	:A lower caste in Kerala
<i>Ezhuthachan</i>	:The teacher of the <i>ezhuthupalli</i>
<i>Ezhuthupalli</i>	:The traditional school where letters are taught
<i>Grandham</i>	:Book
<i>Janmam</i>	:Hereditary property right of the landlord
<i>Janmi</i>	:The land lord
<i>Jatha</i>	:Procession
<i>Kaali</i>	:The war goddess
<i>Kalaris</i>	:The traditional school for martial arts that existed in Kerala. Schools that taught skills that involved physical exercise such as dancing were also called <i>Kalaris</i>

<i>Kanajanma Maryada</i>	:The traditional system of leasing of land
<i>Kanakkudiyar</i>	:Holder of <i>Kanam</i> right
<i>Kanam</i>	:The property under mortgage and lease
<i>Karanavar</i>	:The head of the <i>Nair</i> joint family
<i>Kavya</i>	:Poetry
<i>Khadi</i>	:Hand woven cloth
<i>Kithab</i>	:Book
<i>Konakam</i>	:Loin cloth
<i>Kovilakam</i>	:The house of the <i>Ambalavasis</i>
<i>Kudippallikkoodam</i>	:The <i>Asan</i> school
<i>Kudiyar</i>	:The tenant
<i>Kusumam</i>	:Flower
<i>Madrassa</i>	:The religious school of the Muslims
<i>Malayali</i>	:Keralite
<i>Malikan</i>	:Pension
<i>Manjal</i>	:Palanquin
<i>Mannappedi</i>	:Fear from the <i>Mannan</i> (a lower caste)
<i>Marakkuda</i>	: A palm leaf umbrella used by the <i>Brahmin</i> women
<i>Misrabhojanam</i>	:Inter dining
<i>Mlecha</i>	:A pejorative term on untouchables and strangers
<i>Molla</i>	:Religious teacher of the Muslims
<i>Musaliyar</i>	:Teacher
<i>Nadar</i>	:A lower caste of Travancore
<i>Naduvarzhi</i>	:Local Chieftain
<i>Nair</i>	:An upper caste
<i>Nambudiri</i>	:The upper caste <i>Brahmin</i>
<i>Nayadis</i>	:The wandering slave tribe
<i>Nilathezhuthu</i>	:Writing on the floor
<i>Olakkuda</i>	:Palm leaf umbrella
<i>Ooralas</i>	:Trustees
<i>Othupalli</i>	:Religious school of the Muslims
<i>Pattam</i>	:Rent
<i>Pattu</i>	:Song
<i>Panakkizhi</i>	:Money
<i>Panchamas</i>	:The castes below the <i>Sudras</i>
<i>Pandaravaka</i>	:Property of the King
<i>Paraya</i>	:A slave caste
<i>Pathasalas</i>	:Schools

<i>Pattabakki</i>	:Arrear of rent
<i>Pidiyari</i>	:A handful of rice
<i>Pathayappura</i>	:The granary
<i>Pulappedi</i>	:Fear from the <i>Pulayas</i>
<i>Pulaya</i>	:A slave caste
<i>Puranas</i>	:The Epics
<i>Puravaka</i>	:Property of the people
<i>Purohita</i>	:The priest
<i>Qazi</i>	:Religious leader
<i>Rakthapanam</i>	:Drinking of Blood
<i>Sambantham</i>	:A kind of Contract marriage between the <i>Brahmins</i> and the <i>Nair</i> women
<i>Samiti</i>	:Organization
<i>Sangham</i>	:Group
<i>Sanghatana</i>	:Organization
<i>Sastra</i>	:Prescribed knowledge ; today it is a term for science
<i>Satyagraha</i>	:An act protest not resorting to violence
<i>Savarna</i>	:The upper caste
<i>Sirkar</i>	:The Government
<i>Sisusalai</i>	:Nursery
<i>Suvisesham</i>	:Sermon
<i>Swami</i>	:Lord
<i>Taravadu</i>	:The house of <i>Nair</i> joint family
<i>Theendal</i>	:Un approachability
<i>Thozhilali</i>	:Labourer
<i>Thullal</i>	:A performance art
<i>Ulema</i>	:The learnt man
<i>Ullaada</i>	:A lower caste
<i>Upanayanam</i>	:The Sacred thread ceremony
<i>Vayanasala</i>	:The reading room
<i>Vettuva</i>	:A lower caste
<i>Verumpattam</i>	:Simple lease
<i>Vidyarambham</i>	:Initiation into letters

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