

**THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS
IN THE GROWTH OF
THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT OF KERALA**

*Thesis submitted to the
University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of*
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY**

By

PRIYADARSINI. P

Under the guidance of

Prof. (Dr.) K.K.N. KURUP
Former Vice-Chancellor
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

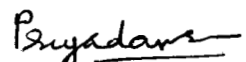
**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

2007

DECLARATION

I, Priyadarsini. P., do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **“THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE GROWTH OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT OF KERALA”** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in History**, has not been submitted by me fully or partially for the award of a Degree, Diploma, Title or Recognition before.

Calicut University Campus,
31-01-2007.


PRIYADARSINI. P

Prof. (Dr.) K.K.N. KURUP
Former VICE-CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

Calicut University Campus,
31-01-2007.

CERTIFICATE

I, Prof. (Dr.) K.K.N. Kurup, do hereby certify that the thesis entitled **"THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE GROWTH OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT OF KERALA"** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in History** is a record of bonafide study and research carried out by Mrs. Priyadarsini. P under my supervision and guidance.



Prof. (Dr.) K.K.N. Kurup
(Supervising Teacher)

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ABBREVIATIONS

B.E.M.	:	Basel Evangelical Mission
C.M.S.	:	Church Mission Society
I.N.C.	:	Indian National Congress
K.P.C.C.	:	Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee
L.M.S.	:	London Mission Society
N.S.S.	:	Nair Service Society
S.N.D.P.Yogam	:	Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam

INTRODUCTION

This thesis “The Role of Intellectuals in the Growth of National Movement of Kerala” is part of an enquiry to analyse and understand, the role of intellectuals in aspiring self-consciousness and national awareness among the masses, and hence creating a congenial atmosphere for the growth of the ideology on nationalism in Kerala. What differentiates other people of a society from the intellectuals is a notion that should certainly be dealt with. To Antonio Gramsci, “All men are potentially intellectuals in the sense of having an intellect and using it, but not all are intellectuals by social function.”¹ This opinion about the intellectuals justifies their role in the society and the creation of hegemonic social classes. Though an intellectual is commonly defined as a person possessing or supposed to possess superior power of intellect over others, but in the Gramscian model, it is not that she or he possesses ‘superior’ powers of intellect, but that they have in society a responsibility to produce knowledge and /or to pass that knowledge to others. The function of an intellectual is, above all, directive and organisational, i.e., educative and intellectual.² For any proletarian revolution to be successful, we see the directive and organisational achievement of the intellectuals associated with it. Apart from capturing economic and proletarian power, Gramsci thought that the proletariat must face the problem of capturing intellectual power. To put it simply his notion of proletarian revolution subsumed the replacement of bourgeoisie cultural

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1. Antonio Gramsci, *Selection From Prison Note Books*, (trans.) by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence & Winhart, London, 1971, p.1
 2. Kate Crehan, (ed.), *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology*, Pluto Press, London, 2002, p.131.

consciousness by the proletarian cultural consciousness.³ Analysed so intellectuals are crucial in their role in the establishment of a new social order. The intellectuals are who transform the incoherent and fragmentary feelings of those who have a particular class position in to a coherent and reasoned account of the world as it appears from that position.⁴ Sri Narayana Guru, Brahmananda Shivayogi, Vaghabadananda Gurudevan, Chattampi Swamikal and Swami Sivananda Paramahamsar, whom I have studied in particular as intellectuals in my work subscribe very much to this view. Organically connected with the backward classes, they tried to educate and enlighten the masses and hence created a successful proletarian culture. It is true about them when Robert. W. Cox opined on the intellectuals as not a distinct and relatively classless social stratum. In Cox's words, "They perform the function of developing and sustaining the mental images, technologies and organisation which bind together the members of a class and of an historic bloc into a common identity."⁵ Organisational capacity of an intellectual is of great importance as far as the subaltern classes are concerned because it is their inability to organise, which is exploited by the feudal powers of the society. For any group to achieve dominance and to make its conception of the world hegemonic, and then to reproduce that hegemony, demands organization.⁶ By

3. Ragen Harshe, *Twentieth Century Imperialism: Shifting Contours and Changing Conception*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1994, p.152.

4. Kate Crehan, (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.129-130.

5. Robert. W. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations" in Stephen Gill (ed.), *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p.51.

6. Kate Crehan (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.132.

intellectuals, must be understood not those strata commonly described by this term, but in general the entire social stratum which exercise an organisational function in the wider scale- whether in the field of production, or in that of culture or in that of political administration.⁷ The enormous development of activity and organisation of the education in the broad sense in the societies that merged from the medieval world is an index of the importance assumed in the modern world by intellectual functions and categories.⁸

Gramsci begins his note 'The Formation of Intellectuals' with a question, "Are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular specialised category of intellectuals?"⁹ To answer this question Gramsci has distinguished between two types of intellectuals, traditional and organic. This distinction is very relevant in the case of the intellectuals of colonial India. Intellectuals of the rural type are for the most part 'traditional' that is they are linked to the social mass of country people and the town (particularly small town) petite bourgeoisie, not as yet elaborated and set in motion by the capitalist system.¹⁰ They are one who brings into contact the peasant masses with the local and state administration. The second types of intellectuals, the organic intellectuals are those with fundamental structural ties to a particular class.¹¹ It can be observed the 'organic' intellectuals, which every new class creates along side

7. Gramsci, quoted in Kate Crehan, *ibid.*, p.132.

8. Antonio Gramsci, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

9. *Ibid.*, p.5.

10. *Ibid.*, p.14.

11. Kate Crehan, *op.cit.*, p.137.

itself and elaborates in the course of its development are for the most part 'specialisation' of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence.¹²

The nature and the role of the intellectuals in colonial India in promoting the spirit of nationhood and fighting against various dogmatism occupies a major portion of the colonial history of India. Nineteenth century India was deeply engulfed in bigotry, superstitions, ignorance and blind fatalism. In K.N. Panikkar's words, "That the social practices and religious beliefs prevalent in the nineteenth century acted as impediments to progress was a conviction common to most nineteenth century intellectuals."¹³ It became their responsibility to oppose blind tradition and to reinforce freedom, equality, knowledge, and human dignity. Historians described this period of reformation under the notion of renaissance. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Kesab Chandra Sen, Ishwara Chandra Vidya Sagar, Bal Shastri Jambekar, Aksay Kumar Dutt, Mahadev Govinda Ranade are only some among the many important personalities who tried for an ideological shift of culture in India in the nineteenth century. They forthrightly opposed the inequalities and irrelevant practices in their society. K.N. Panikkar says, "While opposing the hegemonic values of feudal society, the intellectuals advocated the introduction and acceptance of value characteristic of a bourgeoisie order."¹⁴ They stressed the

12. Antonio Gramsci, *op.cit.*, p.6.

13. K. N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony, Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, Tulika Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p.7.

14. *Ibid.*, p.8.

need for education, rationalism, scientific reasoning and technical development in the western model. Though initially they did not oppose the colonial regime, later the intellectuals exposed before the masses the exploiting nature of colonialism. The writings of Dadabai Naoroji and R.C. Dutt were examples of how India was bled white by the colonial exploitation. They stood for the growth of press, started schools and colleges and championed the cause of female education. The intellectuals then tried to promulgate the feeling of nationalism in India. They provided stimulation and inspiration for the ideology of nationalism to flourish. To aspire and generate mass consciousness became their major function. In this context what Yogendra Singh said is relevant. "For nationalism as a process, aspiration is as important as achievement."¹⁵

Such an ideological shift of paradigm from tradition to modernity was essentially a feature of the society of the Kerala in the nineteenth century also. These beacons of light viz., Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru, Vaghabadananda Gurudevan, Brahmananda Sivayogi, Sivananda Paramahamsar and a lot more who followed their suites were responsible for embarking the era of renaissance in the nineteenth century in Kerala. Engulfed with caste discriminations, slavery, superstitions, polygamy, polyandry, primitive mode of worship, ignorance and stagnant economic growth, the feudal hegemony of Kerala posed a serious threat to its development. It became the prime

15. Yogendra Singh, "Social Process and Dimensions of Indian Nationalism" in Ganshyam Shah (ed.), *Social Transformation in India*, Rawat Publishers, New Delhi, 1997, p.123.

responsibility of the intellectuals to break away the traditional norms by inculcating the feeling of self-confidence of the backward classes. The development of consciousness, dominant or contending, in a society formed one of the major themes of colonial history.¹⁶ He, whose conditions were pathetic at the hands of the dominant classes of his own society, could not gain strength to fight the external forces of colonial domination.

Objectives and Significance of the Study

Though these intellectuals were not directly involved with the national movement to a considerable extent, it was their ideologies, which were indirectly responsible for the growth of the national movement. My objective in this work is to bring into light those teachings and to examine how these ideologies helped to attain for the nationalist movement of Kerala, its democratic outlook. These intellectuals mostly of saintly nature mingled with men of the downtrodden groups and cultivated in them the feeling of self-respect and equality, which were suppressed. These feelings later took the form of an anti colonial consciousness. Here lies the significance of the intellectuals. They took the risk of educating and organising the masses and hence were truly respected by people of all sections. Analysed from Gramscian point of view, they were true intellectuals, who possessed the intellect to guide the masses. For Gramsci the creation and maintenance of hegemonic system depended on the realisation of an organic and dialectical relationship between intellectuals and the masses, relationship which will be fully established in socialist

16. K. N. Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p.57.

societies.¹⁷ The national movement of Kerala was democratic and had the support and cooperation of people from all walks of life; especially of the backward classes. The socialist aspect of the national movement helped to further the cause of Communism in the society here. My argument is that the national movement of Kerala would not have got its democratic and universal outlook without the ideologies of the intellectuals supporting them. So a study on their role in promoting the growth of national movement is very relevant. What Gramsci told about intellectuals, was true of the intellectuals of Kerala. Though intellectuals have the job of producing knowledge; but for those intellectuals interested in the revolutionary transformation of society, knowledge must be based on a genuine understanding of the condition of life experienced by the popular element.¹⁸

In the Kerala context there were many intellectuals who in small and big ways have contributed to the socio-economic transformation there. Their role in the modernization of Kerala society can never be underestimated. But instead of a wide extensive study of all those great persons, I have chosen for my selective intensive study the lives of five great souls of Kerala. Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru in Travancore, Brahmananda Shivayogi in central Kerala, Vagbhadananda Gurudevan and Swami Sivananda Paramahamsar in Malabar. The choice made here is with the specific intention to highlight their contribution as minutely as I could.

17. Leonardo Salamini, *The Sociology of Political Praxis: An Introduction to Gramsci's Theories*, Routledge and Kegan Pvt. Ltd., London, 1981, p.100.

18. Kate Crehan, *op.cit.*, p.131.

Review of Related Literature

Gramsci is the only Marxist theoretician to have analysed from a consistent stand point the problem of intellectuals and ascribed to them a crucial role in the processes of formation and maintenance of past, present and future hegemonies.¹⁹ Hence I have relied greatly on Gramscian literature for my classification of intellectuals. The work by K.N. Panikkar's *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony, Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, explores the relationship between ideology and consciousness in the complex-intellectual situation that came into being in the nineteenth century.²⁰ K.K.N. Kurup in his work, *Nationalism and Social Change - The Role of Malayalam Literature*, has attempted to trace the role of intellectuals of Kerala in fostering the feeling of nationalism. In this work, K.K.N Kurup has argued that the emerging middle class in Kerala found in the intellectuals, the ideologues of social justice and civil liberties. As such the growth of nationalism in Kerala is greatly related to the intellectual awakening which appeared in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The roots of all reform movements and social change in the twentieth century in the region could be traced to these intellectual movements.²¹ The doctoral thesis of Asokan Mundon, "The Renaissance and Social Change in Malabar; A study with Special Reference to Ananda Samajam, Sidhasamajam and Atmavidya Samajam," tries to address

19. Learnado Salamini, *op.cit.*, p.101.

20. K.N. Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p.56.

21. K.K.N. Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change - The Role of Malayalam Literature*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1998, p.33.

the three prominent social movements that tried to rephrase the social and cultural ideas prevailing in Malabar.²² The study looks at the three movements in an integrated way, as agencies that engaged in social transformation in the Malabar region.²³

The doctoral thesis of M. Sahadevan, “The Ideological Bases of Modernity in Kerala,” explains the role of many personalities in transforming the traditional society of Kerala to modernity. M. Sahadevan attributed self – awareness as the need for modernity. Self awareness means here the liberation from the external world, the supernatural world, slavishness to ideology and the concept of high and low based on purity –impurity consciousness on one side and the assertion of the self over external world, to allow creativity to burgeon.²⁴ M. Sahadevan has studied how the ideologies of the philosophers of nineteenth century helped to make men rational and creative. Though there are works dealing on the social reform of the philosophers, none have dealt in detail, the role of intellectuals, in promoting the growth of nationalism in Kerala. Here lies the significance of my topic.

Sources

I have adopted an analytical descriptive approach, in the writing of the thesis. Primary sources in the form of census reports, published by

22. Asokan Mundon, *Renaissance and Social Change in Malabar: A Study with Special Reference to Ananda Samajam, Sidhasamajam and Atmavidya Samajam*, unpublished doctoral thesis of Calicut University, 2003.

23. *Ibid.*

24. M. Sahadevan, *Ideological Basis of Modernity in Kerala*, unpublished doctoral thesis submitted in Calicut University, 2002, p.429.

Governments of Travancore and Cochin were used. Government Reports on slavery, Reports of SNDP Trust, Kollam, *Janmi-Kudiyan* Committee Reports, Reports of Revenue Administration, Reports from Kerala Archives, Totenham Reports of Malabar Rebellion and the like were used to write the thesis. But the most important primary sources that I relied were the original writings of the intellectuals. Sri Narayana Guru's *Atmopadesasatakam*, *Advaita Satakam*, *Vedanta Sutram*, *Anukambadesakam*, *Kundilini Pattu*, *Sivasatakam* and *Sri Narayana Guruvinte Sampoorana Krithikal* by T. Bhaskaran expose his ideologies. *Vagbhadananthente Sampoorana Krithikal* edited by T. Bhaskaran, *Atmavidya* and the Journals of Vagbhadananadan, like, *Atmavidyakahalam*, *Sivayogavilasam*, and *Sivayogivilasam* that I could go through shows how he retaliated against the evils of society. His papers *Atmavidyakahalam* loudly supported Gandhiji and the national movement. Brahmananda Sivayogi, a prolific writer himself was an author of numerous texts like *Mokshapradeepam*, *Sidhanubhuti*, *Anandadarsam*, *Anandadarshamsam*, *Anandakummi*, *Ananda Sutram*, *Stri Vidya Poshini*, *Ananda Vimanam*, *Ananada Sopanam* and so on. KCHR's Project on Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru, though uncompleted until now, had collections of letters of people who had personal experiences with these maestros. *Sidhavedham*, *Mokshasutram*, *Jati Ennatu Entu*, *Sidhavidyarthikkula Natapadikramangal* and *Kerala Anacharam* written by Sivananda Paramahamsar are the only works that throw light about to his ideologies.

Oral interviews were conducted with the aged Nirmalananda Sivayogi, the present President of Sidhashramam, Alathur, who was a true disciple of Brahmananada Shivayogi. Bharati, the daughter of Vaghubadananda shared the views how truly an intellect, her father was. Dharmaraj Kaloor, Vaghubadananda's relative furnished details about the activities, which suggested the communist bent of mind, Vaghubadananda had towards the labourers issues. The Uralungal Labour Society of Vatakara, was in fact a brain child of Vaghubadananda. The interviews with the inmates of Sidha Samajam, Swami Ramakrishanan, Balan and Kashyapan were extremely useful, as these were no much studies on Sivananda Paramahamsar. Kumbalath Santhakumari whose grand father was a disciple of Chattampi Swamikal, herself has written on Chattampi Swamikal, through conversations revealed the greatness of Chattampi Swamikal. Talks were also held with Swami Sookshmananda and Swami Swaroopananda, Swamis of Sivagiri about Sri Narayana Guru. The dailies *Mathrubhumi* and *Desabhimani* were used to study on the trends of nationalism. The *Mathrubhumi* dailies before 1947, which I went through, had detailed reports of Guruvayur *Satyagraha*, Civil obedience movement, Quit India movement and the Communist movement of Kerala.

Regarding the secondary sources there are biographies and various works, which were used as the basis of my study. The biographies by Murkoth Kumaran, M. K. Sanu, G. Kesavan, Vijayalayam Jayakumar in detail explain the life and work of Sri Narayana Guru. In the case of Chattampi Swamikal,

the works of Maheshwaran Nair, Balakrishnan Nair, Jagati Velayudhan Nair, K.P.A. Menon and Kumbalath Santhakumari, analysed from different angles the life and literature of Chattampi Swamikal. M.S. Nair, Bhiman Guruji, and P.V. Gopalakrishnan have tried to explore the life and deeds of Brahmanada Sivayogi, while K.K. Pavithran and Swami Brahmavathan did so in the case of Vagbhadananda. In the case of Sivananda Paramahamsar, no secondary sources were available on his teachings. Other miscellaneous sources include the KCHR files at Trivandrum and the visitors' diary at Sidhashramam, Alathur.

Chapterisation

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter analyses the condition of the society of Kerala in the nineteenth century. Emerged in superstition, caste system, ignorance, with no rational thinking or logical reasoning, Kerala presented a very dull and degenerated scenario then. Oriental despotism referred to by the European scholar was very true in the case of Kerala. Karl Marx wrote:

We must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinction of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man

to external circumstances, instead of elevating men to be the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self developing social state into a never changing natural destiny.²⁵

The caste system with its myriad form of super ordination and sub ordination, its many castes and taboos is perhaps most responsible for conferring on India this dubious honour.²⁶ The caste system and other superstitions associated with it are analysed in detail in the first chapter.

Along with the internal forces of destruction, there were the political cultural and economic threats posed by colonialism. So the impacts of colonialism form the theme of the second chapter. The misery inflicted by the British on Hindustan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all what Hindustan had to suffer before. All the civil wars, revolutions, conquests, famines, strangely complex, rapid and destructive as the successive action in Hindustan may appear, did not go deeper than its surface.²⁷ Stagnant growth and development were witnessed in all fields of social activities. Invariably, the programme taking place in India throughout the nineteenth century has been characterized as de-industrialisation, concepts as arrested development, decline of industries, general regression and industrial devastation.²⁸ The English drained the resources and filled their own coffers.

25. Karl Marx, "The British rule in India", in Marx & Engels (ed.), *The First Indian War of Independence* (1857-1859), Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p.14.

26. Deepanker Gupta, "Hierarchy and Difference: an Introduction" Deepankar Gupta (ed.), *Social Stratification*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991, p.1.

27. Karl Marx, *op.cit.*, p.14.

28. Georges Kristoffel Lieten, *Colonialism, Class and Nations, The Confrontation in Bombay in 1930*, K.P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1984, p.11.

That is why Frantz Fanon wrote, “Without the third world, without colonialism there was no Europe.”²⁹ Both renaissance and revivalism were integral to the search for identity. Colonialism provided the cultural context for their articulation.³⁰ However the colonialist ideologies were greatly responsible for the growth of nationalism in Kerala. There lies the relevance of this chapter.

In Chapter III, the teachings and ideologies of Sri. Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal, Brahmananda Sivayogi, Vaghabadananda Gurudevan and Sivananda Paramahamsar are dealt in detail. It is analysed how they created a silent cultural revolution by denouncing superstition, caste system, inequality, ignorance, animal sacrifices, polygamy, polyandry, child marriages, and parsimonious practices like *taliketukalyanam*, *thirandukuli*, *pulikudi*, *pudavakoda*, *pulakuli*, etc. On the other hand they encouraged simplicity, rationalism, humanism and tried to elevate the individuality of people devoid of any identity. This chapter examines how they prepared the stage for the nationalist movement of Kerala to flourish immediately.

Trends of nationalism are examined in the fourth Chapter. We find in various stages fight for social justice and fight against colonialism occurring simultaneously in Kerala. With the emergence of communist and labour movements in the later phase of national movement, we find the grass root

29. Quoted in Catherine Hall, *Cultures of Empire, Colonisers in Britain and the Empire in Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000, p.13.

30. K.N. Panikkar, “Colonialism, Culture and Revivalism,” *Social Scientist*. Vol. 31, Nos. 1 & 2, January, 2003, p.15.

level participation in the movement by peasants-labourers, and backward classes, for which the role of intellectuals are truly praiseworthy.

In the fifth and the concluding chapter an earnest attempt is made to understand how the social reform movement in totality, affected the growth of nationalism in Kerala. It is seen how the various ideologies of intellectuals against social injustice and even their concept against the consumption of liquor became the slogans and motives of the various phases of the national movement. As an impact of the social reforms on the national movement we could see that down trodden classes and women were mobilized into it. The social reforms also helped Communism and Socialism to easily penetrate and make a permanent footing in Kerala. The historical Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 which allow people of all castes to enter and worship, temples of their choice was a great success of the social reform movement.

CHAPTER I

THE SOCIETY OF KERALA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The scenario of the society of Kerala in the nineteenth century was that of a degenerated one, engulfed in the worst form of caste distinction, which was extremely visible by unapproachability and untouchability. The issue of caste system or caste differences was of a very serious nature in the society of Kerala. The caste system operated in the most irrational manner here. People at all levels of Hindu society observed the triple social evils of untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability.

The society of Kerala as well of India is divided into groups known as castes for over three million years. The English word caste is of Portuguese and Spanish origin, *casta* or race.¹ Caste implies some thing not mixed properly from the Latin, *castus*.² A caste has been described as a social unit and it is in accordance with its character as such that it is generally speaking the guardian of its own rules, that it disciplines its members, expels them from the community or readmits them after penalties imposed and satisfaction exacted.³ The Hindus of India date back the authenticity of castes to their sacred texts the *vedas*, according to which Hindus are divided into four groups, the brahmin,

1. Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchus: The Caste System and its Implications*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1970, p.21 See also, J. Murdoch, *Review of Caste in India*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1977, p.1, Sridhar, V. Ketkar, *The History of Castes in India*, Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1979, p12.

2. Louis Dumont, *Ibid.*, p.21.

3. J.H. Hutton, *The Caste in India*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1963, p.94.

the kshatriya, the vaisya and the sudra. Louis Dumont states that now contrary to what Hindus often imagine, caste has no place in the vedas, which for the Hindus, contains all revelations.⁴

The *jatis* or castes, which most scholars differentiate from the varnas, evolved later due to inter-marriages and mixing of the members of the four varnas, mentioned above. D. D. Kosambi argued that caste did not arise out of any internal division of *varna* of vedic society, the literary meaning of *varna* being colour. The divisions were the result of external forces. With food surplus, which would be exchanged for commodities, a new social organization began to be formed among the Aryans around 1000 B.C.⁵ Morton Class, a social anthropologist has taken a similar view and has emphasized the pivotal role of caste in the economy of India. He has stated that the South Asian socio economic system is strictly inseparable from the caste system. Whatever caste may be on sociological and ideological levels, it is clearly the crucial element of the economy.⁶

The caste system has been differentiated by scholars from the class system of the western countries. The complex nature of caste has made it tough for the scholars to give a clear definition of it. The most popular theory on Indian caste is that of Louis Dumont who argued that Indians belonged to a

4. Louis Dumont, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

5. D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to The Study of Indian History*, Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1956, p.95.

6. Morton Class, quoted in Ganashyam Shah, (ed.), *Caste and Democratic Politics in India*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2002, p.12.

distinct human or cultural category, that of *Homo Hierarchus*. The principle of the opposition of the pure and the impure underlies hierarchy, which is the superiority of the pure to the impure; underlines separation because the pure and impure must be kept separate, and underlies the division of labour because pure and impure occupation must like wise be kept separate. The whole is founded on the necessary and hierarchical coexistence of the two opposites.⁷ Dumont argued that the political and economic domains of social life in India had always been encompassed by the religious domain, articulated in terms of an opposition between purity and pollution.⁸ A lot of importance has been given by Dumont to make the religious domain the prime feature of the ideology of caste, which he has described by the single world hierarchy. Caste is fundamentally religious and hierarchy is about the valorization of society over the individual.⁹ For Dumont the presence of the renunciating element in Hinduism does not alter his central premise, which is that it is fundamental to Hindu thought to rank all beings, all substances and all aspects of worldly social existence by this overarching criterion of purity and pollution.¹⁰ According to Dumont's theory brahmins stand at the apex of the caste hierarchy, even kings being subordinate to them, because they are purer than any other caste. As per Dumont's theory, ideologies of individualism,

7. Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchus*, *op.cit.*, p.43.

8. Nicholas Dirks, *Caste of Mind, Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002, p.57.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Susan Bailey, *The New Cambridge History of India, Caste, Society and Politics in India from the 18th Century to the Modern day*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p.79.

competition and equality is absent in caste society because it is purely hierarchical. Andre Beteille and Senart E, Barth. F and Berreman like Dumont have stressed on the graded stratification. To Beteille caste may be defined as a small land named group of persons characterised by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life, which sometimes includes the pursuit of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in hierarchical system.¹¹ A caste system is one whereby a society is divided up into a number of self contained and completely segregated units, the mutual relations between which are ritually determined on a graded scale.¹²

G. S. Ghuriye has given the six features of caste as follows; (1) segmental division of society, (2) hierarchy, (3) restrictions of feeding and social intercourse, (4) civil and religious disabilities of different sections (5) lack of unrestricted choice of occupation and (6) restrictions on marriage.¹³ Celestial Bougle has given three significant features of Indian caste system. Bougle has opined that hereditary specialisations, reciprocal repulsion regarding separation in matters of marriage and contact and family hierarchy, as far as any social form can realize in its purity, the caste system is realised in India.¹⁴ Most of the western scholars have agreed on the rigid and unchangeable nature of Indian caste system and the theory of hierarchy.

11. Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power, Changing Patterns of Stratification, in Tanjore Village*, Oxford University, Delhi, 1969, pp.38-53.

12. E. Senart, quoted in J. Murdoch, *op.cit.*, p.8.

13. G. S. Ghuriye, "Features of Caste" in Ganashyam Shah (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.38-57.

14. Celestian Bougle, *Essays on the Caste System*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, p.21.

Dumont, Leach R. and Bailey have agreed that caste system is a unique system found in India only.¹⁵ To every one caste has been considered the model of a static, rigid, hierarchical social system.¹⁶

M.N. Srinivas, a pioneer among the Indian anthropologists to have studied about caste system said that the village community consisted of hierarchical groups, each with its own duties and privileges. The caste at the top had power and privileges, which were denied to the lower castes. The lower castes were tenants, servants, landless labourers and debtors or the clients of the higher castes.¹⁷ Eric Miller has subscribed to this view of M.N. Srinivas. In his article 'Villages in North Kerala,' in M.N. Srinivas's book, Miller has given the picture of the occupational pattern here. "Nambudiris and chieftain castes tend to be landowners (*jenmies*); the higher nair sub-castes are either land owners or non cultivating tenants (customary *kanamdars*); the inferior nairs and some thiyyas are cultivating sub-tenants either on permanent leases or on annual leases (*verumpattamkars*); the majority of upper polluting castes are landless labourers; while the lower polluting castes were recently serfs, tied to a particular block of land."¹⁸

15. Murdoch, *op.cit.*, p.13.

16. Owen M. Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1969, p.4.

17. M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1966, p.19.

18. Eric, Miller, "Village Structure of North Kerala," in M.N. Srinivas (ed.) *India's Villages*, APH Publishing House, Bombay, 1955, pp.44-45.

In the opinion of the recent scholars like Partha Chatterjee, “Caste attaches to the body not to the soul, it is the biological reproduction of the human species through procreation within endogamous caste groups which ensures the permanence of ascribed marks of caste purity and pollution.”¹⁹ Indian scholars now don’t agree to the view of Louis Dumont’s hierarchy. Deepanker Gupta when opposing the colonial view of rigidity and hierarchy associated to the Indian caste system says, “Brahmin hierarchy is only one version albeit the most resourceful of all. When economic and political changes take place, even the self-evaluation of castes does change.”²⁰

The caste system did not exist in the ancient Kerala Society. It was an innovation introduced by the Aryans who came from outside. Though the caste system with its vigorous social exclusiveness had not crystallised itself during the early Sangam age, the later Sangam period witnessed the rudimentary form of social stratification.²¹ Slowly and steadily the vulgar trends of untouchability and hierarchical degradation crept into the society of Kerala. To begin with caste system was claimed as not a strategic devise conceived and worked by an influential few for selfish ends, but a scheme of cooperative life based on the highest ideal of universal well being. The most general view is

19. Partha Chatterjee, “Caste and Sub- Altern Consciousness,” Ranjit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies, Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vol. VI, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981, p. 203.

20. Deepanker Gupta, “Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Caste” in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XIX, Nov.-Dec., 1984, pp. 46-48.

21. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1979, p. 6.

that the origin of caste was first racial and then occupational, but its importance is neither religious nor moral, but social and political.²² When a group of upper class elite, started exploiting, the fellow beings in the social order, however, the debased structure of the caste differentiation was exposed. Its sacred antiquity for the orthodox, its unique tenacity for the iconoclast, its fat obnoxiousness for a reformer have made caste problem a serious issue.²³

Caste system in the nineteenth century became an institution resting on primeval separateness and segmentation in the part of each and every section of the society. A. Ayyappan identifies the caste system of Kerala with that of the apartheid of South Africa; however in the latter's case it was skin color that resulted in social discriminations. In his words, "In Kerala there was the most pernicious ritual method of keeping the lower caste constantly at a distance of several yards from the person, residences and institutions of the higher castes, the economic method of preventing them from owning land with severe occupancy rights and the intellectual method of excluding them from all sources of higher knowledge enshrined in the Sanskrit language."²⁴

It is well known that the caste system in Kerala was the most rigid one than in many other parts of India. Its tentacles swallowed each and every section of the society, widely. Its ramification were mild and intricate, its

22. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1901*, Government Press Publication, Travancore, p. 272.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

24. A. Ayyappan, *Social Revolution in A Kerala Village, A Study in Cultural Change*, Asia Publishing House, 1965, p. 123.

ordinances, drastic and numerous and their observances rigorously enforced.²⁵ A particular feature of caste system in Kerala was the worst atmospheric pollution that it insisted on, while in the rest of India, it existed only in the form of touch pollution. Pollution or *ayitham* as implied in Malayalam was the most significant of the characters of caste system. The tiny plant of untouchability grew into the mighty and multi branched tree of unapproachability. In its priest ridden and fertile soil of superstitions there were unapproachable or even unseeable castes.²⁶ An overall stagnation of the society resulted and left a large section of people gain nothing substantial in their lives, because of the retrogressive nature of the caste system. The Hindu social structure that existed in Kerala was so contrived as to facilitate undue growth and development of a microscopic minority but at the same time to prevent the majority from enjoying even a mediocum of human rights.²⁷ Since it was made to believe that untouchability had divine or religious sanctions it proved to be the greatest stumbling block to the orderly growth and development of all sections of society. A static and status seeking society it has exhausted a considerable part of its physical energy and mental vigour for the isolation and insulation of its social groups, marking out in minutest details the distance and differences between one and another. The forte of caste was the denial of

25. Government of Cochin, *Census Report of 1931*, Cochin Government Press Publication, Ernakulam, p. 63.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

27. C. N. Somarajan and C. Sivadasan, *Civic Rights Movement in Travancore*, S. N Publishing House, Quilon, 1995, p. 9.

rationality on fads and superstition.²⁸ To Samuel Mateer, caste was a religious fact of the first order. The gap that separates one caste from another is often very great as great almost as between different species of animals, or as which exists between mankind and their cattle and dogs.²⁹

An outline of the traditional social ladder of Kerala is essential to understand the intensity of the caste problem. The traditional caste pyramid had the nambudiris at its apex. Though they were of a microscopic minority the power that they possessed was immensely great. The whole framework of Hinduism was for the comfort and exaltation of the Brahmins.³⁰ They behaved as the holiest of human beings who were looked upon as representatives of Gods on earth. The Travancore census report of 1874-75 says, "His presence is holy, his directions are commands, his movements are procession his meal is nectar and he is the holiest of human beings."³¹ He was exempted from all sorts of capital punishments that existed then. Economically this position was indeed high as they were the landlords. The brahmins were rich land lords though the administration of the land was in the hands of the nairs. Thurston wrote, "They are no doubt the traditional land owners of Kerala and had in

28. S.N. Sadasivan, *Social History of Kerala*, Asia Publishing House New Delhi, 2000, p. 369.

29. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1991, p. 369.

30. Jacob Canter Visscher, *Letters from Malabar*, Gantz bros Publication, Madras, 1862, p. 68.

31. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1875*, Travancore Government Press, p. 261.

their hands the *Janmam* or property rights of lands in a large portion of Malabar.³²

Buchanan has stated that the power to put anyone to death on the spot that disobeyed their brutal commands and the ease that they enjoyed in the society made the nambudiris pleasure lovers and erotics.³³ The caste Hindus was not a producing class. The tillers of the soil supported them. Almost every man in the society spent a good share of his hard earned property on the nambudiris. Even the ruling classes were subordinate to them. The Rajas spent huge amount of money for their benefit so did the rich people of the state to entertain the nambudiris. This liberality towards them acquired for the state the epithet of *dharmasamsthanam*.³⁴

Economic power also vested in the hands of the nambudiris with the gradual usurpation of the land holdings. The rights for education and the study of Sanskrit vested entirely with them.³⁵ They made it sure that as long as the lower classes remained ignorant they were submissive. The lower castes had no option but to accept the suzerainty of the brahmins to escape from his wrath.

32. Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Cosmo Publication, Delhi, 1905, pp.159-160.

33. Francis Buchanan, *Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol. II. translated by C.K.Kareem, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 1981, p. 325.

34. G. Rajendran, *The Ezhava Community and Kerala Politics*, The Kerala Academy of Political Sciences, Trivandrum, 1974, p.18.

35. R. N. Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore, A Backward class Movement for social Freedom*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1975, p. 7.

Even the Kings had to pay respect to the brahmins. They ranked virtually above the Kings and were to some extent above and outside the political system of the kingdoms. The rulers were dependant on them for the administration of justice. So they were in a position to exercise control over the rulers and enjoy a privileged position.³⁶ They exploited ruthlessly each and every community under them. In short the brahmins were the exploiters and the rest of the society, exploited.

Below the nambudiri brahmins, there were foreign brahmins, the immigrant castes, the embranchiris and patters from Tulu and Tamil Nadu. It is significant to note that the patters were looked upon as alien people.³⁷ *Ootupuras* were run by the Rajas, rich and aristocrats all over Kerala, to feed the brahmins as they considered it as their duty to make the brahmins happy. The patters depended for food mainly on these *ootupuras*. Many of these poor brahmins led a semi vagrant existence and lived on the food given from the separate catering centres run by the rulers, temples and aristocrats, specially intended for them.³⁸ They functioned as cooks and priests in royal and aristocratic households.³⁹ The main reason of their inferior status was that they

36. M. Sahadevan, *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making, A Study of Sahodaran Ayyappan*, Sophia D. G. Publication, Palakkad, 1993, p.4.

37. M.S. A. Rao, *Social change in Malabar*, Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1957, p.20.

38. K.K.N.Kurup, *Aspects of Kerala History and Culture*, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1977, p. 40.

39. *Ibid*, p. 40.

had no high connection by *sambandam* or possession of lands. However they considered themselves supreme to the native brahmins. They held themselves higher than the Malabar brahmins and nambudiris who, they say sprang, from fishermen elevated to the brahmanical deity by Parasurama.⁴⁰

The hierarchical pyramid next had the Kshatriyas in its order. The Kshatriya section actually comprised the Rajas and the virtual kings of the region. These rulers kept huge proportions of land under them. The King's foremost duty was to preserve the rights and rule for the good of the brahmins. Marriage relations by means of *sambandham* existed among the kshatriya women and brahmin men. It was the exclusive rights of brahmins to marry the female members of the royal family of Cochin.⁴¹ However the kshatriya men were forbidden from marrying the brahmin women. The kshatriyas could marry or could have conjugal relations with the sudra (nair) women who are lower to them in status. The union of kshatriya with nair women gave rise to the caste of samanthas, who by caste are nairs differentiated by social position and observation of hypergamy from the nambudiris.⁴² Rajas engaged themselves in petty warfare, which devastated the society economically. In the words of Mateer, "Time and treasure of rulers and people were wasted in war and on forts and arm, while the lower classes were made to serve in menial attendance. Petty princes attacked each other's territories and carried away

40. Jacob Canter Visscher, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

41. M. Sahadevan, *op. cit.* p.4.

42. L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *Social History of Kerala*, Vol, II. *The Dravidians*, Book Centre Publication, Madras, 1970, p. 46.

the people as captives.”⁴³ This led to the severe problem of slavery in the state.

Below the brahmins in ritual status are a small number of kshatriyas and ambalavasis, but the major-high caste group and until the inter-war years Kerala's dominant caste was the nairs, some 15% of the total population.⁴⁴ Together with the nambudiris the nairs have formed the land-owning class. Their men served in the military too. By their numerical strength, hold over the militia, land and the local administration they were a dominant caste. The most distinctive feature of the nair society was the family structure, which was hypergamous, matrilineal and matrilocal and so loosely arranged, as to raise doubts as to whether marriage existed at all.⁴⁵ Turning to nair marriage Barabosa writes:

These men were not married, their nephews are their heirs. The nair women of good birth are very independent and dispose off themselves as they please with brahmins and nairs, but they do not sleep with men of castes lower than of their own even under pain of death.⁴⁶

43. Samuel Mateer, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

44. T. J. Nossitter, *Communism in Kerala, A Study in Political Adaptation*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982, p.26.

45. *Ibid*, p.28.

46. Quoted in C.J. Fuller, *The Nairs Today*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976, p.3.

These sorts of marital relations were looked upon with pride by the nair segments and the nambudiris enjoyed their loose marital ties with no responsibilities of looking after the women and her children. The lust of the nambudiris and the way how the exploitation of lower caste women was for sexual purposes is revealed by certain customs. It was the socio religious custom to be observed by the nair women that they should take off their clothes covering their breasts in the presence of nambudiris and members of princely families. It was the ignorance among the nairs that was taken for granted by the brahmins.

Though they were afraid of the wrath of brahmins, the nairs treated the castes lower to them with utter discrimination. The nair had the rights to cut off the head of a pulaya, if he violates any caste rule, instantaneously. The lower castes while walking along the road would normally warn other of their impending approach by shouting 'po' 'po' i.e., go away. This was to warn him from approaching until he retired or climbed up the nearest tree. If a nair accidentally meets a pulaya on the highway, he cuts him down with as little ceremony as others destroy a noxious animal.⁴⁷ There were numerous sub-castes within the nair caste and there were rivalry between these castes very often. However the nairs were afraid only of the nambudiris and were definitely at an upper hand above all other sections of the society. Except the nambudiri the nair had no other priestly, spiritual or religious instructor.⁴⁸

47. *Ibid.*, p.12

48. F. Fawcett, *The Nairs of Malabar*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1990, p.226.

There was a decline in the dominant position of the nairs in the nineteenth century. Embroiled in social malcustoms, the community ceased to have an organized existence and was struggling in the grip of superstitions which held a loft pernicious practices as ideal.⁴⁹

The thiyyas and the ezhavas who formed a bulk in the population of Kerala occupied the next position in the caste hierarchy. The thiyyas were a polluting caste to the high caste savarnas, but their condition was not as deplorable as that of the pulayas and parayas, whose very sight provoked the upper caste people. The most common occupation of the thiyyas was to plant coconut trees and to procure toddy by means of toddy tapping.⁵⁰ The ezhavas of Travancore are by tradition toddy tappers and this was the presumptive basis of their very low social status (alcohol being a substance foresworn by the brahmins).⁵¹ Toddy came to signify not only the thiyyas subordination to the nairs, but also the lowness of the thiyya through association with what was increasingly characterized as an impure profession.⁵² Other than toddy tapping their occupation included military service and also as tenant farmers under the nair and nambudiri land lords.

49. Vijayalayam Jayakumar, *Sri Narayana Guru: A Critical Study*, D.K. Print World, New Delhi, 1999, p.28.

50. N.Bhaskaranunni, *Pattonbatham Nootandile Keralam*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1958, p. 220.

51. Oliver Mandelson and Marika Vicziany, *The Untouchables*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 31.

52. Dilip.M.Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 69.

Though having constituted a bulk of the population of Kerala, they were denied the very basic privileges. Their service was essential to the caste-savarnas as they were very dependant on the ezhava-thiyya classes for providing menial attendance to them and as labourers in their fields. As an untouchable caste they faced numerous restrictions on their dress, customs and customs and religious practices. They could not attend schools with high-caste children or take jobs in the Government services, enter Hindu temples or have idols of the higher gods in their own temples.⁵³ In the famous Malayali memorial submitted by Barrister G.P.Pillai to the Raja of Travancore, he has mentioned that there was not a single ezhava who earned the lowest salary of Rs.5/- any where in the whole of Travancore Government. Service.⁵⁴ The nairs strictly eliminated the ezhavas from acquiring education, as they knew that once enlightened through education, the bulk of these ezhavas could not be kept under servility. The condition of the ezhavas is best explained in a document published by the Government of Travancore in 1898. It says, "Martyrs to the distinction of castes, they are treated by the higher orders with supercilious scorn too poor to include their rapacity, they are held by them in bondage at least they are awed into a servitude, mitigated to be sure when contrasted to that of the praedial slaves."⁵⁵

53. Kenneth, W, Jones, *The New History of India, Social Religious Reform Movement in British India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 180.

54. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram*, Kerala Basha Institute, Trivandrum, 1974, p. 511.

55. Quoted in T. K. Ravindran, *Asan and Social Revolution*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1972, p. 8.

However, they instructed and ill-treated their inferiors with as much venom as they received from their superiors. The fatal lethargy of slavery had entered their souls.⁵⁶ They made sure that the lower classes treated them with due respect and courtesy and the violation of caste rules were not pardoned with. They exercised certain powers high and above other lower castes. They had the exclusive rights to give *vannathi mattu* to the nairs and nambudiri women (when they were under pollution), the right to hang the highway men and the rights to control all the labourers of the guilds like the carpenters, goldsmiths and washer women.⁵⁷ These powers they exercised with all their might and right. Thus the thiyyas functioned as an intermediary class between the brahmins and the low castes.

‘The lower polluting classes’, a term used by Kathaleen Gough and David M. Schneider in their book, *The Matrilineal Kinship* to distinguish the pulayas and the parayas lived in the outskirts of the village in separate small hamlets.⁵⁸ They were strictly forbidden to come in the vicinity of the higher classes and even their lives were at stake if they even happened to violate the caste regulation.⁵⁹ Majority of the population of Travancore in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century consisted of slaves and down trodden

56. Sathya Bai, Sivadas and Prabhakar Rao, *Sri Narayana Guru, The Social Reformer of Kerala*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2002, p. 17.

57. C.A.Innes, *The Malabar Gazetteer* (rpt.), Kerala Gazetteers, Trivandrum, 1997 p.125.

58. Kathaleen Gough and David M. Schneider, *The Matrilineal Kinship*, A. H. Wheeler and Co., Allahabad, 1972, p. 315.

59. *Hindukkalum Tazhnnajatikkaram* in Vivekodayam, Vol. VII (5), 1911, p.126.

communities. Many legends are associated with the deplorable origin of the pulayas, kammalas, cheruma, parayans etc. One such legend has been furnished by L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer. It said, "The pulayas got boon from the God Shiva along with the spade and an axe, the rights to clear the forests, to cultivate lands and to own them. When other people came and took possession of their lands they were advised to work under them."⁶⁰ Samuel Mateer however believed this to be imposed on them by their masters. In their own words, he wrote, "We are content to remain in our present circumstances, for *Bhagavan* (God) after having created the higher castes considered what to do with the surplus earth, when Parvati advised him to create herewith a low class to serve the high ones."⁶¹

Pulayas in the beginning of the nineteenth century did not live a life of their own. They never worked or earned a living for themselves. They lived to bring pleasure and provide labour to the higher classes.⁶² They begetted children, so that the master could have a continuous supply of workers. They lived in mud huts, erected by the side of the paddy fields, which they had to watch for their master.⁶³ They were denied to enter the premises of the savarna temples, which were the centre of the religious life. They were denied rights for education and even for using decent and civilized languages as used by the

60. L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1981, p. 89.

61. Samuel Mateer, *op.cit.* p. 34.

62. S. Saradamoni, *Emergence of A Slave Caste, Pulayas of Kerala*, People's Publishing House, 1980, p. 53

63. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1931, op.cit.*, p. 342.

nambudiris. "Caste asserts itself even in the names by which the houses of different classes are known. The humble tenants of nambudiri *jenmis* will always speak of his house as *kuppappadu* (literally a heap of rubbish). A nambudiri's house is called *illom* or *manakkal*, a foreign brahmin's is *matom* or *manakkal*, a nayar's *veedu*, ezhavas *peray*, cheruman's was *kudi*, pulayan's *thara* and parayan's as *cheri*."⁶⁴

Report of census of Travancore of 1876 stated that the pulayas were used to be regarded as cattle and bought and sold as such till a few years back when they were emancipated from slavery, though in the majority of instances, they have remained in lands of their former masters happy and contented with their lot.⁶⁵ The lower castes were denied even their basic rights and could in no way escape the bewildering indifferences shown by their masters. A brahmin by neglect to perform his religious ceremonies and caste observances would become an out caste but no member of the lower castes could rise to a higher position in the Hindu religion by its peculiar constitution which did not take converts to its faith. The barrier of castes was inseparable. A shudra might rise to be a Prime Minister he still could not expect to be brahmin. He would not partake of meals with the humblest of brahmins he would not even so much as see a brahmin take meals.⁶⁶

64. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1891*, Travancore Government Press Publication, p. 185.

65. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1876*, Travancore Government Press Publication, p.187

66. *Ibid.*, p.186

A pulaya could be flogged or be even beaten to death. Extreme labour conditions in the fields exhausted them severely. Performing labour in the fields, standing for hours in water, digging and manuring they are subjected to rheumatism, cholera and other diseases which carry off many before they approached the old age.⁶⁷ Ward and Conner observed that in sickness they were wholly left to nature, perhaps dismissed in poverty and in age often abandoned.⁶⁸ Slavery to remain as mere serfs was abolished in the middle of the 19th century. But this did not lead to any sort of improvement in the lives of the depressed classes. As the Cochin census Report of 1911 recorded, "So long as orthodoxy reined supreme, among caste Hindus they had to labour under all the disabilities, which unapproachability involved."⁶⁹ These depressed communities though consisted a bulk of society's population could not contribute even minutely in its march towards progress and modernization. They shivered to death under the grip of brahmin aristocracy.

One could wonder how the *savarnas* could treat their fellow human beings with such hatred, that kept the lower castes secluded from the rest of the society though labouring and risking their whole lives for their lord's pleasure. One such description is given by Mateer who has written openly the terrific living condition of the parayas of Travancore. He stated:

67. Mateer, *Land of Charity*, *op.cit.*, p. 43

68. Ward and Conner, *Memoirs of the Geographical and Statistical Survey of Travancore, Travancore*, Government of Travancore, 1900, p. 40.

69. Government of Cochin, *Cochin Census Report of 1911*, Cochin Government Press Publication, p. 255.

The men are in wretched filthy, clothes. There is much suffering from sickness, the dust of the house produces vermin and itch, which deprives them of rest by day and sleep at night. A person of respective nature must cover his nostrils with his cloth when he enters amongst them for the stinch and the filth. The aged, if there are any suffer from debility and may lie hapless, day after day until they die. Infants suffered from sore, diarrhea, worms and want of food and adults from headache, indigestion, plague, dysentery and intermittent fever.⁷⁰

Besides the Hindus, the Muslims and Christians also lived in Kerala though were minorities. The Hindus number 12.7.million about 59.41%, Christians 4.5.million about 21.5% and Muslims 4.2 millions about 19.50% of the total population. The Muslims and Christians had to live with a majority of population that was Hindus. The Christians of Kerala, have some times been described as Hindu in culture, Christian in religion, oriental in worship and they have several ceremonies, which bear resemblance to those of Hindus. Though the Hindu high castes treated them as strange foreigners, their condition improved under the British rule and the inspiring work of Christian missionaries. However the Christians found the governmental jobs and offices not easily acceptable as compared to the brahmin and nair communities which dominated the governmental services due to the problems created by caste.⁷¹

70. Samuel Mateer, "The Paraya Caste of Travancore," *Journal of Asiatic Society*, New Series, Vol. XVI, 1885, p. 192.

71. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.65.

The Muslims occupied the third position after Hindu and Christians, in the strength of their population. Lack of education and the servility of women forbidding them education, polygamy, kept the Muslims superstitious and ignorant. They were looked down upon by the Hindus as *mlecchas*, so were the Christians. Many obnoxious and expensive ceremonies existed among these communities which needed to be wiped out totally so they could take part in the nationalist struggle towards independence.

A brief description of the caste structure of Kerala is given above. However the most striking feature of this caste differentiation, which created bewilderment even among the foreign visitors was the pollution or '*ayitham*'. Most of the foreign visitors have mentioned of two kinds of pollution, by people whose very approach within a certain specified distance caused atmosphere pollution to those of higher castes, like those of pulayas, parayas kammalas, cherumans, parayans etc. and by people who caused pollution only by real touch or actual contact i.e., those of ezhavas and thiyyas. The prescribed distance for the most unapproachable classes was given by Logan as such in feet. The nayadi (dog-eater), 72 ft; the pulayan (agrestic-slave), 64 ft.; the kaniyan (astrologer), 36 ft.; the mukkuvan (fisherman), 24 ft.⁷²

If a Tamil brahmin touched a nambudiri, the latter was made impure. However, it was the lower castes whose life was made most miserable by

72. William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I (rpt.), Charithram Publishers, Trivandrum, 1981, p.145.

pollution. If it was a pulaya who had polluted a namboodiri, kshatriya or sudra, he should digress from his path and run away into hiding upon realisation of his crime. When the privileged classes walked on public roads, they shouted 'hoy' and by hearing this warning, the lower castes had to disappear from the vicinity. A blind superstition prevailed that incurable diseases would occur to the upper classes if they were polluted by the lower castes.⁷³

When a *savarna* was in sight, the *avarna* had to reveal his identity by removing the clothing on the upper half of his body irrespective of the fact, whether the *avarna* was a man or woman. The *avarnas* were denied the right to use footwear, umbrella, good clothes and ornaments, while the nambudiris had the right to use them.. If the temple tank or house was polluted by touch, the impurity would be removed by a special rite called *punyaham* to be performed by the nambudiris only.⁷⁴ *Punyaham* or purification was a way by which pollution could be wiped off. The mad superstitions of the brahmins and nambudiris, made them perform *punyaham*, which was a waste of energy spent on ridiculous and frivolous touch and atmospheric pollution. Rather than diverting their potential and talents towards constructive modernization, the higher classes were deeply sunk in ridiculous, frivolous touch and atmospheric pollution.

73. Francis Day, *The Land of Perumals* (rpt.), Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1990, p.68.

74. William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.145.

Each and every section of the society was suffering from very many inherent weaknesses in the society of Kerala. Ignorance, lack of education, deplorable condition of women, beliefs in superstitions, economic wastage of money for the purposes of ostentatious, luxurious customs and ceremonies, which served no practical purposes presented a rather dull and deteriorated socio-economic scenario. There was a gradual decline in the status of women as well as in the moral standards in the nineteenth century.

Polygamy and polyandry were in practice without any social stigma attached to it. The males of the namboodiris, kshatriyas and higher castes who had their caste wives, practised polygamy by cohabiting with women of the nair caste.⁷⁵ At the same time the practice of junior male members of the nambudiri families having *sambandham* with nair women, ushered in an age of unbridled polyandry. The nair families considered it as a matter of prestige to have marital relations with the namboodiri and brahmin men. Thurston has stated, "At present day there are families especially who look upon it as a honour to be united with Brahmins."⁷⁶ While a union with a man of higher caste was considered *kesanusari* (literally that which follows the hair) as purifying blood and raising, prestige of progeny, cohabitation with a man of lower caste was regarded with contempt.⁷⁷ Thus in the case of marital relationships, we find the impact of caste system having a serious connotation

75. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.93.

76. Edgar Thurston, *op.cit.*, p.372.

77. M.S.A. Rao, *op.cit.*, p.37.

here as the former type (*anuloma*) having marital ties with men of higher castes acquiring great prestige while (*pratiloma*) women consorting with men of lower castes took a debased form.

No sanctity was associated with the institution of marriage. Among the nambudiris only the eldest brother of the family was supposed to get married. He could have proper marital relationships with up to four women of his same caste for creating future generation. To prevent the property from getting dispersed only the eldest brothers' marriages were considered legitimate. The younger brother cohabited with females of the nair caste on whom he had no responsibility. The nair women lived in their ancestral houses (*taravads*) protected by their maternal uncles (*karanavers*). The *sambandham* relationship of the brahmin with a nair woman did not bring them the benefits of a proper marriage and instead they along with their children became unprotected and desolated. In a big *tarawad* with numerous nieces who carried out *sambandham*, financial and emotional safety and security that a husband gave his wife was absent.

The foreign visitors of the nineteenth century could not miss the morgantic marital relationship of the society of Kerala. Nagam Aiya quotes Fred Fawcett in his *Travancore State Manual* as follows:

Rev. S. Mateer, author of a well known book of Travancore where he resided sometimes for over a quarter of century, I think, informed me about *sambandham* ten years ago. He was

speaking of polyandry amongst the nairs of Travancore that he had known an instance of six brothers, keeping two women, four husbands to one and two to the other. Hamilton in his account of East Indies, and Buchanan in his Journey says that among the nairs of Malabar, a woman has several husbands but they are not brothers.⁷⁸

The individual status of woman is said to have risen with the increase in the number of lovers. However she could not possibly point out the father of her children. Such a pathetic state of condition prevailed among the lower classes too. The thiyya and pulaya women were compelled to have sexual relationship with nambudiri and nair landlords. If a brahmin wished to have sexual relationship with a sudra's wife, she was bound to satisfy his wish. A sudra could not be sure of the true parentage of the children born to his wife.⁷⁹ Edgar Thurston said, "Thus it came about that the custom of concubinage, so freely indulged in by the brahmins with nair women, obtained such firm hold upon the country, that it has only been strengthened by lapse of time."⁸⁰

Another peculiar practice of social legitimacy was the *marumakkathayam* system, which was an offshoot of the hypergamous marital relationship of the century. According to this system, the children lived in their

78. Fred Fawcett, quoted in Nagam Aiya, *Travncore State Manual*, Vol. II, Travancore Government Press, Trivandrum, 1906, p. 204.

79. Fred Fawcett, *Nairs of Malabar* (rpt.), Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1990, p.2.

80. Edgar Thurston, *op.cit.*, p. 312.

mother's *tarawad* under the care of their maternal uncles and did not claim any legitimate or legal share from their father. Many writers of course noted that succession and inheritance were matrilineal under this system, but most of them explained this custom, somewhat tautologically as a simple consequence of polyandry. In consequence of the polyandry, no nair knew his father and every man looked upon his sister's children as his heirs. A sudra could not be sure of his fatherhood and hence could not practise the patriarchal form of inheritance.⁸¹ *Tarawad* was the centre of living under this system and the common property remained intact, without getting dispersed, as any number of families could hang together under one *tarawad*. This system had a lot of drawbacks. The benefits of a legal marriage, parental rights, domestic rules, the obligation to support one's wife and children were ignored. It fostered a spirit of idleness, which could but strike at the root of national prosperity.⁸²

The nambudiris followed a patriarchal system of inheritance. It was their desire to keep their vast estates and property intact, that legal marriage within the caste was permitted only to the eldest male member. "The rule permitting the eldest son only to marriage" says F. Fawcett, "was doubtless, raising out of desire to maintain property intact. The nambudiri's selfishness however flourished at the cost of ideal fatherhood among the lower caste. The children born to a nambudiri in a sudra woman had to observe caste pollution

81. C.J. Fuller, *op.cit.*, p. 5

82. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, Travancore Government Press, Travancore, 1906, p. 364

and were not given social equality with their father.”⁸³ They were treated as inferiors by their fathers and he had no responsibility over their lives. These were some obvious defects of *marumakkathayam*.

A recent writer has stated that, “The law of inheritance also called for a drastic change. The *marumakkathayam* system under which the wife and children of the males in the nair and ezhava communities were not legally entitled to a share in their wealth and property was causing considerable tension and resentment in their families. However some radical changes in the pattern of inheritance was worked out, with the spread of education among the nairs and others classes. Many enlightened and educated nairs began to realise their deterioration and to rebel against brahmanical tyranny and vulgar immoral state of society in which they lived.”⁸⁴

Two forms of inheritance prevailed among thiyyas, *makathayam* in Todupuzha, Meenachil and Alangad Taluks of Travancore. A combination of *makkathayam* and *marumakkathayam* prevailed in Trivandrum, Kottarakara and Pattanapuram. In Malabar the lower classes like pulayas practised *makathayam*.⁸⁵

Another important feature of society was the slavery that existed in the existing social conditions of the state as an institution. “Slavery was not an

83. F. Fawcett, *Nambudiris, Notes on Some People of Malabar*, Superintendent of Government Press, Madras, 1900, p.63.

84. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala History and its Makers*, NBS, Kottayam, 1987, p.223.

85. L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *Social History of Kerala, op.cit.*, p.85.

isolated phenomenon. It was widespread through out the south, and has been for centuries. Buchanan has noted that most of the agricultural work in Palghat was performed by slaves. These slaves could be bought, sold, mortgaged and rented out. They were severely treated and their diminutive stature and squadid appearance showed evidently a want of adequate nourishment. Despite their extreme subordination even among untouchables, the fate of these slaves of south India was in some ways emblematic of the whole history of untouchables in the nineteenth century.⁸⁶ Their condition was almost similar to the beasts that were used to plough the field. Enjoying no basic civic rights, they were ill-treated miserably by the land lords who owned them. It is stated, "The slaves were like cattle brought and sold in markets and other centres in bodies of ten, fifteen and twenty. The price of a slave varied from Rs.3 to Rs.14 in times of famine the children were sold at the rate of four *annas* per head."⁸⁷

The nambudiris owned the majority of the land holdings. The landlords retained a portion of the land as his private domain for cultivation by their serfs. The rest was held by nair retainer households as non cultivating tenants (*kannakars*). Each tenant household also gave some lands for cultivating to the sub-tenant households (*verumpattakars*) of the thiyya castes. The tenants traditionally retained one-third of the net produce and surrendered the rest to the masters.⁸⁸

86. Francis Buchanan quoted in Oliver Mendelson and Marka Vicziany, *op.cit.*, p.82.

87. Regional Records Survey Committee, *History of Freedom Movement of Kerala*, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1970, p.175.

88. Kathaleen Gough and David Schneider, (ed), *op.cit.*, p.315.

Oozhiyam or personal gratuitous services and forced labour for the Governments of Travancore and Cochin existed along with the vulgar system of caste pollution and slavery. *Oozhiyam* services rendered by the lower classes included forced manual labour and supply of vegetables and provision. In Cochin the village officers were directed to compel the riots under their jurisdiction to supply provision to the places, temples and *ootupuras*.⁸⁹ The poor slaves were harassed and compelled to service and then showed the discriminating treatment of the Government as the slaves. A different form of *oozhiyam services* by name *viruthy* or feudal services, which compelled the *viruthy* holders to supply service and provision to the government in lieu of lands enjoyed by him also existed.

Burdensome taxes were levied on the slaves by the government. Every occasion was used for squeezing the labour classes in the name of taxes, which were wasted on brahmins temples and ceremonies. Home taxes were paid by parayas, pulayas, shanners and ezhavas. Grass cutting was paid by parayas in Nanjinad. The widow of a weaver continued to pay the tax on the loom (about a rupee per annum) long after the death of her husband and the cessation of his work.⁹⁰ The slaves lived like animals after being totally squeezed of their income. Many other forms of *taxes* were also compelled to be paid by the lower castes. Some of these taxes were *anikkaram*, *thalavari*, *valakaram*,

89. C. Achyutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual* (rpt.), Government of Kerala, Ernakulum, 1995, p.415.

90. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life of Travancore*, *op.cit.*, p.292.

thankkaram, noolkaram, thiruva, padappanam, vivahakaram, thalakkaram, mulakkaram, azha, kozha, kazhcha, pizha, ponnarippu, menipponnu panthalkaram, chetupatom kottupattukaram, abaranakaram, anakaram mechilkaram, adimakaram, vanarapattom, thallarapattom, rupavari, rajabhogam and so on.

Punishments were also utterly brutal to the slaves while the high castes managed to escape from all sorts of severe punishments. “The examination of truth, meant for providing innocence was by means of ordeals, which included trail by water, (which involved swimming in a crocodile ingested water tank), otherwise the crocodile ordeal, trial by fire (where the suspected person was to dip his hands in boiling oil), trial by poison (where the accused was to insert his hand into a pot where in a poisonous snake was imprisoned). If the accused was a brahmin these tests were not applicable to him.”⁹¹ The cruelest methods like peeling off the skin, throwing before wild animals, cutting of body organs, grinding the body in a mill, stamping by elephants were used. The kings who ruled the kingdom with the help of brahmins exempted them from all sorts of severe punishments.⁹²

Rajas engaged in petty wars and the captives of the territories conquered were treated as slaves. This was a reason that aggravated slavery. The worst superstitious practices of *mannapedi* and *pulappedi*, which existed in the society only tried to keep way the lower classes from the higher classes. The

91. William Logan, *op.cit.*, pp. 205-206.

92. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.418.

pulapedi period was during the month of *Karkidakam* (July-August). The period of the pulaya terror was a nightmare to the high castes ladies. During the period if a pulaya met a shudra woman or if he might see her, and she would ipso facto lose her caste as well as the connection with the relatives.⁹³ She was then treated as a downtrodden caste and had to live among the slaves and pulayas.

Shunned as if inflicted with plague, the higher castes viewed the pulayas with a mixture of alarm and indignation, and even towns and markets would be considered defiled by their approach.⁹⁴ The woman if touched by a pulaya did not try to hide it for fearing the wrath of pollution to her family. She was compelled to leave her ancestral house and live a deteriorating life. The pulayas and 'mannans' never raised the opportunity to defile the caste woman and this increased the number of slaves in the society.

The life of a slave was of course very terrible. Economically he was a devastated human being, left with no money or food for his survival for all the hardwork and labour that he had done for his master. The Report of Slavery of 1841 gives an account of the condition of slaves. "The slave in the interior is a wretched half-starved, diminutive creature, stinted in his food and exposed to the inclemencies of weather. In the remote parts where there was no demand for labour they are left to eke out a miserable existence by feeding upon wild

93. K.K. Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1973, p.29.

94. Ward and Conner, *op.cit.*, p.40

yams. In sickness they were wholly left to nature, perhaps dismissed, in poverty deserted and often abandoned.”⁹⁵

The *jenmis* were not interested in improving the conditions of slaves, and they thought the exploitation of the slaves was their right. The condition of the slaves under the *jenmis* prevented progress and hindered the growth of the society. Landed property was also left uncared and a low economic growth was recorded as the result. The *janmi-kudiyam* committee Report of 1916 has stated, “*Jenmi* of Travancore as a class was not the improver of the landed property as the peasants are. The more the latter are placed under the dependence, will and pleasure of the former, the less must be the progress and improvement of the landed property.”⁹⁶ Thus the slavery could be looked upon a reason for the stagnation of the society economically and politically.

The *ezhavas* and the *nairs* were economically deteriorated by certain other obnoxious and unnecessary practices of the nineteenth century. To keep themselves respectable, these communities whether financially capable or not lavishly celebrated certain ceremonies which led to their economic peril. The obsolete and irrational practices like *talikettukalyanam*, *tiruandukalayanam*, *pulakuli*, etc prevailed among these communities became the reasons for their financial impoverishment.

95. Government of Travancore, *Report of Slavery 1841*, Government Press, Travancore, p.134.

96. Government of Travancore, *Report of Jenmi-Kudiyam Committee 1916*, Government Press, Trivandrum, p.1.

Kettukalyanam or *talikettukalyaam* is an indispensable rite in the case of every nair and ezhava girl before she attains puberty. Concerning the *Talikettu* ceremony in Travancore, N. Subramani Aiyer writes as follows, "After the age of eleven, a nair girl becomes too old for this ceremony, though in rare instances, it is celebrated after a girl attains her age."⁹⁷ The *karanavar* of the girls fixes an auspicious date with the astrologer for the ceremony and elaborated *pandals* are constructed for the purpose. If the family is influential *katiru mandapam* i.e. a raised floor with a ground roof, beautifully decorated with pictures, mirrors, and glass globes is erected inside the *pandal* and it is here the actual wedding takes place. The bridegroom who ties the *tali* can only be selected from well recognized families in the village called *machampikars*.⁹⁸ Days of sumptuous feasting to the bridegroom's parents, brahmins and aristocrats begins with the *aiyni oonu* (special feast given to bridegroom). This is a gigantic feeding business especially with the well to do classes of nairs.⁹⁹ The bridegroom who ties the *tali* around the bride's neck belonged to nair family. Buchanan has stated that girls so married were not allowed to cohabit with their bridegrooms and he openly has criticized such situations to be vulgar.¹⁰⁰ Feasting is given to friends and neighbors in the consecutive days too

97. N. Subrahmanian Aiyer, quoted in Edgar Thurston, *op.cit.*, p.319.

98. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, p.354. (Machampickars are men in the village, whose social status is equal to that of the tarawad in which the ceremony is to be celebrated).

99. *Ibid.*, p.354.

100. Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.65.

and T.Gopala Panikkar says that the total cost of a feast is about three times the number of *paras* of rice consumed.¹⁰¹

The *tali* is in some places destroyed on the fourth day. This instead of giving a man a right to marry the girl, the ceremony destroys even what he previously possessed.¹⁰² This expresses the futility and meaninglessness of the ceremony that is celebrated most elaborately and it is also noted that it did not have any legal force. The bridegroom gets no marital rights, goes out of the marriage completely and never sees the girl again.¹⁰³ As the celebration is costly, its advantage is taken of a single occasion, in course of ten or twelve years to marry all the girls in *tarawads*, irrespective of their age, even infants of cradle included in the process.¹⁰⁴

Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai had put forward the liberal interpretation that the *talikettukalyanam* seems to have risen out of the freedom which *marumakkatayam* men and women enjoyed to dissolve marriages when they find that person whom they have as partner is of incompatible temperament.¹⁰⁵ William Logan has pointed out that looseness of marriage and laxity in sexual morality would have been prevalent.¹⁰⁶ Lewis Moore was of the opinion that

101. T. Gopala Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1883, p. 144.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

103. L. A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, *op. cit.*, p. 90

104. Nagan Aiya, *op.cit.*, p. 55

105. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, NBS, Trivandrum, 1970, pp. 271-83.

106. William Logan, *op.cit.* p.112.

the ceremony had a curious resemblance to the mock marriage to God, which was often performed when girls are dedicated to temple secure.¹⁰⁷

Fawcet stated that *talikettukalyanam* is to somewhat analogues to what a *devadasi* of other countries undergoes before she began her profession. But this comparison has been counted out as the claim for fidelity in marriage has the popular sentiment.¹⁰⁸ The *talikettukalyanam* on the whole has a sheer waste in the part of the families. They conducted it and his resulted in economic ruin and financial bankruptcy.

Thirandukalyanam is a celebration when a girl reaches the age of maturity. This ceremony when a girl attains the age of puberty is celebrated in grand scale in the well to do nair and ezhava families. When the menstruation occurs for the first time, she is kept secluded in a room and on the third day the girl's relatives are treated to a sumptuous feast. On the fourth day she is taken to bathe in a tank where she takes a cloth from the washer women or *vannathi* and this is called *vannathimattu*.¹⁰⁹ Her own clothes are taken by the *vannathi* for washing and with the *vannathimattu* the pollution is over. The relatives who come and see the girl during this period is supposed to bring gifts to the girl. Caste women are invited and entertained with *pansupari*.¹¹⁰ *Vanathimattu* is a peculiar advantage to the vannathis. "The *mannam* or *vannam* washes

107. Lewis Moore, quoted in L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

108. F. Fawcet, *op.cit.*, p. 229.

109. L. A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, *op.cit.*, p. 41

110. *Ibid.*, p. 42

clothes for the nairs when they are living apart. According to their custom these garments must be washed and wrung by them and no other. If this is not done by the nairs they are not freed from sins.¹¹¹

The ceremony is brought to close by a grand procession called *pattinapravesam* in the case of the girls of affluent families. This is yet another part of this custom, which is attached to pomp and splendour and the whole function, is a sheer waste as looked from the economic point of view. Only those families who celebrated these functions were considered influential in the society and this compelled even the poor families to go after pomp and splendour to guard their social status and ruin themselves. N. Bhaskaranunni in his *Pathonbatham Nootandile Keralam* has written that the final procession was associated with elephants, *arppu*, *kurava*, *panchavadya* and all other paraphernalias of a grand procession.¹¹² Most of the ezhavas and nair families moved towards bankruptcy after celebrating such unnecessary ceremonies.

Another peculiar ceremony of the nair and ezhava communities was the *Pulikudi*. *Pulikudi* is an indispensable ceremony performed for every pregnant woman, rich and poor alike in the ninth month of pregnancy. "The wife of the maternal uncle hands over tamarind juice to the brother of a girl who wears a golden finger in right hand. Holding a country knife in his left hand, with its pout towards the north, he pours tamarind juice over his left hand with the right

111. Mansel Longworth Dames, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1981, p. 57

112. N.Bhaskaranunni, *op.cit.*, p. 206.

hand thrice. The juice dribbles down the knife into the mouth of the girl who is seated facing eastwards and she drinks it. The whole ceremony is wound up by sumptuous feast to all friends and relatives.”¹¹³

Ceremonies relating to the birth and childhood were also important to the Keralites. It is surprising to see that women of barber castes officiate as midwives and cuts the umbilical chord at the birth of a child. The delivered woman and baby are looked after by these sudra women for ten days on observed as the period of pollution. At the end of the pollution, she takes the new clothes brought by the washerwomen, the *vannathimattu*.¹¹⁴ It is strange to note that, the sudra women’s touch or taking of meals in her presence creates no pollution during the period of confinement. This very custom emphasises the dependence on lower classes by the caste people. Even brahmin and nambudiri women were nursed by sudra ladies. The services these low castes rendered were of menial nature but their role was indispensable as far as delivery was considered.

Namakaranam or the naming ceremony is performed preferably on the twenty-eight day of the child’s birth where a name is called in the right ear by the *karanavar* of the child. *Annaprasnam* or *choroonu* is performed in the sixth month of the child and it is the first feeding of the child with rice. *Vidyarambam* or introduction to the alphabets takes place in the third year. *Upanayanam* is a ceremony in the seventh or eighth year of a brahmin boy

113. L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*, p. 44

114. *Ibid.*, p. 20

when a sacred thread is invested. This is exclusively to brahmins and its belief is that it is only with the sacred investiture that the boy is a brahmin and until then he was not better than a sudra.¹¹⁵

Funeral ceremonies or functions known by the name *pulakuli* are observed, which are of variation to the different castes of the society. Cremation of the body was the most common way but the burial of the corpse was also in vogue. "It is directed by the Hindu law," says Colebrooke "that a dying man should be laid on a bed of *cusa* grass, if he be a sudra either in the house or out of it indifferently, but if he is of higher caste he must be placed in open air. A brahmin's corpse should be carried out of a town by the western gate a ksahatriya's by the northern, vysian's by the eastern and sudra's by the southern."¹¹⁶

When the party reaches the general pyre which of the wealthy is generally made of sandalwood, the corpse is laid upon it and the son kindles the flame. On the following day ashes are collected and thrown into the river.¹¹⁷ There is a practice of inserting a gold coin into the mouth of the corpse, depending on the affordability of the family. Thus we see that even after death the paradox between caste people and untouchables and the rich and the poor was clearly evident. The wastage of money comes after the cremation. A day is announced for *sanchayanam*; a ceremony to collect the skeletal remains of

115. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.103.

116. Quoted in Francis Day, *op.cit.*, p.383.

117. Jacob Canter Visscher, *op.cit.*, p.135.

the cremated which generally falls on the fifth day. The death ceremony lasts for almost a fortnight, which is observed as pollution. Relatives stay in the house as a part of the mourning and are fed by the family. This becomes a burden for the poorer section as they found it difficult to meet the expenditure for a long period of two weeks. To keep up their status in the society high they had to feed the relatives lavishly which made them economically impoverished.

In the case of a death of a senior member of a *tarawad*, there is a feast called *pinta adiyanthiram* on the sixteenth day after death given to neighbours and friends. On the first anniversary of death they give a great feast in the memory of the deceased, which is repeated every year, less of expense.¹¹⁸ Though Visscher has said on less expenditure, the dignity of the family did not leave them from not reducing the expenditure. The *shradam* or the ceremony at the end of the year incurred heavy expenditure, due to lavish feasting of friends, relatives and neighbours. The first anniversary is a ceremony involving heavy expenditure. The *diksha* is observed by the relatives of the dead sometimes for six months and even for one year. The last day of *diksha* is again one of great festivity.¹¹⁹

It has been said that the social condition of women is one of the truest ways of measuring the heights of a people's culture. The condition of women in India was at its lowest ebb during the greater part of the nineteenth century. It is an admitted fact that in upheavals brought by political forces and foreign

118. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

119. L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

dominations women usually suffered the most.¹²⁰ The condition of women in Kerala was still worse under the wild caste restrictions and regulations. They were often compelled to give up their chastity to please the autocratic groups. The low caste men had to surrender even their wives to the nambudiri and nair landlords. They were also supposed to uncover their bosom at the vicinity of caste men. This was the way that they were supposed to show their respect to the socially superior people. Low caste women were slaves in the plough fields and toiled day and night to earn their daily bread. Mateer in his *Native life of Travancore* has given an example of the miserable plight of pulaya women, which truly reveals how the low caste women suffered under caste and gender bias:

It is most painful to see a poor and inoffensive women, with a load in her back or burdened with an infant, compelled to scramble up the steep sides of the road and retire into the jungle, to allow a high caste man to pass on seeking for a favourable chance to cross the highway or go along it. She waits till one party has gone, then makes a dash but perhaps is balked by meeting another party in the opposite direction. What discomfort, misery and waste of time all over the country and that for no rational purpose or appreciable advantage to any one.¹²¹

120. Tara Ali Beg (ed.), *Women in India*, Publication Division of Government of India, New Delhi, 1958, p. 5.

121. Samuel Mateer, *op.cit.*, p. 335.

If this was the condition of low caste women, up in the hierarchy the caste women too lived miserable lives. Polygamy and polyandry were widely practised. The nair women were forced to have *sambandham*, even with the nambudiri of their father's age, and their consent was not a matter of relevance. In the words of Buchanan, "The nambudiri man created a society where no nair, knew his father and every men looked upon his nephews as his heirs."¹²² Francis day proclaimed that until a change in this system occurred (polyandry) this portion of India could hardly be said to be advancing in civilization.¹²³

The worst of all this was the condition of nambudiri ladies. The law of primogeniture allowed only the eldest son of a family to marry and their younger brothers entered into marital relations with the sudras. As a result of this the number of nambudiri spinsters increased. The dowry system was very common among this caste and this impoverished even the richest families due to marriage expenses. Two or three girls are married to one man, which made polygamy widespread. Life of a newly wed was of a very tough nature in her husband's house. A teenage girl, married to an elderly nambudiri had to live with her *sapatnis* (earlier wife's of her husband) and when she became a widow very soon life became still miserable. Caste regulations and pollution rules were strictly enforced by the elders on her. Pollution rules are observed more strictly, when there are elder women, who are widows and whose lives are centred around the kitchen and domestic altar.¹²⁴ Life of a woman was

122. Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.142.

123. Francis Day, *op.cit.*, p.318.

124. M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, *op.cit.*, p.124.

strictly confined to the *padinjatti* of the house and many died as spinsters and early widows. Any isolation of chastity, leads to loss of caste, social status and total separation from the family. As parts of punishments rats and snakes were left to the women's room that was kept in seclusion. Enquiry into cases of conjugal infidelity is conducted by *smartha* (Judge and hence the name *smarthavicharam*). No longer a woman in chaste, she was considered as a *sadhanam*.¹²⁵ Funeral ceremonies are conducted for this *sadhanam*. The judgement is called *pindam vekkai*. From that movement onwards she is considered as dead. She then lives as a low caste or are taken away by Tamilians or others. The *smartha vicharam* done by the elderly and prominent nambudiris included a lot of economic wastage as these judges had to be feasted every day lavishly. The longer the judgement goes on higher the financial burden to the families. Being strictly *gosha* the women shut up inside the house and seldom moved out except in cases of extreme emergency. They were denied schooling and education as conservatism regarding pollution rules prevented them from going to schools and intermingling with lower castes.

The deteriorated condition of women can be assessed from the *devadasi* system that was widely prevalent in those days. The development of *devadasi* system in medieval Kerala was a logical corollary of the growth of caste and *janmi* system. The nambudiri – brahmin *jenmis* and feudal chieftain's who led a life of ease and erotism patronized the devadasis lavishly. The *devadasis* were initially dancing girls attached to the temples in service of God, but

125. M. Sahadevan, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

gradually their main function was to entertain the nambudiris and the system came to be linked with prostitution.¹²⁶ The worst part of this evil was that the *jenmis* forgot their wives and responsibilities at home and patronized the *devadasis* exorbitantly which ruined many a *jenmi* families. Thus the women of the nineteenth century in Kerala, whether low or high caste had to play only a minimal role in the growth towards modernization.

There were still more variant factors that deteriorated the intellectual development of the society and so the role of devil worship and superstitions deserve special mention. Devil worship referred to the worship of evil and malignant spirits by the ignorant and superstitious people of Kerala. The worship of wicked spirits or demons, to deprecate their wrath or appease their anger is altogether distinct from that of idols, which are supposed to represent more or less benevolent duties and minor, or meditorial gods. It is a very ancient and widespread superstition and appears to underlie many of the more elaborate and complex system of paganism.¹²⁷ Every event that went beyond the knowledge of the ignorant people was associated with the devils. They wondered how diseases like cholera, small pox and typhoid occurred and associated it with the anger of the devils that they considered as Gods. The popular demons were Madan, Mallan, Kutti Sattan, Muchandei Moopan, Bhadrakali, Ammen, Isaki, Paramasatee, etc. Devil temples were common in Kerala and animal sacrifices to please these wild Gods were looked down by

126. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, pp. 271-283.

127. Samuel Mateer, *Land of Charity*, *op.cit.*, p.198.

the foreign writers. Animal sacrifices were associated with such pragmatic worship patterns to prevent the society from the wrath of the anger of the demon Gods as the worshippers believed. George Wood Cock has stated that in the past the ezhavas had worshiped various manifestations of dravidian deities in small shrines where there were animal sacrifices.¹²⁸

This devil worship and animal sacrifices did not bear any resemblance to the sanskritized forms of worship practiced by the brahmins. Pretensions to witchcraft, divination and magical spell are made by many of these demon worshippers. The lower classes of natives thoroughly believed in the possibility of the transmigration of evil spirits by witchcraft into person's bodies.¹²⁹ It was believed that a sorcerer can produce such intense pain in the person's bodies and he makes immediate confession of the crime that he had committed. Some of the parayas were considered to be professional *mantravadis* or magicians and were credited with tremendous powers over certain evil spirits and demons and sought after in their mountain abodes by those who desire to wreak vengeance upon their enemies.¹³⁰ Serious illnesses and other inflections were frequently referred to the malice of the enemies who were supposed to have bewitched the sufferer, and counter charms and solemn incantations were used to counter act the malignant influences supposed to be at work.¹³¹ These

128. George Wood Cock, *Kerala: A Portrait of the Malabar Coast*, Faber and Faber, London, 1967, p. 228.

129. Francis, Day, *op.cit.*, p. 389.

130. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.159.

131. Samuel Mateer, *Land of Charity*, *op.cit.*, p.210.

pragmatic forms of worships kept the lower classes away from the brahmins. There worship patterns devoid of any scientific reasoning or rational thinking were yet other stumbling block in the march towards development.

Serpent worship was also widely prevalent in the society among Hindus. Serpents were considered as Gods and worshipped in every home. Periodical ceremonies called *pambuthullal* was ensued by an elaborate *pooja* to the serpent Gods, at the end of which the Gods were supposed to enter the bodies of the people involved with the *pooja*. "The entrance of Gods into their bodies is characterised by the fearful concussion of their whole frame, gradually developing into a ceaseless shaking, particularly the upper part."¹³² The serpent worship was common with the high classes too as there are instances of the families of *pampinmekavve* nambudiris and the great magical spell they had over the serpents. These nambudiri houses were supposed to be full of cobras in every nook and corner. Their propitiation was very expensive and it expressed the degenerated pragmatic unscientific beliefs in the part of the natives of Kerala.¹³³ The hard earned money was wasted for such expenses and lack of education became the reasons for the ignorance and superstitions of the people.

Summarizing briefly we see that the scenario of the society that existed in the nineteenth century, was not at all congenial for the growth of nationalism and fight against the British paramount power. The society struggled at the

132. T.K. Gopala Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

133. *Ibid.*, p.160.

yoke of brahmin autocracy unable to develop an urge for national sentiments. The most vulgar feature was undoubtedly the caste structure. The Hindu caste system achieved its highest degree of elaboration here.¹³⁴ The caste system provided unlimited power to the high castes to exploit the low castes. The social order in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was more rigid and stereotyped, less humane and indulgent to the extent that the lower castes lived a life of misery and perpetual agony while the upper classes enjoyed at the expense of the formers disabilities.¹³⁵ India was beginning to realise that nationalism was an impossible dream with caste system in its way.¹³⁶

A majority of the population had no basic rights as they lived for the sake of upper classes. The natural result of all such aspects was that the unfortunate communities were subjected to social disabilities of a severe and humiliating character segregated in localities which were often unhealthy and removed from villages and towns and condemned to live in miserable hovels that were unfit for human occupations. They were shut out from almost all civilizing influences of life and had no access generally to the amenities of civilized life. Materially and metaphorically their existence was dark steeped as they were in filth, wretchedness, ignorance and superstitions.¹³⁷

134. N.K. Bhaskaran, 'Social Reform Movement and Politics in Kerala', *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. XI, Publication Department of History, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, March, 1984.

135. T.K. Ravindran, 'Consequences of Untouchability in Travancore' *Traditional Culture Bulletin*, Trivandrum, July, 1975, p.31

136. Eugene, F. Irschick, *Political and Social Conflict in South India*, University of California, California, 1969, p. 42.

137. Government of Cochin, *Census Report of 1911*, *op.cit.*, p. 311.

Slavery was a direct result of the caste stratification. Slaves and their masters formed entirely two separate entities in the society. Slaves and downtrodden population on one side and a very microscopic minority [the upper class] who lived at their cost supported the British colonial rulers who looked down the Indian tradition with disregard. The masses could in no way raise a respectable living or fight against their superior's tyranny. Slavery was abolished in the middle of the nineteenth century but the emancipation of the depressed communities did not lead to any perceptible improvement in their social and economic condition. So long as orthodoxy reigned among caste Hindus they had to labour under all the disabilities which unapproachability involved.¹³⁸

The social conditions of women as we have seen were terribly deteriorating. Womanhood was condemned and gained no respect both among the *savarnas* and the *avarnas*. The era showed a decline in the prestige of nair dominance, certainly due to evil impacts of their custom, pattern of inheritance and marital bonds. The pragmatism of *marumakkathayam*, the complexity of joint family system and the conjugal infidelity of matrimonial relationships led to their deterioration. Wastage of money on the unnecessary ceremonies was not interrogated which broke the backbone of their economic system.¹³⁹ Witchcraft, superstitions and devil worship accelerated the intellectual degeneracy of the society of Kerala.

138. *Ibid.*, p.268.

139. P.Sankara Menon, *Keralathinte Samudhayika Parishkarana Prasthanam*, Mangalodayam Publication, Trivandrum, 1953, p.25.

Thus altogether, the social reformers and intellectuals of Kerala had to strive tremendously hard to break away the shackles of caste and revitalize the energy and money of the people for creative and constructive programmes in order to boost up the nationalism that was gaining momentum all over India in the beginning of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM

Colonialism, the creation of colonies and their exploitation in a systematised way, was derived from the Latin term 'Colonia' that means settlements of Roman citizens in a newly conquered territory. The word colonialism is often used interchangeably with imperialism.¹ European countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth century seriously part took in the scramble of possession for countries in Asia and Africa, which resulted in the creation of many colonies. It was political, economic and cultural control, over the third world countries that gave impetus to the growth of Colonialism. Colonialism, the word's immediate associations are with intrusions, conquest, economic exploitation and the domination of indigenous people by European men.² In D.K. Field House's words, "Colonialism emerged as a general description of the state of subjection – political, economic and intellectual. Colonialism means the condition of a subject people and is used exclusively of non-European societies, when under the political control of European states of American."³ Similar is the opinion of Albert Memi when he said, "Colonialism

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1. Catherine Hall, *Cultures of Europe, Colonisers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000, p.5.
 2. Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture; Anthropology, Travel and Government*, University Press, Princeton, 1991, p.1.
 3. D.K. Field House, *Colonialism (1875-1945), An Introduction*, Wiedenfield and Nicholson, London, 1981, p.6.

is most commonly used today to connote the oppression, humiliation and exploitation of the indigenous people.”⁴

Catherine Hall used the word colonialism to describe the European pattern of exploitation and discovery of settlement, of dominance over geographically separate ‘others’, which resulted in the uneven development of forms of capitalism across the world and the destruction and / or transformation of other forms of social organisation and life.⁵

The word imperialism is often used interchangeably and is very much associated with colonialism. Edward Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* differentiated both the term this way. “As I shall be using the term imperialism means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominant metropolitan centre, ruling a distant territory. Colonialism which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlement in distant territory.”⁶

Capitalism is another word and feature associated with imperialism and colonialism. European capitalism gathered strength at the expense of colonies like India and Africa. It prospered by adapting through (force and economic pressure) the rest of the world to fit the needs of the more advanced capitalist

4. Albert Memi, *The Coloniser and the Colonised*, Orion Press, New York, 1905, p.149.

5. Catherine Hall, *op. cit.*, p.5

6. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books, New York, 1994, p.9.

nations.⁷ As in the case of colonies like India which had a self sufficient village economy till then, they shifted economy and production in such a way that colonialism favoured the growth of British capitalism and industries. By promoting capitalism the British were then sowing the seeds of destruction.⁸ The colonial masters drained the colonies virtually of all its wealth drastically. It was this exploitation that made Frantz Fanon remark in his work, *The Wretched of the Earth* so. “For centuries, the foreign capitalists have behaved in the underdeveloped world like nothing more than criminals.”⁹ The British capitalism, which gathered energy at the cost of India’s economy, destroyed its traditional agriculture, handicrafts and textile industries and totally tilted the self-sufficient village economy of India.

The British government always acted as an alien government, from 1757 after the Battle of Plassey, when they gained the political power over Bengal till 1947. Till they left India, they maintained this alien nature. They ruled to fill their own coffers without trying to improve the political set up or the economy. Though the imperialist historians praise the ‘benevolent’ nature of the British, it was far from truth. In Partha Chatterjee’s words, “This was the rule that distinguished the colonisers from the colonised, that was predicted by the power of the metropolis, over its subject people.” He called it the rule of

7. Henry Magdoff, *Essays on Imperialism and Globalization*, Corner Stone Publishers, Kharagpur, 2002, p.260.

8. George H. Nadel and Perry Curtis, *Imperialism and Colonialism*, Mc Millan, London, 1964, p.25.

9. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove, New York, 1968, p.101.

colonial differences.¹⁰ D.K. Field House also presents a similar view. He said, “So the concept of colonialism implies there is no necessary identity of interests between rulers and ruled. Indeed it is normal to think they are diametrically opposed.”¹¹

Colonialism not only destroyed the economy and well being of the colonized state, but also its culture drastically. Amilcar Cabral, the African freedom fighter spoke of the permanent organised repression of the cultural life of the people as the very core of colonialism.¹² In his ‘*Intimate enemy*’ Ashis Nandy has viewed colonialism as a moral and psychological sentiment rather than a policy. He wrote, “Obviously a colonial system perpetuates itself by inducing the colonised, through socio economic and psychological regards and punishments to accept new social norms and cognitive categories.”¹³ It was the drastic change in the life and cultural pattern of people that was visible during the colonial period. It is true when Frederick Cooper wrote, “but the principle meaning of colonisation has come to involve people rather than land; coercive incorporation into an expansionist state and invidious distinction.”¹⁴

10. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments, Colonial and Post Colonial Histories*, University Press, Princeton, 1993, p.10.

11. D.K. Field House, *op.cit.*, p.6.

12. Amilcal Cabral, quoted in Ashis Nandy, *Bonafire of Creeds: The Essential*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2004, p.17.

13. Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p.3.

14. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question; Theory, Knowledge, History*, University of California Press, London, 2003, p.27.

The anthropologist, Nicholas Dirks, in his *Colonialism and Culture* has written that cultural forms in newly classified traditional societies were reconstructed and transformed by and through colonial technologies and opposition between colonisers and colonised, Europe and Asian, modern and traditional, west and east, even male and female.¹⁵ Viewed in such a way it was colonialism that favoured the growth of nationalism in India. Imperialists normally attempted to destroy the culture of a dependency and to replace it by their own. The cultural imperialism affected negatively the self-estimation of individuals in colonies. Thus colonialism tended not only to deprive a society of its freedom and its wealth, but of its very character, leaving its people intellectually and morally disoriented, what Frantz Fanon has described in his *The Wretched of the Earth*.¹⁶

The effects of British colonial rule and the westernization process initiated by the foreign powers had deep repercussions in Kerala, the southern most state of India. Among the three states of Kerala, it was Malabar that came under the direct rule of the British. The other two states, Travancore and Cochin were princely states. However, the impacts of colonialism were felt everywhere. In the words of Tagore, "The rule of India by foreigners who had gone before was a mere drift on the surface of her life. This time it was the

15. N. Nicholas Dirks, (ed.), *Colonialism and Culture*, University of Michigan, Michigan, 1992, p.2-3.

16. Frantz Fanon, quoted in D.K. Field House, *op.cit.*, p.7

nation of the west driving the tentacles of its machinery deep down in the soil.”¹⁷

The British unleashed a ruthless land revenue and economic policy in Kerala, which affected a majority of the population, agriculture being the most common occupation of the land. A vigorous economic policy of land revenue was introduced in the last decade of the eighteenth century. This civilized economic exploitation made Malabar blood white more than under the Mysorean Government.¹⁸ This policy contributed to the pauperization of peasants. The revenue policy of the company was one of the primary causes for all sorts of agitation in Malabar. The ruin of traditional occupations and handicrafts led to a steep hike in the rate of unemployment in the state. Industrialisation was not encouraged by the colonial masters and along with the subjugation by the *savarnas*, the masses had to bear a tortuous life of penury by the rulers. British rule tumbled the economic system of the state.¹⁹ The whole of Kerala was in a deteriorated position, socially, politically and economically. The colonial rulers took it as the most vulnerable condition to establish their superiority here. This was generally the situation all over India. To fight against modern capitalism, to preserve one's own freedom and sovereignty was

17. Rabindranath Tagore, quoted in George Dunbar, *A History of India from Earliest Times to Present Day*, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1990, p.590.

18. K.K.N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala; Studies in Social and Agrarian Relations*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p.8.

19. K.Damodaran and C. Narayana Pillai, *Keralathinte Swathantriya Samaram*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 1957, p.4.

not possible to the whole of India, as they were deteriorated and degenerated in every field, drastically.²⁰ Scholars differ as to the nature of the British imperialism. Most of them are convinced that imperialism was the result not so much of economic impulses or of the desire to bring civilisation and good government to non-European people as of the urge to dominate.

A brief outline of the annexation of small principalities of Kerala will give a better picture how Kerala came under the yoke of colonial imperialism. The year 1498 when the Portuguese traveller, Vascodagama landed at Calicut, it opened a new stage for the European imperialism to flourish. The primary intention of the Portuguese was trade, but they had the selfish motive to wipe off the Arab Muslims who were having trade supremacy in Malabar. They fought with the Zamorin and were supported by Cochin and Cannanore. Thus the Portuguese introduced into Kerala politics, political rivalry supported by foreign power.²¹ Soon after the Portuguese, other foreign powers like Dutch, French and English also found their inroads into the state of Kerala. In 1663, the Dutch made the Portuguese give up their possessions in Kerala and took the monopoly of Malabar trade. They subjugated the petty chieftains of the state till the beginning of eighteenth century when the powers of English and French increased terribly. In 1723 a treaty was signed between the English East India

20. E.M.S. Nambudirippad, *Kerala Charitram Samskaravum Oru Marxist Veekshanam*, Chinta Publication, Trivandrum, 1981, p.38.

21. A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, "*European Imperialism in Kerala and its Impact*", paper Presented at the South Indian History Congress, Department of History, University of Calicut, 1991, p.59.

Company and the Travancore Raja. This treaty was the foremost of all treaties, the British had with any other Indian State is to be mentioned. This friendship offered the English, a fort to be built at Kulechal for them, at the cost of Travancore Raja. In 1726 the Rani of Attingal permitted the English to construct a fort. They used their power to exercise supremacy in the Northern Kerala too. By 1792 when Malabar adopted British sovereignty after the Mysorean interlude of Haider and Tipu, most of Kerala was under their suzerainty. The only exception, in the North was from Pazhashi Raja of Wayanad who waged a strong protest to overthrow British intervention until 1805. He died unable to achieve his objective. The indigenous political powers were facing the European expansion in its total reality and many of them crumbled before the colonial policy of expansionists.

There were similar protests in Travancore and Cochin between 1805 and 1809. This superior military tactics of the British crushed the heroic rebellions by Veluthampi Dalawa of Travancore and Paliath Achan of Cochin. There were always fights against the French as repercussions of the wars between the two imperial powers else where in India and the world. Things were favourable to the British who succeeded in confining the French power to a very small number of pockets in Kerala. By 1812 English control over this region was firmly established.²² Taken in the world context, the political and military conditions of the period favoured the British over any other power: (1) The waning of Spain's pre-eminence, (2) the shift of Portugal's dependence on

22. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *op.cit.*, p.61.

France to the dependence on England, (3) the end of a virtual monopoly of shipping (4) the growth of colonial rivalry between France and England and the emergence of Britain's preeminence on the sea and international commerce.²³ This world wide supremacy had its repercussions in Kerala too granting them monopoly over any other power in the affairs of Kerala.

The British were able to exploit the enmity that existed among the petty chieftains and the Rajas. There was not a single power, which could cope up with the technology and advancement of the British. Worst of all, the petty Rajas supported the British against their fellow brethren, enabling the Europeans to cut down the power of one after the other. The ignorance and illiteracy of the masses made the mastery of the land easier. Kerala with its rich supply of natural resources became a very enterprising supplier of raw materials for the industries in London. The English framed the administration of the land to suit their benefits. While some reforms were utterly exploitative, some proved to be slightly beneficial for the development of Kerala.

The British conquest of India led to a revolution in the existing land system.²⁴ Administrative changes initiated by the colonialists were creating fissures on the well-knit feudal social set up of Kerala. Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people of Kerala and the administrative changes affecting it tilled upside down, the prevalent economic system.

23. Henry Magdoff, *op.cit.*, p.24.

24. A.R. Desai, *The Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Book Depot, New Delhi, 2000, p.30.

Indian feudalism is distinguished from European feudalism by the striking feature that no class of landed feudal nobility with proprietary rights over land existed under it.²⁵ A *jenmi* of the old days was not only the land lord, he acted as the centre of the whole social organization around whom the people of the society gathered to solve their problems. He regulated all the spheres of activities of the people of his society. However the well prevalent customs prevented rack-renting and arbitrary eviction of the tenants by the *jenmis*. "For various reasons like the abundance of cultivable land, no *jenmi* could evict a tenant except for non-payment of rent or on other grounds which society at large would justify as sufficient for eviction."²⁶ According to E.M.S.Nambudirippad, "*Jenmis* who arbitrarily evicted or otherwise oppressed a tenant would as surely be dealt with by society as the tenant who did not pay the customary rent or pay the customary allegiance to the *jenmi*."²⁷

In Kerala, the temples, nambudiri brahmins, the Rajas and chieftains were the lords of land. All the other persons held land on derivative basis.²⁸ One such superior right was *kanam*. They were the *kanakkars*. The *kanakkar* leased land to numerous subtenants or *verumpattakkars* who belonged to the slave class normally. In Malabar, Tenancy system was generally a system of relationship based upon an accepted order of ranking dependent on the caste

25. *Ibid.*, p.31.

26. E.M.S. Nambudirippad, *Selected writings* Vol. II, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1998, p.227.

27. *Ibid.*

28. S. Ramachandran Nair, *The State and Economy in the Colonial and British India*, Lipi Publication, Trivandrum, 1998, p.19.

hierarchy prevalent in the society. Most of the *jenmis* or landlords were nambudiris or brahmins while their tenants or *kanakkars* were nair men or nambiaris.²⁹ The traditional structure of agricultural society in Malabar was based on fragmented feudalism, hierarchically ordained reaching down to the lowest stratum. The *jenmi* (landlord), *kanakkaran* (protector) and the peasant shared the produce equally, working out a social equation on the basis of mutual dependence and reciprocal interests within the confines of a feudal system of exploitation.³⁰

British rule while exploitative had set in motion economic forces leading to the destruction of the traditional Indian society.³¹ Lord Cornwallis by his permanent settlement of land created the first group of landlords in India in 1793. They who were revenue collectors before, were transformed into landlords who had to pay, a good share of the produce to the British Government officers that were appointed for the collection of revenue. The *jenmis* started losing his powers on the people by modern notions of social relations. In Malabar, the Tenancy Committee, which submitted its report in 1793, entitled the Government 40 percent of the net produce of the wetland and 1/3 of garden crops. The tenant share was 1/3 of the produce from wet and

29. V.V. Kunjikrishnan, *Some aspects of Tenancy Agitation in Malabar, 1900-1930*, Paper Presented at the South Indian History Congress, Karnatak University, 1991, p.112.

30. K.N. Panikkar, 'Peasant Revolts in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in A. R. Desai (ed.), *The Peasant Struggles in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1979, pp.604-605.

31. M.N. Srinivas, *The Dominant Caste and other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991, p.23.

garden land. The remainder was left to the *jenmis*. The scheme did not provide any share to the *kanam* tenant. The claim of the *jenmi* as lords of soil was recognized.³² The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1929 describes a *jenmi* (landlord) this way. "Landlord means a person under whom a tenant holds and to whom he is liable to pay rent or *michavaram* and includes a *jenmi*." ³³ The power of a tenant over landholdings was absolutely nothing. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1929 defined the tenant as any person who has paid or has agreed to pay rent or other consideration, for his being allowed by another to enjoy the land of the *jenmi* and includes an intermediary, a *kanamdar*, a *kuzhikanamdar*, a *verumpattamdar* of any description and the holder of *kudirappu*. The report says a *kanamdar*, *kanam-kuzhikanamdar*, *kuzhikanamdar* customary *verumpattamdar* or cultivating *verumpattamdar* who has obtained a renewal may at the end of any agricultural year, surrender his holding to his immediate landlord by a registered payment.³⁴

The introduction of the British administrative institutions led to the dissolution of the system by the substitution of a strong central power for the divided authority of the feudal chieftains. The British rule introduced the concept of private property in land. The *jenmis* were recognized as freehold proprietors and the *kanakkaran* was considered a mortgage or lessee and was

32. S. Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*, p.20.

33. Government of Madras, *The Malabar Tenancy Act 1929*, Government Press, Madras, p.24.

34. *Ibid.*, p.7.

treated as such.³⁵ New classes, absentee landlords and money lenders at the top and tenants-at-will, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers at the bottom came into being. A new agrarian system was born that was neither traditional or feudal or capitalists.³⁶ Earlier the revenue was only a portion of the actual produce, which varied from year to year, but under the British rule the landlords had to pay a fixed amount of revenue to the Government. A.R. Desai has written, when under the new system, fixed money payments assessed on land and not on the annual produce were introduced, the landlord or the peasant proprietor had to meet the revenue claim of the state irrespective of the failure of the crop.³⁷ When unable to pay the rent, the landlord had to sell his land. This insecurity of possession and ownership of land, a phenomenon unknown to the pre-British agrarian society came into existence.³⁸ The English were exploiting the farmers to pay huge land revenues without giving importance to improve the standards of agriculture. At the time of political transfer of India from the East India Company to the British Crown in 1857-58 the land revenue of the whole of India was £ 15.3 million. There was a progressive rise in the land revenue during the subsequent period. By 1900-01 it rose to £17.5 million, by 1911-12 to £ 20 million and by 1936-37 to £ 23.9 million.³⁹ Land

35. K.N. Panikkar, *op.cit.*, pp.604-605

36. Bipan Chandra, 'Peasantry and National Integration in Contemporary India' in K.N. Panikkar (ed.), *National and Left Movement in India*, Vikas Publication, New Delhi, 1980, p.107.

37. A.R. Desai, *op.cit.*, p.34.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, p.49.

revenue system resulted in the utter impoverishment of the agrarian masses of Kerala as well as India as a whole.

The British tried to introduce the European pattern of land settlement patterns in Kerala, which was strange to the natives. The landlord or *jenmi* 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 mortgages and *Kuzhikanomdars* and *verumpattomdars* as tenants at will all of who could be evicted by the freedom of contract enjoyed by the owner.⁴⁰

In short the British rule made two fold changes in the land tenure. (1) It took away certain rights and privileges of *jenmis*, which were social, political and cultural in character. (2) It gave him unrestricted rights on the landed property held by him.⁴¹ It marked the beginning of utilizing land as private property that could be mortgaged purchased and sold, a phenomenon unknown to the old feudal pattern of Kerala. It facilitated the growth of capitalist development by bringing up the idea of individual ownership of land. Armed with powers, the landlords not only demanded exorbitant rents and renewal fees but also introduced several provisions, which facilitated eviction earlier than the stipulated period.⁴² Though this did not have any immediate

40. T.C. Varghese, *Agrarian Changes and Its Social Consequences*, Allied Publishers, Calcutta, 1970, p. 29.

41. E.M.S. Nambudirippad, *Selected Writings*, Vol. II, *op.cit.*, p.228

42. K.N.Panikkar, in A.R. Desai, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.108.

repercussions, in the long run it created considerable pressure on the land and also deprived the cultivator-cum *kanakkaran* a part of his income. The new structure or relationship or forms of surplus extraction and utilization; (a) did not provide incentive or opportunities to any class or stratum engaged in agriculture in any position to make modern improvements (b) led to the siphoning of resources from the agriculture and agriculturists.⁴³

The self-sufficient economy and communal social life was lost with the introduction of colonial rule. With the ending of isolation of local markets, small farmers had to finance their debts in risky export trade or lose their land. The British had their own intentions in creating disruption in the traditional land pattern. Firstly their aim was to take a large share of the agricultural produce as land revenue. Secondly while achieving this end they were also interested in creating and recognising a few superior right holders of land who would then act as British agents.⁴⁴ Their policies though favoured the landlords were indeed devastating to the poor peasants whose conditions never bothered the Government. In Burton Stein's words, "Partly because the Indian authorities steadfastly refused to protect the small producers, there were major losses of productive resources to money-lenders while food export to distant markets constitute a different sort of drain and contributed to the terrible series of famines to which the imperial regime was slow to respond."⁴⁵

43. Bipan Chandra, in K.N. Panikkar, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.108.

44. T. C. Varghese, *op.cit.*, p.22.

45. Burton Stein, *History of India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p.248.

The law courts established by the British were extremely favourable to the *jenmis* who acted against the wishes of tenants. The British Government always acted according to the interests of *jenmis* and neglected the interests of the peasants. The traditional arrangement of sharing crops between the *jenmis* and tenants collapsed, and as per the contract the tenants had to give forth a very huge part of the produce to the owners and government even if the cultivating collections were unfavourable.

The British land tenure policies increased the numbers of landless labourers, *kudiyans* and agricultural labourers who were ruthlessly exploited by the landowners. According to the Census Report of 1921 – *jenmis* and the landowning class figured around a lakh while the landless labourers figured up to 14.5 lakhs.⁴⁶ This was the state of condition in Malabar. Even during years of scarcity, the tenants were compelled to give away the state's share. The tenants reacted against these policies to protect their lives. Between 1836 and 1900 it is reported to have riots and uprisings in Malabar, which were against the landlords and the colonial rulers.⁴⁷ The British alliance with the landlords, made them treat the tenants and cultivators with discrimination and no progressive steps were taken to improve the standards of life of the ordinary peasants in Malabar. Their lethargic action and unsympathetic attitudes towards the toiling masses especially the Mappila Muslim tenants fanned religious fanaticism and embittered Hindu-Muslim relation inseparably.⁴⁸

46. K. Damodharan and C. Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.25.

47. *Ibid.*, p.6.

48. S. Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.* p.25.

However the conditions of cultivators and tenants were better in the princely states of Travancore compared to their counterparts in the British Malabar. The state governments pursued agrarian policies more conducive to the growth and welfare of cultivators. Though the ryots had no ownership rights in these lands they enjoyed fixity of tenure. A discriminatory assessment towards the cultivators was avoided as far as sharing the tenure was concerned. Though the *jenmi* used to harass the peasants, their power to exploit was to a large extent restricted by the state ownership of a large part of cultivated and cultivable lands.⁴⁹ The monarch was able to cut off the power of landlords which created a rather cultivator friendly pattern of living as compared to that of Malabar.

The state of Cochin took an intermediary stand between Travancore and Cochin as far as agrarian tenures were conserved. In Cochin also the state tried to subdue the power of the ryots landlords but was not as successful in doing so, as was the case in Travancore, Cochin followed a policy which was more similar to that of the land policies in Malabar. The only difference was that a considerable part of the land belonged to the state and to that extent, it acted as deterrent to the powers enjoyed by the private *jenmis* vis-à-vis the cultivators.⁵⁰

The new land revenue settlement led to the creation of a new group of landlords who had no much interest in agriculture or improving the conditions of the land. The tenants were compelled to pay a fix amount of their produce

49. T. C. Varghese, *op.cit.* p.31.

50. *Ibid.*, p33

to the landlords, thus leading to their bankruptcy. Tenancy reforms did not constitute a change in the basic economic relationships. They reshuffled the upper levels of the tenurial hierarchy and exposed the tenants at the bottom to competition.⁵¹ Harassed by the landlords and the colonial masters, the tenants earned an unfavourable and highly unprofitable mode of agriculture in the land.

Another major impact of the new land reform was the commercialisation of agriculture. Previously what was produced by agriculture, were mainly food crops, and devoured there itself. But colonialist land revenue policies led to the production of agricultural goods not only to be used inside the village but that for international market. According to E.M.S. Nambudirippad, "The establishment of British rule on the one hand accelerated the creation of the national market and made the biggest transformation in the mode of production that is it replaced the production of articles mainly for one's own use by production for the market."⁵² Those were the years of industrial revolution in Europe, and it necessitated the increase in supply of raw materials for the European factories. The agricultural pattern of Kerala had to satisfy the British capitalism that was growing at a tremendous pace. The raw materials for the industries abroad had to be supplied from India, at a very unprofitable rate. This stagnated the growth of Indian agriculture, without creating much development in this field.

51. S. Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*, p.38.

52. E.M.S. Nambudirippad, *The National Question in Kerala*, Peoples Publishing House, Bombay, 1952, p.70.

The land of Kerala became the cultivating areas of cash crops, such as jute, cotton pepper, coconut, tea, coffee, wheat, sugarcane and linseeds. Money economy was introduced instead of exchange through the means of commodities produced. Diversion of the village agricultural production from serving the personal needs of the peasant and village requirements to catering for the Indian and world market, not only led to commercialisation and specialisation of crops, but also disrupted the ancient unity of agriculture and industry in the traditional Indian village. In Kathaleen Gough's words, "Landlords and local merchants profited from their sales to British export firms and brought pressure on the peasants to grow them in their roles as wage labourers, serfs, tenants, or indebted small holders. Despite the expansion of the total cultivated areas the production of export crops reduced the area available for subsistence farming in at least some regions such as Kerala."⁵³ These situations created conditions for commercial bourgeoisie to grow. Commercialisation of agriculture led to the growth of moneylenders. Commercialisation of agriculture which often led to crops being grown with the merchant's advances and marked through his monopolistic channel further strengthened his position, as did the fact that he often combined the usurer's function with that of the trader's.⁵⁴ He also began to control land as an absentee landlord. Landlords, traders and moneylenders strengthened their position in the name of commercialization. According to Bipan Chandra,

53. Kathaleen Gough, "Indian Peasant Uprising," in A.R. Desai, (ed.), *The Peasant Struggles in India*, *op.cit.*, p.90.

54. Bipan Chandra in K.N. Panikkar, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.111.

“Moreover, whatever increase of income occurred in agriculture due to certain commercialization of agriculture also mostly went to them.”⁵⁵ The colonial state, local landlords, metropolitan capitalists, indigenous merchants and moneylenders and rich peasants were among the main claimants of the surplus produced by the peasantry.⁵⁶ Roads, canals and railways all hastened the tempo of commercialization in British India.⁵⁷ This ended the isolation of the self-sufficient village community of Kerala.

Another major feature associated with commercialisation was the large scale flow of European capital in Kerala's agriculture. European capital investments favoured the British to develop their financial growth. It is true when Michael Tharakan said, “While colonialism and capitalism are products of a common historical process, capitalism produced development in the metropolis as where colonialism produced underdevelopment on the colonies.”⁵⁸ In Kerala direct colonial capital came to be employed in plantations. The increased investment in plantation led to the unique colonial institutions known as ‘coastal firms’.⁵⁹ By the nineteenth century, the

55. *Ibid.*, p.112.

56. Sugata Bose, *The New Cambridge History of India, Peasant Labour and Colonial Capital in Rural Bengal*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.112.

57. Burton Stein, *op.cit.*, p. 260.

58. Michael Tharakan, “Factors in Penetration and Consolidation of Colonial Power in Kerala (1721-1819)”, in P.J. Cherian (ed.), ‘Perspectives of Kerala History, The Second Millennium’, *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1999, p.329

59. Michael Tharakan, “Development of Colonial Economy in Kerala 1850- 1944,” in P.J. Cherian (ed.), “Perspectives of Kerala History, The Second Millennium,” *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1999, p.378.

transformation from manufacturing to one of nearly exclusive primary production occurred not only in Kerala, but elsewhere in India also.⁶⁰ The British capitalist utilized Indian resources at a less cost, paid low wages to Indian workers and increased their profits British capitalists monopolized all areas of plantations. Colonial capital preferred a course in which the cost of labour was quite simply nothing.⁶¹ They utilised Indian resources at a less cost, paid low wages to Indian labourers and filled their own coffers. Consequently the investment of British capital in India, far from being of any benefit to the Indians, indirectly drained away India's resources and capital. The fundamental difference between pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production was that in the pre-capitalist formations there was no separation of the producer and the means of production, under capitalistic colonial role, the cultivation had no right over land. With the ending of isolation of local markets small farmers had to finance their debts in risky export trade or lose their land.⁶²

The impacts of capitalism were felt in the areas of India's trade also. The evidence of history shows that there indeed was a major globalisation at the end of the nineteenth century.⁶³ The period from 1860 to 1914 is marked by the classic colonial form of unequal exchange of India's agricultural commodities for British manufactured goods, notably textiles and the

60. *Ibid.*, p.369.

61. Sugata Bose, *op.cit.*, p.74.

62. Burton Stein, *op.cit.*, p.260.

63. Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed, Reflection on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, Permanent Black. New Delhi, 2004, p.84.

generation of an export surplus through the rate of raw materials to the rest of the world which through an intricate mechanism of payments which offset Britain's deficits.⁶⁴ India in this period and until the First World War was in terms of international trade the most open market in the world.⁶⁵ It was the time of industrial revolution in India. The decline of India's textile exports is seen as a consequence of the rapid increase in factory productivity.⁶⁶ Indian hand made textiles could not compete with the cheaper machine made goods produce in Britain. The monopoly on foreign trade and the restrictive tariffs on the imports of some Indian goods including textiles and sugar to Britain actually cut India's manufactures off from the foreign markets.⁶⁷ This led to the de-industrialisation of India's peasantry. Though this was the case of India's manufactured goods, there was a great demand for raw cotton produced in India. Increasing reliance upon the Indian market undoubtedly gave Manchester a keen interest in the development in the Indian sub-continent. At a time of crisis when raw cotton was in short supply or when export materials sagged, Manchester banged the drum of development and campaigned vigorously for increased spending on public works, for a guaranteed return on capital invested in railways and for low and non-discriminating tariffs.⁶⁸

64. S. B. Saul, 'Studies in British Overseas trade' in Sugata Bose, (ed.), *op.cit.* p.43.

65. Amiya Kumar Bagchi, quoted in Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India: An Intellectual and Social History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p.82.

66. Jim Matson, "De-Industrialisation or Peripheralisation: The Case of Cotton Textiles in India," in Sugata Bose, (ed.), *South Asia and World Capitalism*, *op.cit.*, p.216.

67. G. K. Shirokov, *Industrialisation of India*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, p.14.

68. Thorner, quoted in P.J. Kaine and A. G. Hopkins (ed.), *British Imperialism, (1688-1914)*, Longman Group, New York, 1993, pp.334-335.

When the traditional textile manufacturing industry of India was destroyed as the result of industrialization In Europe, those workers were left unemployed. They tried to find jobs in the already crowded area of India's conventional agriculture. This resulted in the sub-division and fragmentation of land holdings and added to the problems of agriculture. In G.K. Shirikov's words, "a characteristic feature of the economic structure of colonial India was in actual fact, the overwhelming predominance of a backward agriculture over an insufficiently and narrowly developed industry and the dependence of the reproduction of fixed as well as working capital on the foreign market."⁶⁹

The construction of roads and railways in India was always looked upon as an act of British benevolence It created far repercussions in the Indian society. Construction of railways and roads took a tremendous pace under the British than under the Rajas of Kerala. The roads that existed earlier were useful for travelers of foot and horse and other vehicles could not be carried along. For example taking the case of Travancore, road construction took a rapid pace in there and by 1904; the state was able to maintain 2218 miles of cast roads, 816 miles of village roads and 376 miles of traces for new roads.⁷⁰ Though the railways provided small employment opportunities to the local people and made transactions and travelling easier it adversely affected the agrarian economy of the state. In the words of Shireen Moosvi, "Agricultural prices over different regions began to converge and Indian trade became linked

69. G. K. Shirokov, *op.cit.*, p.13.

70. V. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.* p. 253.

to the world market. The latter process led to an improvement in agriculture's term of trade. But the impact of this improvement was in part wiped out by increased taxation, where indirect taxes tended to rise as the proportion of land revenue decline."⁷¹ By 1890 railways were carrying large proportion of hardy and cheap food grains to distant markets and producers were caught in credit pressures previously unknown.⁷² Railways did not hasten industrialisation in India. Apart from employment as unskilled labourers, India gained neither money nor experience in modern engineering from the building of locomotives and rolling stock, for these came from Britain and benefited owners and workers there. Very few advanced technical skill were imparted since Indians held a mere 10 percent of superior posts in railways by 1921, and only 700 locomotives were made in India over the century before independence.⁷³ Much of the transport and communication system were built mainly to facilitate the export industries of the colonies and while this was impatient in stimulating the development of exports, it left to the colonies with a system which was lopsided as that transport links which served to integrate the domestic economy were generally assigned a lower order of priority or simply ignored.⁷⁴ The railways of India were a way by which the British capitalism was strengthened

71. Shireen Moosvi, "The Indian Economic Experience (1600-1900): A Quantitative Study," in K.N. Panikkar *et al.*, (ed.), *The Making of Modern History*, Essays presented to Irfan Habib, Tulika Publishers, New Delhi, 2000, pp.345-346.

72. Burton, Stein, *op.cit.*, p.260.

73. *Ibid.*, p.259.

74. Michael Havinden and David Meredith, *Colonialism and Development, Britain and Tropical Colonies (1850-1960)*, Routledge, London, 1993, p.135.

by the colonial connection.⁷⁵ Railways became the typical example of how capital investment favoured the British economy. The construction of railways stimulated the demand for rails, locomotives, railway cess and other products of the iron steel and machine industries in Britain.⁷⁶ Thus we can see how railways exploited India's economy. The famous Indian railways that often acted as a great modernising achievement of colonialism were planned and constructed to serve the strategic and economic need of metropolis.⁷⁷

Though the economic devastation caused by the British was indeed drastic, their contribution to education was great in India. The most significant among the impacts of the colonial administration was the solid support rendered in promoting education in the country. If it was not for westernisation and removal of ignorance by education, the growth of nationalism could not have gathered impetus so vigorously so as to push out the British from the land. If the pattern of economic exploitation, which the British developed during the nineteenth century, merely completed that began by earlier trader-invaders, the progress of education, which they initiated brought a new and entirely revolutionary changes into the life of Malabar Coast. The people of Kerala were later than those of Bengal in taking to modern education but in the long run they did so much more thoroughly: they became the most literate people of India by the nineteenth century. The influx of missionaries, first Protestant and

75. *Ibid.*, p.248.

76. Henry Magdoff, *op.cit.*, p.83.

77. Sugata Bose and Iyesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture and Political Economy*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, p.83.

later Catholic were willing to concentrate their activities on education rather than proselytization.⁷⁸ In their zeal for spreading education and abolishing slavery and forced labour, as well as their fight for granting low caste women for covering their breasts, they became the precursors of social reform movement in Kerala.⁷⁹

As early as 1834, the foundation for modern education was set in India. The first English School was opened at Trivandrum in 1834. It was the earliest attempt of the Government of Travancore to impart English education in the country.⁸⁰ Active support was there from J. Roberts, the head of the seminary of Nagercoil to guide the activities of this school. Many vernacular schools were amalgamated to the English school started later at Kayamkulam, Kottayam, Chirayinkil etc. In 1865, the system of vernacular education also gained the attention of the government and they sought to improve the imparting of vernacular language.

It was Col. Munro who gave an impetus to West education in Cochin.⁸¹ Credit goes to Rev. J. Dawson for initiating English education in school in Cochin at Mattanchery in 1818. Schools were established at Trichur,

78. George Woodcock, *Kerala: A Portrait of the Malabar Coast*, Faber and Faber, London, 1967, p.226

79. P.Chandra Mohan, "Growth of Social Reform Movement in Kerala," in P.J. Cherian (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.461.

80. Regional Record Survey Committee, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol.I, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1970, p.74.

81. *Ibid.*

Trippunithara etc in the forthcoming years. In 1890 a department for promoting vernacular education was started.

In Malabar, in 1862, Brennan set up the Brennen School at Tellichery where children of all creeds and castes could get education. In 1872, the government directly controlled the affairs of the school. The high schools and colleges built later were the results of private enterprise and generosity.⁸² The Christian missionaries played a significant role promoting education. The historians viewed the Christian missionaries and their activities with diverse opinions. To some of them the dogmatism and compulsive prose litigation done by the Christian missionaries were harmful to the traditional Indian culture while another group argued strongly that they were the predecessors who paved the way for the renaissance of the nineteenth century that was yet to be staged on. This point of view is strongly supported by some missionaries who in the absence of an impressive number of converts seem naturally inclined to over emphasize their agencies contribution to social change.⁸³ Ever since the divine Lord Jesus Christ gave to his followers, missionary command to spread his kingdom, his apostles, disciples and followers drawn through the centuries have carried out his salvic mandate by

82. *Ibid.*, p.75.

83. Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India, L M S in South Travancore in the Nineteenth Century*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1989, p.87.

spending their lives as witness in the noble cause of evangelising the world and for the salvation of mankind.⁸⁴

In Kerala during the nineteenth century the London Mission Society (LMS) Christian Missionary Society (CMS) and Basel Evangelical Mission (BEM) were the dominant among the missionary groups. The LMS predominantly operated in South Travancore and gave valid contribution to education under the guidance of Ringeltaube. W.T. Ringeltaube who arrived in Travancore in 1806 and with a land grant from Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai set up a school to give elementary instruction to poor children, irrespective of caste and creed.⁸⁵ For three or four years Ringeltaube travelled diligently in, south Tinnevely and Travancore as an itinerant missionary preaching and teaching the word of Kingdom. Ringeltaube was privileged to baptize in all about 900 persons.⁸⁶ The people whom he converted to Christianity belonged to the lower classes of the society who were groaning with pain under the Hindu caste hierarchy and its brahmin monopolist principles and when the missionaries offered better living condition and employment, they in large numbers started embracing Christianity. M.J. Koshy writes, "To the Christian missionaries goes the abiding honour of having taken the first tangible step towards the

84. Fathimakutty Kapil, "Catholic Mission, Contributions Towards Education since 1846 in Vishakapatnam Diocese," *Proceedings of South Indian History Congress*, Andhra University, 1997, p.196.

85. George Wood Cock, *op.cit.*, p.224.

86. Samuel Mateer, *Land of Charity* (rpt.), Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1991, p.264.

introduction and diffusion of western learning.”⁸⁷ The Prussian Protestant missionary, W.T. Ringeltaube who stayed in Travancore between 1806-1816 established some schools where free instruction was given in reading and writing to all poor children, irrespective of caste and creed. His efforts were fostered by the encouragement given by Col. Munro.

Charles Mead, whose contribution led the LMS in spreading education among the downtrodden until his death, succeeded Ringeltaube. Charles Mead believed that the only weapon that could mould young men to self-respect was education. He worked relentlessly through out his life to attain his objective. To educate pulayas, who were denied education, a separate school was started in 1801. Schools to educate destitute and adults were also established. A girl's school was opened by LMS at Nagercoil to educate girls, though at the face of brisk opposition from the caste-hindus. Training for lace making, spinning and embroidery were also given there to girls. LMS took special initiative for female education in Travancore. Before the end of the century a total of 48 LMS men and two lady missionaries started working laboriously to spread knowledge to the masses. Anglo vernacular schools were introduced in order to give better and higher education to those boys who did considerably well in the vernacular schools. The lower classes that were denied education until then seemed to be excited by the activities and they were enthusiastic to get themselves opened to the new world of knowledge. In a letter by Rev.

87. M.J. Koshy, *The Genesis of Political Consciousness in Kerala*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1972, p.16.

Knowles of LMS to the Diwan of Travancore regarding using the land at Vembayam for mission purpose, he writes about the support from the part of the natives. "The shed and hut in question have not been put up by the mission but by the people themselves, in their arduous desire to obtain vernacular education and it would be changed indeed, if under a Maharajah whose great aim is for his people's education and benefit."⁸⁸ The rulers of Kerala were supportive to the educational attempts of the missionaries. They had sought the cooperation of efficient teachers among the missionaries, so as to enable better education in their state. Right from the beginning the nineteenth century education was encouraged by the Travancore rulers.⁸⁹

Another important mission was the Church Mission Society (CMS), which made the hilly station of Kottayam as their headquarters. It authorized missionaries like Bailey, Baker and Phen to work in the field of education. Baker started numerous schools where there were Syrian congregations. The education in Kottarakkara, Allepey and Cochin were brought under the activity of CMS. Achuta Menon writes, "The study of English was given primary importance. In 1827 there were 7 schools of 100 pupils. CMS did not show any interest in educating the slave class."⁹⁰ Robbin son Jeffrey has given the reason for this discrimination. Some missionaries were reluctant to accept the pulaya converts as they thought that the slave caste converts would lower the

88. Kerala State Archives, Confidential File 602, Thiruvananthapuram, 1883.

89. M.J. Koshy, *op.cit.*, p.16.

90. C. Achyuta Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1911, p.65.

prestige of the missions and make it more difficult for them to retain, Syrian Christian and converts from members of higher caste.⁹¹ The Travancore census of 1891 states that from 1837 onwards CMS had begun to make converts from the heathen and to receive Syrians. The History of CMS in Travancore and Cochin for the last 60 years tells of its unmistakable progress.⁹²

The Report of Census of Travancore of 1884 states the wonderful growth of CMS thus, "The pulaya converts of CMS in Travancore and Cochin for the last sixty years numbered about 10,000. The country under the CMS is dotted with mission schools chiefly attended by Syrians, Anglicans, nairs and chogans. These were separate schools for pulayas. There were 4 schools for Hindu girls at Kottayam and others at Thiruvalla. To Mrs. Bishop was due the credit of having established the first of these. A printing press by Benjamin Bailey led to the growth of press later in the consecutive years."⁹³

The German Basel Mission did pioneering work on education in Malabar. The Basel Evangelical Mission established in Switzerland in 1815, began its activities in north Malabar, a quarter of a century later, establishing a network of elementary and high schools by the end of the nineteenth century.⁹⁴ The Basel mission also undertook many social services activities as running of

91. *Ibid.*

92. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1891*, Travancore Government Press, p. 254.

93. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1884*, Travancore Government Press, p. 188.

94. Dilip M.Menon, *Caste Nationalism and Communism in South India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p.64.

educational institutions, printing and publishing houses, houses, hospitals, orphanages and old age homes. The Basel mission took a strong stand against caste. The mission rejected outright the pattern of caste related occupations and experimented creating a group of persons without castes. The Basel mission was responsible for setting up the first weaving and tile factories in Malabar largely to provide employment for its converts.⁹⁵ In this factories labourers from different caste background started working together. This helped to reduce the social distance that existed between different social castes.⁹⁶ Still another aspect of social mobility is location of new avenues of employment. Basel mission industries had offered employment not only to converts but also to non-converts. According to the statistics of employment, as on 1913, out of a total number of 3,533 employs in Basel mission factories, 954 were non-converts.⁹⁷ The mission also encouraged female education and spread of literacy. The mission created chances that enabled the women of the society to attain education, employment and live with dignity.

Jai Prakash Raghavaiah sums up the impact of Basel mission as such:

First of all it created a group of converts who had almost totally discarded their previous caste affinities. The impact of this on the larger society was by way of powerful demonstration effect.

Secondly it raised the social status of the converts who

95. Jai Prakash Ragavaiah, *Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara, 1834-94*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p.55.

96. Dilip M. Menon, *op.cit.*, p.65.

97. Jai Prakash Raghaviah, *op.cit.*, p.60.

predominantly belonged to the lower castes. Operating in an environment of social transition, it gave a thrust to the social movements of the time. In a caste-stratified society, it gave avenues for higher level employment to lower caste peoples. Moreover their other activities such as opening of educational institutions and issuing of journals did help to widen the area of interaction between people of different backgrounds.⁹⁸

The activities of Christian missionaries were very favourable to the lower caste population who for centuries has been suffering tremendous caste indiscrimination. The missionaries though for the purpose of spreading their religion, invited low caste people into their religious fold and provided them education, employment and better living standards. Due to their efforts we find the number of Christian converts increasing drastically.

The Cochin Census Report of 1933 states:

Their conversion to Christianity or Islam gave them a passport to tread over the fields forbidden by them. Their approach no longer pollutes castes above them. Yesterday a slave, compelled to stand at a distance of 64 ft from brahmins or nair masters and always restricted to the limits of the field, from which he steps out but with loud warnings of his approach, today he walks on the public road almost shoulder to shoulder with the most orthodox

98. *Ibid.*, p.63.

brahmin and approach with reasonable distance of the sacred edifice of the latter. When thus metamorphosed he is enable to engage himself in whatever work he wanted to earn high wages and lead a comparatively easy and comfortable life.⁹⁹

The missionaries worked tremendously against the slavery that prevailed in the state. They started schools for the slaves so as to open the light of education to them. This created resentment from the upper classes of the society. Slave labour had been a strong factor in sustaining the feudal agrarian economy and the abolition of it was to have a disturbed effect on the economy. As mentioned in the early chapter they who were slaves were treated like beasts of burden and were compelled of *oozhiyam* or forced labour. The ryots belonging to the ezhava, shanars, pulayas and parayas were subjected to *oozhiyam*.¹⁰⁰ The Christian missionaries exposed to society, the problems of the slaves in Kerala. It was by their untiring labour, sincere devotion and the great influence, they wielded over the British Residents and the Government of Travancore that made a move in this direction.¹⁰¹ C.M.S. and L.M.S. missionaries were not having cordial relationship with each other but they

99. Government of Cochin, *Cochin Census Report of 1933*, Cochin Government Press, p.291

100. Letter dated 12 December 1905, From the settlement of abolition of Oozhiyam and Viruthi in Travancore, From Dewan Peshkar to Chief Secretary of Government, Quoted in P. Ramachandran, "Abolition of Oozhiyum and Viruthi in Travancore," *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. III, September- December, 1977, p.521.

101. The Regional Record of Survey Committee, *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, op.cit., p.57.

formed a single opinion regarding the abolition of slavery. In the petition given to the Raja of Travancore, four CMS missionaries and eight LMS missionaries collectively signed for the abolition of slavery.¹⁰² Due to their untiring efforts slavery was abolished in 1855 and *oozhiyam* in 1865. They had to face opposition from the caste Hindus on the issue of slavery. The open support given by the missionaries gave undue strength to the slave castes to oppose castism and Brahmins, a kind of which they were lacking ever before.¹⁰³

The English Government allowed the lower classes to enter into state services for the various jobs, which were denied to them earlier. This meant the opening up of state services to people who were hitherto kept outside and thereby enabled them to share power and prestige of position in the hierarchy. This process helped to instill a sense of equality among them.¹⁰⁴ The propagation of the English education naturally facilitated the consolidation of national opinion and the free exchange of ideas. The great treasures of west were opened to the people of this country, which undoubtedly accelerated intellectual growth and cultural development.¹⁰⁵ English education and the principles of equality of men brought into the minds of lower castes a new sense of personality, importance and vitality. This kindled the fire of

102. Robinson Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 1979, p.70.

103. *Ibid.*

104. M.S.A Rao, *Tradition Rationality and Change*, Bombay, 1972, p.135.

105. Regional Record of Survey Committee, *The History of Freedom Movement of Kerala*, *op.cit.*, p.75.

nationalism and inspired the quest for independence, which ultimately paved the way for self-government.¹⁰⁶

As a result of the spread of English education and the increasing contact with the Europeans, the caste system has broken down considerably.¹⁰⁷ The missionaries as well as the British Government did not follow pollution rules and caste taboos of keeping a certain specified distance from the superior class. The Travancore Rajas acted for the welfare of brahmins. A Government that passed a general order asking the depressed classes to keep up a pollution distance of sixty feet when they approached the temples could not gain respect in the minds of these classes.¹⁰⁸ So they converted in huge numbers to Christianity. They saw that the moment they embraced Christianity, they were accorded better treatment by the higher castes and were no longer treated as untouchables and unapproachables.¹⁰⁹

In the *Travancore State Manual* it is so written about their contributions:

But for the missionaries the Hindu Society will even remain upraised. To them belongs the credit of awakening them (slaves) to a sense of better earthy existence. The activities of missionaries were not merely an improvement of ancient history,

106. M.J. Koshy, *op.cit.*, p.19.

107. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.* p.210.

108. T. K. Ravindran, *Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1972, p. 68.

109. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1931*, Travancore Government Press, pp.48-49.

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a kind of polishing and reforming of the existing model, but an entirely original idea. They conceived and carried out their activities with commendable zeal and often times in the teeth of opposition and persecution. The heroism of rising of the low caste from utter degradation and debasement was unknown to ancient India. It is a glory reserved to a century of human progress, the epoch of happy mingling of civilization of east and west.¹¹⁰

A major incident associated with the missionaries that could not be omitted while dealing with their activities was the "Shanar rebellion" which was called the *melmundukalapam* or the breast cloth controversy. The low castes were denied wearing ornaments slippers and using umbrellas so as to emphasise on the fact that they were not as dignified as the *savarnas*. But what worried the missionaries mainly was the practice of women being compelled to appear in front of the caste men semi nude, uncovering their bosoms.¹¹¹ The women of the low caste shanar community with a sufficient backing from the missionaries urged the Government to provide them rights to cover their upper halves of the body. It was a matter of social dignity to them. The missionaries initiated in 1856, efforts to spread the idea of making the low caste women wear *melmundu*. Rev. Frederick Bailey writes that this propaganda was very tough by nature, as they had to introduce entirely a new custom of covering the

110. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, p.311.

111. Robinson Jeffery, *op.cit.*, p.86.

breasts. Resentment against it was there from every section, mainly from the high castes. Elderly women were found extremely resentful to the new custom.¹¹² The missionaries wrote letters one after the other, to the government and authorities providing this right to the lower caste women. The instances were shanar women who wore *melmundu* were harassed by the nairs and vellalas were complained by the missionaries when the real rebellion took place. The missionary support was very useful to the rebels as the missionaries urged the Government to take necessary steps.¹¹³ The result of this rebellion was success on the part of the shanars and its victory paved way for the later rebellion against caste hierarchy and mal-treatments.

Thus the missionaries and their activities helped to reduce the glaring inequalities between the *savarnas* and *avarnas* to a certain extent. They were the predecessors of the social reform movement that was to take shape very soon and many were the direct result of missionary activities. The Hindu mission societies that were set up to elevate the untouchables and other weaker sections of society later were inspired after the example of the Christian missions.¹¹⁴

The benevolent despotism of the British along with the many destructive aspects created certain constructive forces to function in the traditional society of Malabar. The changes in the agricultural pattern affected

112. *Ibid.*

113. Dick Kooiman, *op.cit.*, p.81.

114. A Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*, NBS., Kottayam, 1978, p.228.

by the colonialists had a little bit of positive impact too. It gave a fresh energy to the economic scenario of Kerala.¹¹⁵ This trend towards commercialization increased the project of cultivation. The scientific and modern means of cultivation, created impacts in the economy of Kerala.¹¹⁶ These trends enabled the economic welding of Kerala with the international markets. Agro processing characterised the first phase of the industrial development in the whole of Kerala. Industries connected with coir weaving manufacturing of coconut oil etc. were started.

The British brought the concept of wage labour, which was a new innovation as far as the economy of Kerala, was concerned. A change was occurring in the field of agricultural labour and handicrafts with this concept. While the semi-serf agricultural labourers in pre-British days had to cultivate particular plots of land of their masters and each of the handicrafts men were tied to a particular village where he had to work and whose inhabitants had to feed him, the British brought about although in a limited extent, production relation based on village labour and capital.¹¹⁷

Changes brought in the administrative set up also revolutionized the society of Kerala. A centralized administrative system was one of the main features of the effects of colonialism, which reduced the importance of petty

115. K.M. Panikkar, *Kerala Swathantrya Samaram*, Prabhat Publishers, Trivandrum, 1957, p.336.

116. Michael Tharakan, "Development of Colonial Economy in Kerala 1850-1944," in P.J.Cherien (ed.) *The Perspectives of Kerala History*, op.cit., p.381.

117. E.M.S. Nambudirippad, *National Question of Kerala*, op.cit., p.77.

Rajas and landlords. Col. Munro organised administrative machinery that could effectively carry on the administration to serve the imperial interests. Through this system he made the crucial achievement of supreme political dominance over the landlords that were the caste Hindus, in general, the nairs and samants who had a decisive role in controlling the administration, without interfering into the social customs, which incurred the displeasure of caste Hindus.¹¹⁸

Judiciary was also reorganised by the western rulers. Previously villages were self-sufficient and village elders settled legal matters. The colonial rule broke the self-economy of the villages and hence the legal power was also taken away with the establishment numerous civil and criminal courts. The reorganised judiciary was based on western legal principles and a chain of both civil and criminal courts were modified and established. Munro also established the system of appointing non-caste Hindus as judges. The laws that existed earlier were not equalitarian. The brahmins even enjoyed immunity from death penalty. The British judicial pattern did not give much consideration to the caste differences, which was a blow to the superiority exercised by the high classes.¹¹⁹ British laws were equalitarian in accordance with the western ideals of democracy and socialism. This meant the opening up of state services to people, who were hitherto kept outside and thereby enabled them to share power and prestige of position in the bureaucracy. This

118. E.M.S. Nambudirippad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubumi*, Thrissur, 1969, pp.148-53.

119. Robinson Jeffrey, *op.cit.*, p.7.

process helped to until a sense of equality among them.¹²⁰ Lower classes gained a sense of importance and self-respect of their own individuality, which was denied to them for centuries.

Disregarding all caste injunctions that so and so should take up such and such job since he belongs to such and such a caste, everybody got such training for and sought jobs, as he or she liked. Government officials, professionals, traders etc, grew up from all castes including those that are in the lowest ranks of the society and the highest castes became pauperized and were forced to seek jobs that could not have been dreamt of by their predecessors of a couple of generations ago.¹²¹ The people of higher castes had to forget their caste taboos, study and work along with the low caste that they had considered as unapproachable. As the British administrators did not sympathise with the sensitiveness of the Kerala people to pollution, contact taboos did not find any place on the administrative system of British. Changes in the political, administrative, educational and economic fields, introduced by the British provided the climate and circumstances favourable for the reduction of social distances.¹²² It was out of this that the first form of the modern democratic movement, took its origin in Kerala – the movement for social equality. It is to the impacts of westernization and colonialism that such a revolutionary movement was to a considerable extent indebted for.

120. M.S.A. Rao, *op.cit.*, p.135.

121. E.,M.S. Nambudirippad, *Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1967, p.123.

122. A. Ayyappan, *Social Revolution in A Kerala Village: A Study in Cultural Change*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, p.132.

Modernisation of Kerala by the construction of roads, railways and other communications, primarily to serve the interests of the colonial masters, proved to be beneficial for the natives to a very small extent. Castes and the occupations performed by each caste were very distinct and exclusive in Kerala. English education encouraged by the British had the effect of unyoking occupation from caste. The Cochin census report of 1911 comments on the impacts of introduction of railways and modernization in the following words:

The traditional occupation was another force making for caste exclusiveness and caste preservation. Many of the old village industries have become unprofitable while a great and growing demand is springing up for labour in mills, plantations and workshops. Similarly the advent of railways and its introduction of machinery have made it impossible for many to confine themselves to their traditional occupations.¹²³

The breakdown of the hereditary occupations and the daily contact in the railway, the law court, the school, the farm and the factory with peoples of different castes and creeds undermined the very foundations of untouchability and unapproachability. Among other reasons which contributed to the breakdown of the caste barriers may be mentioned the migration of population from the rural to the urban areas, and the rapid expansion of the means of communications facilitating contacts between towns and villages.

123. Government of Cochin, *Census Report of 1911*, Cochin Government Press, p.255.

The open support given by the British to the growth of press in the country was yet another positive impact. The British in Kerala introduced the press. In 1847, *Rajya Samacharam*, the first *Malayali* journal was started in Malabar. The growth of press helped to inculcate the ideas of democracy, nationalism and westernization, into the minds of the downtrodden people. The role of missionaries, in the context in spreading the idea of equality cannot be forgotten. A number of journals and newspapers were introduced in the nineteenth century. The *Malayali*, *Service*, *Nair*, *Mithavadi*, *Vivekodayam*, *Deshabhimani*, *Sujanandini* etc. were only a few among the mouthpieces of the social reformers. The custom ridden society underwent revolutionary changes. A spirit of reform and rejuvenation swept the whole of Kerala and every community felt its impact in varying degree. The precepts of *Brahma Samaj* and *Arya Samaj*, and the teachings of Sri. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, were chiefly responsible for the generation of new spirit. The renaissance and the growth of nationalism of the early twentieth century, the stage for which was being prepared, owed much to the awakening of lower classes, against the tormentation of caste discrepancies they have been bearing for centuries. One important aspect of the renaissance was the awakening of the lower orders of the Hindu society against social injustices and evils existing for a long time.¹²⁴ With the spread of English education a feeling of self-respect asserted itself among the masses along with the desire to share in the religious life inside the

124. George Valatt, *Discovery of Kerala*, S.B. Press and Book Depot, Trivandrum, 1977, p.67.

temples permitted only the *savarnas*.¹²⁵ This paved way for the agitation for temple entry, which was a major issue of the national movement of Kerala.

Yet another significant feature of the impact of colonialism was the decline of the dominance of nairs, who were highly influential till then. The report of the revenue administration of Malabar of 1822 says about them as high minded, intelligent, active, intrepid and independent in their manner but candid and respectful.¹²⁶ Until the beginning of the eighteenth century they were a martial people and formed the militia of the country. Military organisation and tactics enforced by the British was in one way responsible for their decline. The British concept of equality of Law to all individuals was yet another reason. A nair could in the good old days take into own hands the punishment of a pulaya who polluted him by approaching within the prohibited distance but he can no longer do it with impunity. From the earliest times they distinguished themselves as warriors and administration, leaving the actual tillage and cultivation of land to agrestic serfs, and commerce and handicrafts to specific groups of guilds.¹²⁷ They emphasised on marital spirit and spread it through the *kalaris*. The European method of warfare made long training with the sword and shield obsolete. The emasculation of the nair militia destroyed the employment opportunities of nairs, who shunned all professions other than

125. Government of Travancore, *Travancore Census Report of 1941*, Travancore Government Press, p.128.

126. *Revenue Report of Malabar*, compiled by H.S. Graene, Commissioner of Malabar, District Press, Malabar, 1922, p.7.

127. Government of Travancore, *Janmi Kudiyan Report of 1916*, *op.cit.*, p.62.

army and government service. Consequently they swelled the ranks of the unemployed.¹²⁸ The emergence of cash economy and socio-economic changes during the colonial rule considerably undermined the cohesion and utility of the nair tarawads. Kerala no longer became the stronghold of the nairs.¹²⁹ The expedition of Marthandavarma, the policies of Comu Achan, Mysorean conquests all led to the loss of their suzerainty and supremacy.¹³⁰ The disappearance of military learning, the establishment of new values through the western style of education, led to the decline of the prestige of the nair community. The nairs were unable to keep in pace with the modernization and technical changes, brought up by colonialism and hence trailed behind in development. The once dominant caste was now uncertain of its position in the social order.¹³¹ The failure of the rising of Paliath Achan and Veluthampi at the beginning of the century had finally taught the nairs that their traditional vocation as feudal warriors was at end.¹³² The various ostentatious and luxurious societies of which were mentioned in the previous chapter, led to their economic degeneration too. Census report of Travancore, 1876 writes this on the nairs, "Though his wants are few and those generally such as can be easily satisfied, the nairs cannot be said to be parsimonious in his expenses.

128. Ibrahim Kunju, *op.cit.*, p.61.

129. K. N. Panikkar, 'Land Control, Ideology and Reforms: A Study of the Changes in Family Organisation and Marriage System, of Kerala' *Indian Historical Review*, Vol.IV, No.1, July 1977, p.3046

130. K.M. Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p.342.

131. T.J. Nossitter, *op.cit.* p.29.

132. George Wood Cock, *op.cit.* p.226.

The construction of a house, and the marriage ceremonies (*talikettukalyanam*) of his nieces are the engrossing cares of every respectable nair and often times exhaust the earnings of lifelong labour.”¹³³

English education and the spread of the liberal ideas of west led to enlightenment among some of the nair youth of the deteriorating status of their caste in the society. As far as Kerala is concerned in 1883 Rev. Samuel Mateer has observed, “Some of the more enlightened and educated nairs are now beginning to realise their degradation and to rebel against the brahmanical tyranny and the demoralizing laws under which they were placed.”¹³⁴

The youth grabbed the need of the caste for reform, which urged them to opt the *makathayam* pattern of inheriting once property. After the enactment of the nair regulation in 1925, many *marumakkathayam tarawads* broke up and the community rapidly passed into the transitional stage to *makkathayam*.¹³⁵ Decline of *marumakkathayam*, the growth of education and literacy, convinced the members of this community, the depth of degeneration that had crept into their traditional social system.¹³⁶

Another major impact of colonialism was the transformation of the life patterns of lower castes especially thiyyas. The lower castes found it possible to

133. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1876*, Travancore Government Press, p.186.

134. Samuel Mateer, quoted in S.N. Sadasivan, *Social History of Kerala, op.cit.*, p.376.

135. Census Report of Travancore 1931, *op.cit.*, p.341.

136. V.V. Kunjikrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.113.

improve their social and economic prospects by conversion.¹³⁷ The increase in trade inflicted by colonialism along with the opening of government jobs to all classes without discrimination was very beneficial to the downtrodden castes. Visible changes occurred in the lives of the thiyya castes. Though traditionally toddy tappers some of them have risen to respectability by engaging themselves in many other professions.

The thiyyas and ezhavas were considered unapproachable and as such they did not have access to the religious goods and services of the caste Hindus. They were neither allowed to worship at the caste Hindu temples nor to study the sacred scripture.¹³⁸ While the caste Hindus secluded themselves from various jobs in the name of pollutions, the thiyyas adopted jobs and education offered by the colonialists in the nineteenth century. At the beginning of this century, an elite had emerged among the thiyyas (a significant number among whom were toddy tappers) deriving their position from education, employment as lawyers and civil servants, involvement in trade and commerce, and the setting up of factories.¹³⁹ The report of revenue administration of 1822 suggests that some thiyyas have risen to respectability and opulence by trade.¹⁴⁰ This improved their economic conditions and they were able to imbibe the western ideals of democracy and liberalism from which

137. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *op.cit.*, p.61.

138. M.S.A. Rao, *Social Movement and Social Transformation*, Mc Millan, Delhi, 1970, p.246.

139. Dilip Menon, *op.cit.*, p.5.

140. Report of Revenue Administration of 1822, *op.cit.*, p.8.

the caste Hindus shunned in the name of pollution. The ezhavas attempted to turn their back on their nineteenth century caste identity and embrace modernity, for taking up reformed Hinduism and English education. K.M. Panikkar says that thiyyas played an incredible role in the society of Kerala. They joined in large numbers in the company's army. They were scholars among them. The main assistant of Hentic Vanrid in the writing of *Hortus Malabaricus*, an encyclopedia of Botanic Science of Malabar, was, Achyuthan a thiyya.¹⁴¹

The courage gained by imbibing ideas of modernization enabled them to attack the monopoly of higher castes in the form of backward class movements, which was a major part of the nationalist movement of Kerala. This was possible by the collective mobilization of the downward classes by the growth of an enlightened elite group of leaders. They were the largest caste in Kerala, accounting for 26% of the population, according to M.S.A. Rao.¹⁴² As a result of a common ideology, sharing of common interests and collective participation in common programmes of action, the deprived section have emerged as politically viable groups which may be called ethnic blocs. This was an important transformative change. The backward class movements arose among them first destroying the foundation of the elaborate social structure of the Hindu community. "It began among the ezhavas, they who were the

141. K.M.Panikkar, *op.cit.* p.345.

142. M.S.A. Rao, quoted in Kenneth W. Jones, *The New History of India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p.180.

strongest numerically of the Hindu communities. The education, which they had received in the Christian schools, had made them conscious of their potential power.”¹⁴³

Other caste groups followed the example of ezhavas sooner. The nairs were prominent among these castes. Other caste groups followed the suites of ezhavas and nairs. Among the untouchables appeared organizations like the Pulaya Mahasabha. Even the nambudiri brahmins slowly realised that their traditions were unfitting for the modern world. Thus the stage was getting prepared for enlightenment, renaissance and nationalism, slowly and steadily.

The impacts of colonialism become a factor that promoted the growth of national consciousness though unimagined by the English administrators, when they unleashed a set of administrative reforms and innovations in Kerala. The natives gained confidence and courage to fight against the brahmin superiority as well as the British paramountcy. The lower castes movements, for gaining their basic human rights often became a part of the nationalist movement that took place afterwards. The whole of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries were marked by a series of relentless social contests. Sometimes peaceful, at times violent, against a long array of social disabilities, which beset the lives of lower castes in the tiny state. This steadily coincided with the growth of nationalist movement in Kerala and India as a whole.

143. George Wood Cock, *op.cit.* p.255.

The impact of colonialism so could better be looked in this way. For good or ill, colonialism has been the primary channel through which the ideas and techniques, the spiritual and material forces of the west have impinged upon the rest of the mankind.

CHAPTER III

THE EMERGENCE OF INTELLECTUALISM

The first quarter of the 21st century heard loud demands for education and job opportunities as well as worship in temples of their own choice by the *avarnas*. The intellectual movement that started in the last quarter of the 20th century sowed the seeds for such a radical social change. The intellectuals were truly beacons of light, who wiped the way the superstition and malpractices of the 19th century society of Kerala. These maestros who were the torchbearers of each community into which they were born saved Kerala from being a lunatic asylum of what it was in the 19th century. There were many great intellectuals, who by their activities distinguished themselves from others and created a significant difference. Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru in Travancore, Brahmananda Shivayogi in central Kerala, Vagbhadananda Guru and Swami Shivananda Paramahamsar in Malabar stood high above others in their task of rejuvenating the society of Kerala.

CHATTAMPI SWAMIKAL

Chattampi Swamikal, a great intellect and social reformer, stands high among others in sowing the seeds of Hindu unity and eradicating many of the evils in the society of Kerala. By leading a simple life, he was perhaps one of the great intellectuals, other than Sri Narayana Guru to have revolutionized the lives of Hindus by his deeds and literary works. He was able to develop confidence in the minds of people and make them believe in their potential to

fight against the aristocrats, who by their wretchedness and wrath made the lives of the downtrodden classes miserable.

He was born in a nair family in 1853. In Thiruvananthapuram near Kannanmoola in the village of Kollur there was a house called Ollurkode. In that house he was the first-born child of Nangemapillai and Thamarasserilath Vasudevan Namboodiri.¹ Born in a poor family, he found it hard to get education. But being a born intellect he tried to gather knowledge in all the ways possible. Kunjan, as he was called when a small child, made it his daily habit to overhear the lessons which the Sanskrit teachers taught the brahmin boys of the *madam* near by his house. One day the teacher came to know of his surreptitious attempt of educating himself. Impressed by the high standard of the young aspirant's attainments he allowed him to attend his classes. Thus Kunjan attained high proficiency in Sanskrit.²

He later had his education in the school of Raman Pillai *Asan* at Pettah. Kunjan used to mingle freely with the members of the ezhava community even during his school days. At a time when it was deemed a criminal act of heterodoxy for a nair, to dine in the house of an ezhava, Kunjan Pillai consorted with the members of that community and scandalized public opinion by taking his meals at the house of Parameshwaran, the elder brother of Dr. Palpu, who later became a well known social reformer.³

1. Vattaparambil Gopinathan Pillai, *Chattampi Swamikal*, Kairali Children's Book Trust, Kottayam, 1982, p. 83.

2. K.P.K. Menon, *Sri Chattampi Swamikal, The Great Scholar Saint of Kerala*, Vidyadhiraja Publications, Quilon, 1981, p.19

3. *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

From Thaikkat Ayyavu, he got the basics of the philosophy of *vedanta*. Sri Narayana Guru along with him had been the disciple of Thaikkat Ayyavu. Both of them later bid farewell to their master discovering his love for money and gold. However they both attained greater prominence than their Guru afterwards, is to be remembered very much.⁴ Ayyavu knew the art of making copper into gold by using certain green leaves. When pressurized to collect these leaves Kunjan gave a golden ring as an offering to his Guru and left him forever.⁵ He took the study of Quran and later also acquired a thorough knowledge of Christianity. From Swami Nathadesikar he learnt Tamil grammar, Tamil scientific texts, *puranas*, *vedantas* etc.⁶

The society in which Kunjan lived was one that was suffering terribly under the grip of brahmin orthodoxy. Though his community of nair was superior to the other backward classes they suffered terribly at the hands of the brahmins. The nair society suffered under concubinage that brahmins enjoyed in the name of *sambandham* with nair women who had no share in the property of their brahmin husbands. The lower classes were also kept away from studying *vedas* and performing sacrificial ceremonies in temples as done by the brahmins. Women like the lower classes were also denied education. Young Kunjan Pillai was terribly unhappy about the caste distinctions of the Hindu

4. S. Guptan Nair in preface, K.R.C. Pillai, *Sri Vidhyadhiraja Satakam*, Brahma Vidya Peetam, Quilon, 2004.

5. A. Balakrishnan Nair, *Paramabattaraka Sree Vidhyadhiraja Chattampi Swamikal; The Hermit and social Reformer*, Indira Publication, Thiruvananthapuram, 2001, p.4.

6. Vattaparambil Gopinathan Pillai, *op.cit.* p.75.

society. It was during this period when the Christian missionaries were trying to convert Hindus especially downtrodden castes to Christianity. He realised that it was the lack of equality and freedom that promoted men of lower castes to embrace Christianity. His whole life though austere and simple was extremely devoted to remove such evils of the society.

Swamikal was a great man who opposed the basic inequalities in the society vehemently. He fought bravely against caste rivalry, religious hatred and evolved his own generalisations as well as logic to express his opinions against such evils.⁷ Chattampi Swamikal was the pioneer to come to the scene to undertake the task of removing untouchability in Kerala as this tradition of *ayitham* posed hindrance to the people of Kerala in all walks of life. The rest of the social reformers come only behind him.⁸ He gets a prime place among the philosopher Gurus of Kerala ever since Adhisankara.⁹ He was by his very deeds and actions a liberated soul who sowed the seeds of revolutions in Kerala.¹⁰

Though he led the life of a *yogi*, he felt the pulse of the miserable conditions of the common folk who were treated no better than cattle and dogs in Kerala. He identified himself with the aspirations of the common folk and

7. Jagati Velayudhan Nair, *Sri Vidyadhiraja Purana, (Hamsapattu)* SISO Books, Triruvananthapuram, 2002, p.43.

8. A.V.Sankaran, *Sri Chattampi Swami Thiruvadikalude Chila Apoorva Sidhikal*, Temple Trust Publication, Attukal, Trivandrum, 1997, p.3

9. A.V.Sankaran in preface, *Geetikankanjali* (Part. I), Darsanam Publication, Trivandrum, 1986.

10. Bhaskaran Pillai, *Chattampi Swamikal*, NBS, Kottayam, 1960, p.66.

spoke strongly against brahmin domination. The nairs, ezhavas and other non-brahmin castes who suffered from serious social disabilities found in him a star of new hope.¹¹

The anti brahmin feelings generated by Chattampi Swamikal acted as a catalyst for social change in the state. Even as a young boy he had the courage to question the brahmin hegemony. The utter meaninglessness of untouchability irritated him even as a young child. He could convince Thodiyil Gopala Pillai (father of Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai), an aristocrat who believed hard in caste discrimination and refused giving knowledge to students other than of the upper classes.

In Chettikulangara of Vanjiyoor, a well learned person, Thodiyil Gopala Pillai was approached by an ezhava youth, Kumaran to clarify some of his doubts about *upanishads*. But Gopala Pillai outrightly refused to clarify his doubts, Kumaran being a low caste. He disliked to pass on his philosophical knowledge to an *avarna*. Kunjan who was then only sixteen, happened to hear the conversation between the two, said to himself loudly that how nice it would be if a little bit of *advaita* in brain drenched into his heart and recited a slogan from *Gita* and walked by. Gopala Pillai then and there itself realised his mistake and embraced Kunjan Pillai. Then the ezhava Kumaran was let to learn *upanishads* from him by becoming his disciple.¹²

11. P.N.Chopra, (ed.), *The Social and Cultural History of India*, State Series, New Delhi, 1991, p.148.

12. Letter from N. Nalin Ganesh (Grandson of Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai) dated 19.08.2004, KCHR Files, KCHR, Thiruvananthapuram.

Swamikal was one among the rare personalities who had a thorough understanding of the atrocities, which the backward classes had to bear at the hand of brahmins for hundreds of years. Most of his activities of Swamikal were a challenge to the dominance of Brahmins.¹³ Colonialism and English education had created a situation congenial for social reform in Kerala. He wrote many books like *Christumatha Nirupanam*, *Christumadachedanam*, *Prachina Malayalam*, *Vedadhikara Nirupanam*, *Advaita Chinta Padhadhi*, *Nijanandavilasam*, *Jivakarunya Nirupanam*, *Prapanchanthil Stri Purushen Markulla Sthanam*, *Keralathinte Desanamangal* and *Adibhasha* all of good scholarly and literary value.

Swamiji believed that birth did not bestow brahmanism to anyone. It was action that made a person brahmin or sudra. He preached that good deeds made a man brahmin and evil deeds made a man sudra. He said, "If one is born in brahmin family and does bad deeds he is a sudra. On the other hand, if anyone does goods deeds even though born into a sudra family, he is a Brahmin."¹⁴ In his text *Vedadikara Nirupana* he tried to break the supremacy of brahmins. He propagated that idea that seeking knowledge is everyone's right whether a brahmin or sudra. The *Vedadhikara Nirupanam* written by Swamikal is an enquiry to the right of all individuals to learn, preach and

13. K.G. Narayana Panikkar, "Samooohika Parivarthanavum Chattampi Swamikalum", *Sri Chattampi Swamikal Satabdi Smaraka Grantham*, Chattampi Swamikal Birth Centenary Publication, Quilon, 1953, p.135.

14. K.R.C. Pillai, *op.cit.*, pp.44-45.

interpret the *vedas*.¹⁵ To yearn spiritual knowledge is a basic necessity of all human beings and all are responsible to break the restrictions posed in their way to accumulate knowledge. This idea was propagated among the sudras first by Chattampi Swamikal as seen in his works, *Prachina Malayalam*, *Christumadachedanam*, etc. It was a revolution unimagined or anticipated by any one during that period. The discussion about *vedadhikara* is the central theme of *Vedadikara Nirupana*. He rationally stated the rights of sudras and women to vedic education. It was the right and duty of a person to gather knowledge even if he was not allowed to do so by the superior class.¹⁶

Swamikal spent years studying ancient sacred text. He quoted instances from the ancient texts to substantiate the rights of sudras to learn *vedas*. He argued, “Raikwan was a sudra saint who composed hymns which are included in the *vedas*. Then how could the right to study *vedas* be denied to the sudras?” This view could not be torn apart by anyone else.¹⁷ Swamikal refuted the view that sudras should not study *vedas* and other texts. He has stated strongly, that it does not tantamount to a prohibiting order that women and sudras should not learn *vedas*.¹⁸ Such revolutionizing views against brahmanism were put forward by him. The anti-brahman feelings generated by Chattampi Swamikal boosted the morale of the lower castes of the society. The *Vedadhikara*

15. Kumbalath Shantakumari, *Sri Vidhyadhara Chattampi Swamikal*, Cultural Department, Trivandrum, 2003, p.118.

16. Maheshwaran Nair, *Chattampi Swamikal: Jeevithavum Krithikalum*, Dooma Books, Trivandrum, 1995, p. 143.

17. K.R.C. Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.118.

18. A. Balakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.26.

Nirupanam made a scathing attack on the religious superstitions and sacerdotal dictatorship of brahmins. He was the first intellectual who questioned the spiritual legacy of brahmins.¹⁹

The *Prachina Malayalam* was another important text written by him. He has delved into the historical origin of Kerala in his book, *Prachina Malayalam*. The inquiry was based on scientific approach, logical argument and history.²⁰ He rejected the view of brahmins that Kerala was a gift to them by Parasurama. He brought in a revolution by objecting the views in *Sahyadri Kandom*, *Keralolpathi* and *Kerala Mahatmyam*, which were accepted by one and all till then. By questioning *chaturvarnya* he brought a revolution itself. He argued and stated emphatically that brahmanism for its selfish purposes was making the worst use of *chaturvarnya*.²¹

Swamikal tried to raise the self-esteem of his community by stating that nairs were not inferiors to brahmins by examining the ancient history of Kerala. He aimed at establishing a pre-eminent position to the nairs. *Prachina Malayalam* was written by Swamikal on a special context. It was when the ezhavas were trying for upliftment under Sri Narayana Guru. The leaders of the nair community like C. Krishnapillai were keen in finding a spiritual leader in Chattampi Swamikal, but he was reluctant for it. On persistent persuasions

19. P. Chandra Mohan, "Growth of Social Reform Movements in Kerala" in P.J. Cherian (ed), *Perspectives of Kerala History: The Second Millenium*, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1999, p.460.

20. A. Balakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.9.

21. Maheshwaran Nair, *op.cit.*, p.146.

from them, Swamikal wrote *Prachina Malayalam* in which he compiled various factors that boosted the morale of the nairs. This certainly gave a promising scope for upliftment and confidence to the future of the nair society. The *Nair Samajam* and its leaders had great reverence for Swamikal and they tried to imbibe his ideologies. His main achievement as social reformer was that he could arouse the social consciousness of the members of his own caste viz., the nairs and make them fight against the social evils that had crept into their ranks. The central theme of his work *Prachina Malayalam* was that nairs were the owners of Kerala.

The *Christumada Nirupanam* and the *Chirstrumada Chedanam* were two texts that he wrote seeking the essence of Christianity and also to expose the fanaticism and false propaganda of the missionaries. As an impact of colonialism, the Christian missionaries were trying to convert the pulayas and backward classes to their religion. Proselytisation was successful as the lower classes denied of even basic rights in their own religion, could live with self-esteem and confidence when converted to Christianity. The growing strength of Christianity alarmed the Hindu sections. Erath Krishnashan and Kaliyankal Nilakanta Pillai requested Swamikal to write a book that would rationally and logically argue with the philosophy of Christianity and that resulted in the writings of the *Christumada Nirupanam*.²²

In *Christumadachedanam* without questioning the prescribed Christian codes of behaviour, he took exception to the conduct of propaganda which did

22. Maheshwaran Nair, *op.cit.*, p.140.

not square with the core of Christian belief. Contradictions in narration between texts in the bible were pointed out humorously but without any trace of condemnation. In the premises of Ettumanur temple, Swami happened to hear the missionaries addressing the non-believers of Christianity as “sinners”.²³ It was this incident that gave him inspiration to write the *Christumadachedanam*. He criticised the way of brainwashing and false propaganda that the missionaries used to convert the Hindus into Christianity.²⁴ It was a united Kerala that he had in his vision. How he refuted the missionary activity of conversion that stood in the way of unity of Kerala is very important. Swamikal infused a new vigour into Hinduism at a time when the religion was facing challenges of the more definite and vigorous faith, which came from abroad. This activity held a great deal to check the rising tide of mass conversion to Christianity.²⁵

Sri Chakrapooja Kalpam of Swamikal was quite revolutionary, by stating that all men without the distinction of caste had the right for worship of God. When after Aruvipuram consecration the question arose how could an ezhava consecrate a Shiva idol, the ideas of *Sri Chakra Pooja Kalpam* has meant to sow seeds for many such criticisms.²⁶ In his speech on the place of

23. K.R.C. Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.40.

24. P. Damodaran Pillai, “Prachina Keralavum Nayanmarum”, in *Chattampi Swamikal Smaraka Grantham*, *op.cit.*, p.134.

25. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Gazetteers*, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1952, p.232.

26. Maheshwaran Nair, *op.cit.*, p.151.

men and women in the universe, he was a spoke person for women's equality and their right to education. His work the *Jivakarunya Nirupanam* demanded kindness from human beings to all living creatures. In all his works he wanted people to forget all rivalry and hatred and live in harmony.

He did not believe in forming an organisation to spread his teachings or amassing disciples. He maintained a good relationship with Sri Narayana Guru, the ezhava spiritual supremo. Their unity of thought and action was accepted by the followers of both the communities and could be seen on various occasions of the national movement where they were of mutual help. Amongst the nairs there were many who accepted the ideologies of Sri Narayana Guru and tried for their fructification. It was Chattampi Swamikal who was responsible for such a response from the side of nairs. He had vehemently objected the *jati* system among the nairs. Even though they both were of divergent views regarding temple entry, they had the same opinion as to break up the fortification of caste.²⁷ Due to their respect to Chattampi Swamikal many of the radical nair men without hesitation took into heart his ideology of equality without caste distinction. Chattampi Swamikal was mainly responsible for the supportive attitude that nairs took in spreading the ideologies of Sri Narayana Guru in Kerala. Many of the radical nairs had come in front of the national movement of Kerala and to fight for social justice of the

27. T. Bhaskaran (ed.), *Kerala Charitram*, Vol. I, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1971, p. 471.

downtrodden castes during the pre-independence period.²⁸ Mannath Padmanabhan, the leader of N.S.S, had stated that their struggle for freedom was meaningful only if the Avarnas got due social justice.

The work of Chattampi Swamikal considerably helped the NSS and Mannath Padmanabhan in their efforts to bring about the moral regeneration of the nair community by eradicating such evils as untouchability, sub-caste barriers and observance of creational social practices like *thalikettukalyanam*, *thirandukuli* and *pudavakoda*.²⁹ His ideas inspired many nairs as can be observed from the opinion of Mannath Padmanabhan. He has stated that the ideas of Chattampi Swamikal should be put into action in such a way that it is useful to the whole world.³⁰

The teachings of Chattampi Swamikal were useful to other communities too. Through his disciple Sri Narayana Guru to the ezhava community and through C. Krishna Pillai, Neelakantathirthapadar to the nair community. The nairs tried to get a new identity and tried to stop *sambandam* and *marumakkathayam*. Nevertheless it was only with the growth of caste consciousness and its associated movements in the early years of the twentieth century that the break with matrilineal practices became an integral part of the

28. K.G. Narayana Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p.135.

29. P.N. Chopra, *op.cit.*, p.150.

30. Mannath Padmanabhan was a leader of the national movement of Kerala who and NSS had taken an active role in the national movement. The organization also tried to establish the social rights for pulayas and ezhavas. He and his followers did a yeoman service in putting into action the Vaikom and Guruvayur Satyagraha.

newly emerging nair identity.³¹ He realised the need for education among the downtrodden classes for their upliftment. Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru conceived the unity of ezhavas and nairs in the fight against brahmin suppression. The unity between ezhavas and nairs was seen on various instances during the different phases of national movement.

He criticized the *sambandam* of namboodiri men in the nair *tarawads*, which destroyed the prestige of nair families. The older generation of nairs continued this practice, as they considered nambudiri as one next to God and his words as orders. The radical younger generation of nairs, however realised the degeneration that *sambandam* and *marumakkatayam* had brought to their caste and they retaliated aggressively by presenting bills and making representation to the Government. This fostered a sense of unity among them and they could stop *marumakkatayam* and make the *sambandam* invalid. These developments had brought them to the mainstream of social and political activities.³² He dedicated himself to the task of making individuals ideal citizens and uplifting them spiritually.³³

Swamiji was visited by many important national figures. Swami Vivekananda greatly appreciated his intelligence. Political leaders like Gandhiji

31. G. Arunima, *There Comes Papa: Colonialism and The Transformation of Matriline in Malabar (1850-1940)*, Orient Long Man, New Delhi, 2003, pp.24-25.

32. G. Sukumaran Nair, *Chattampi Swamikal*, Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, 1982, p. 93.

33. C.K. Paulose, *Advaita Philosophy of Chattampi Swamikal*, Ayyavaikunta Nather Sidhashramam, Kanyakumari, 2002, p.34.

also had visited the *ashramam* hearing about his greatness. In 1924 when the Vaikom Satyagraha was launched by the Indian National Congress to attain the social justice for the *avarnas*, Swamikal was greatly in support of it. K.P.K. Menon writes, "Swamiji's interest in following the daily newspaper was unequalled. He had great faith in Satyagraha. He was of the view that what he wanted was a temple entry satyagraha (At Vaikom, the satyagraha was only for the use of roads around the temple walls by the untouchables). Swami was very appreciative of the freedom fighters, K.P. Kesava Menon, George Joseph, A.K. Pillai, T.K. Madhavan, Chettezuthu Sankaran Pillai, Chettukuth Nair for their sufferings and sacrifices. Reverently folding his hand before the portrait of Gandhiji he said, "He is one of the great men now living, whose fame will spread even more brightly in the years to come."³⁴

The main activity of Swamikal was to stop caste discrimination and sub division among castes and usher in unity and purity of life.³⁵ His life and activities had indirectly given a strong impetus to the growth of national movement of Kerala. During the Vaikom and Guruvayur Satyagrahas we find the selfless dedication of many nairs fighting for the cause of the *avarnas*. It also gave confidence to the *avarnas*, when a nair spiritual head became a strong champion against caste discriminations. Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru and Swami Agamananda fought against the caste hierarchy and strove

34. K.P.K.Menon, *op.cit.*, p.65.

35. Shooranat Kunjan Pillai, "Chattampi Swamikal," in *Chattampi Swamikal Smaraka Grantham*, *op.cit.*, p.25.

hard to make a Hindu society with equality to all. The temple entry proclamation of 1936 could be looked upon as a result of the hard work of these great men.³⁶

His life was meant to purify and strengthen the Hindu religion, which indirectly provided momentum to the growth of nationalism. Chattampi Swamikal was highly responsible for breaking the *savarna avarna* demarcation in the society. It was his active guidance that gave impetus for his fellow beings to attain independence. He is definitely foremost among those who strove hard for reformation and progress on Kerala.

SRI NARAYANA GURU

Epochal is the place of Sri Narayana Guru in the history of Kerala, whose activities reformed the orthodox society there. He initiated a silent revolution which had tremendous impact on the society of the nineteenth century. Narayana Guru born at Chempazanthi in 1853, kept alive the tradition of an Indian *sanyasin*, but turned to reform the caste-oriented contemporary society.³⁷ He was born in the thiyya community, which was one among the downtrodden castes of Kerala. He objected casteism and traditional customs of Kerala and stood for education and modernization. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, "Guru was a great social reformer, a staunch promoter of

36. Vellayani Arjunan (ed.), *The Malayalam Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, The State Institute of Encyclopedia Publication, Trivandrum, 1987, p.407.

37. K.K.N. Kurup, *op.cit.*, p.29.

Hindu religion, a true philosopher and a revolutionary yogi of Kerala. Chopping of heads and creation of chaos and confusion are not the only ingredients of revolution. Any sincere effort to transform the image of civilized life is revolution.”³⁸ Romain Rolland has said, “He was one might say, a *jnanin* of action, a great religious intellectual, who had a keen living sense of the people and of their social necessities. He has contributed greatly to the elevation of oppressed classes of south India and his work has been associated at certain times with that of Mahatma Gandhi.”³⁹

As a small boy born to Madanashan and Kuttiyamma, Nanu, as he was called was bearing with severe pain the atrocities performed by the orthodox classes in the name of untouchability to him and to the fellow human beings of the society. As a young boy he would touch pulaya boys who were looked down by the ezhavas and then touch one after another all the members of his house as a mischief of childhood. Nobody ever imagined that this little boy was initiating his protest against caste discriminations at such a small age.⁴⁰

After getting elementary education from one of the local schools of Kerala, he started learning Sanskrit under Raman Pillai *Asan* of Puthupally of

38. Sachidananda Swami (ed.), *Sri Narayana Gurudev: The Jnanin of Action*, Brahma Vidyalaya, Varkala, 1996, p.103.

39. *Ibid.*, p.102.

40. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, “Narayana Guruvum Deshiya Navodhanavum” in G. Priyadarshnan (ed.), *SNDP Yogam Platinum Jubilee Smaraka Grantham*, SNDP Yogam, Kollam, 1978, p.26.

central Travancore. He had an ascetic bent of mind though he was compelled to marry by his relatives. His mind was always agitated by the spiritual urge which induced him along with a fellow spiritualist subsequently to become the disciple of a man named Ayyavu, the then Superintendant of the British Residency in Travancore from whom he learnt the *yoga* cult.⁴¹ He left all marital bonds and plunged himself into meditation. He accepted Aruvippuram as the place of his activities. Ever since he had been in the forefront fighting against the social inequalities and other atrocities, which economically impoverished and mentally humiliated the lives of downtrodden classes.

A time when avarnas were even not allowed to enter savarna places of worship, Sri Narayana Guru went to the daring extent of consecrating an idol of Shiva, a privilege solely of the Brahmins. It was at Aruvippuram that Guru first consecrated a Shiva idol thus undermining the privilege of brahmin priests who had the exclusive authority to consecrate idols. The event took place in 1888. The Aruvippuram consecration became the event which led to the awakening of the downtrodden societies against the autocratic barbarism practiced by the caste Hindus. Narayana Guru fought with quiet strength the asuric injustices, the philistine fanaticism and barbarian practices of his society.⁴² He resisted brahmanical bigotry and installed deities, himself being

41. P.S Velayudhan, "Sri Narayana Guru, A Peep into His Life and Work" in G. Priyadarshnan (ed.), *SNDP Yogam Platinum Jubilee Smaraka Grantham*, SNDP Yogam, Kollam, 1978, p.14

42. V.P. Krishna Iyer, "Sri Narayana Guru: The Dynamics of his Teachings," T. Bhaskaran (ed.), *Aruvippuram Prathishta Shadabdi Smaranika*, Aruvippuram Prathishta Shadabdi Smaranika Committee, Trivandrum, 1988, p.117.

of the untouchable caste. This consecration totally changed the lives of the people of Kerala. It was this event that gave courage to many to question the age old traditions practiced in Hinduism for centuries. It gave courage to people to question superstitions and atrocities practiced in the name of religion. Those who were previously bearing with pain, the cruelties practiced by brahmins, from the Aruvippuram event onwards began to roar and protest against it.⁴³ It was a social revolution in many ways. Without building a temple or sanctum, without having an idol of any perfect shape, without the disturbances of festival bands and drums, elephants, mantras and prayers, without being initiated by brahmin priests, without having any formalities, Swamiji consecrated an idol therein. Swamiji thus shattered all the traditional norms that had been associated with the consecration of the idols for centuries.⁴⁴ This event for the first time elevated the condition of the lower classes morally and gave them a feeling of dignity, self confidence and unity which created better lives for them. Modern Kerala truly is the contribution of Aruvippuram consecration carried over by Sri Narayana Guru. By this event Guru tried to reform many of the practices performed in the name of religion. He favoured sanskritisation as far as the norms of worshipping were concerned. He probably would have believed that following the *savarna* form of worship would instill a feeling of self confidence in the minds of the lower classes.

43. K.K. Rahulan, "Kerala Navothanthinte Prathishta," T. Bhaskaran (ed.), *Aruvippuram Prathishta Shadabdi Smaranika*, Aruvippuram Prathishta Shadabdi Smaranika Committee, Trivandrum, 1988, p.168.

44. *Ibid.*, p.171.

Thus worshipping *marutha*, *chamundi*, *madan* and other primitive forms of worship and offering wine and animals as sacrifices during festivals to please those Gods were discouraged by him. Instead a more sophisticated serene and hygienic form of worship of Gods, like Vishnu and Shiva were encouraged. He probably would have thought to promote hygiene and cleanliness among the members of society, making temples the abode of hygiene would definitely help.⁴⁵ Above and all according to him, "For one who seeks salvation, determination not to bow before anything but truth is very important along with modesty that he has to maintain. He should try to control his senses and seek salvation."⁴⁶ This is expressed by him in the following verse where he has nullified the importance of idolatry.

No object idolatry or
Kowtowing is implied,
But rather an adoration
Of the absolute as the highest
And dearest of human values.⁴⁷

People of lower classes found in Guru a saviour and a reformer born to liberate them from the clutches of bondages. The event created tremor in the

45. C. Achyutha Menon, "Sri Narayana Guruvum Kerathile Navodhanavum," T. Bhaskaran (ed.), *Aruvippuram Prathishta Shadabdi Smaranika*, Aruvippuram Prathishta Shadabdi Smaranika Committee, Trivandrum, 1988, p.190.

46. *Sri Narayana Guru*, "Vedanta Sutram," Commentary by Muni Narayana Prasad, Narayana Gurukula, Varkala, Kerala, 1988, p.5.

47. Nataraja Guru, *The Word of Guru*, Paico Publishing House, Ernakulam, 1952, p.439.

orthodox circles. It led to a change in the cultural, social, political and religious pattern of Kerala.⁴⁸ If ever a demarcation could be done between ancient Kerala and modern Kerala, it was this historical event which took place at Aruvippuram. With this event the society altogether moved towards independence, economic self sufficiency, cultural development establishment of political rights and a new era of sovereignty, equality and fraternity.⁴⁹

Within a few years the fame of Sri Narayana Guru spread wide. He had formed a *vavootu yogam* at Aruvippuram to carry on the activities relating to the deity and temples. Meanwhile intellectual thinkers like Dr. Palpu, had actively organized *Ezhava Maha Sabha* with the intention of reforming the ezhavas. But this organization because of its intellectual outlook could not attract into its fold the ordinary ezhavas who had no education. However Dr. Palpu realized that such an illiterate community could walk for reformation if an organization was established with a spiritual leader respected by the masses.⁵⁰ With this idea he approached Sri Narayana Guru and with his blessings and consent, *Vavootu yogam* at Aruvippuram was transformed and registered as *Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam*, in 1903. The *yogam* gave ample chances and scope for the development of lower classes under the guidance of the very progressive Dr. Palpu and the reformer poet

48. V. Sundaresan, "Keralathile Samoohika Parishkarana Prasthanangal" in G. Priyadarsanam (ed.), *SNDP Yogam's Navati Smaraka Grantham*, SNDP, Kollam, 1995, p.47

49. *Ibid.*

50. M.K. Sanu, *Narayana Guru Swami*, NBS, Kottayam, 1976, p.171.

Kumaranasan.⁵¹ About S.N.D.P Yogam M.K. Kumaran says, “S.N.D.P. has the position of being the forerunner of all reform movements in Kerala. The awareness and awakening that *yogam* created did not confine to the ezhava community alone. Its activities shook all the religions of Kerala. It undermined the self-confidence and pride of the orthodox groups. It was no longer capable to tie down people by the name of superstitions and blind faith. Religious beliefs customs and traditions literature, culture political ideologies all were exposed to total change. There was nowhere in India such an organisation whose impacts was so deep and wide. This organisation could be looked upon as one which led to the first organised nationalist movement of Kerala”.⁵² This organisation and the role it played to wipe away caste discriminations from the society of Kerala had been remarkable. It was through Sri Narayana Guru’s reform movement that Indian reformation and renaissance grew in a fruitful manner.⁵³

He showed a very secular attitude while dealing with other castes and religions. He advised the members of the *yogam* not to criticize other religions and communities at all.⁵⁴ This message is conveyed through his ideology ‘Gain Strength Through Organization’. His intention was to develop *yogam* as a

51. *General Report of Sri Narayana Sangam Trust*, SNDP Sangam Trust, Kollam, 1974, p.5.

52. M.K. Kumaran, “SNDP Yogavum, Keralathile Purogamana Prasthanangalum,” in G. Priyadarsanan (ed.), *SNDP Yogam Platinum Jubilee Smaraka Grandham*, *op.cit.*, p.28-29.

53. P.K. Gopalakrishnan., “Narayana Guruvum Deshiya Navodhanavm,” *op.cit.*, p.26

54. M.K. Sanu, *Sri Narayana Sandesam*, Lulu Books, Kottayam, 2000, p.12.

platform for creating harmony and bringing confidence by keeping united all castes and religions. The tolerance that he carried out to the other religions is well expressed through his writings. The paragraphs forty-three to forty-nine of *Atmopadeshashatakam* spreads his philosophy that all religions are but the same. The forty-sixth paragraph is an advice to people fighting over the name of religions. He has stated that one should not get the impression that by criticizing or humiliating other religions he would make the foundation of his own religion stronger.⁵⁵ Forty-ninth paragraphs says whichever religion a person follows, he should be keen on discovering the absolute inner truth of his religion and should realize that it is the same absolute truth which is but seen in various forms in other religions.⁵⁶ In another work *Kundilini Pattu* there is a paragraph in which he has asked human beings to live without being inflicted by casteism and religious discriminations. Loving each other selflessly is the way that he has suggested for everyone's happiness.⁵⁷ In his work *Anukambadeshakam* he has exemplified the glory of the prophet of Muslims, Mohamed Nabi. The verse is as follows.

“In human semblance here

Is he a divinity,

Or perhaps the law of right

55. *Sri Narayana Guru, Atmopadesasatakam*, Commentary by Muni Narayana Prasad, Published by Muni Narayanna Prasad, Narayana Gurukula, Varkala, 1981, p.216.

56. *Ibid.*, p.216.

57. *Sri Narayana Guru, Kundilini Pattu*, Commentary by Brahmananda Swami, Published by Kotukoikkal Velayudhan, 1970, p.12-13.

In sacred human form
 Is he the pure begotten son
 Of the Lord most high
 Or kindly prophet Nabi
 Pearl and gem in one.”⁵⁸

According to Guru, “It is in meaning the same, when God takes the shape of a man and a pious man by his good deeds attains a position of God, the supreme. This idea is seen in successful culmination in the case of Nabi.”⁵⁹ Guru has called Nabi, pearl and gem in one. The pearl found in oceans depth represents perfection. It symbolizes an integrated normal value in human affairs. The gem is a thing of similar beauty value with many facets. There is a certain pure severity combined with a lavish sense of richness and kindness combined in character and personality of Mohammed, the prophet.⁶⁰ Such a view of Swamiji about Nabi shows his tolerant attitude towards other religions.

Guru gradually made Sivagiri at Varkala as his place of abode where he consecrated the idol of Goddess Saradha. He became completely involved in social reform, by starting Sanskrit schools, English Schools and *vaidya salas* at

58. Nataraja Guru, *op.cit.*, p.366

59. Sri Narayana Guru, *Anukambadesakam*, Translated by Muni Narayana Prasad, Narayana Gurukulam Foundation, 1981, p.27

60. Nataraja Guru, *op.cit.*, p.366

Sivagiri.⁶¹ Without any caste discriminations he taught his followers the way of worshipping God and appointed them at *Saradha madam*.

He consecrated temples in various parts of Kerala because he thought temples would promote equality, cleanliness and helped people to lead a pious life. Thus he included consecration of idols as a part of his programme. He consecrated as many as sixty idols in various temples. They include the Saradha idol at Sivagiri, Jagannata temple at Tellicherry, Somasundaram temple at Kannur, Triptiswera temple at Mangalapuram, Srikanteswara Temple at Kozhikode and Maheswara temple at Thrissur.⁶² Ezhavas during that period widely worshipped *Chamundi*, *Maran*, *Marutha*, etc. and Guru was dead against this primitive mode of worship and the animal sacrifices associated with the *kavus*. He not only consecrated deities of Siva, Saraswati, Subrahmanian and Devi but also stopped the worshipping of devils as Gods.⁶³ Such an instance was there in the Kokkotu Arumukhampillayar Temple. The details of deities taken by him from the *Kokkattu Arumukhampillayar* Temple from worship are as follows: *Isaki (yakshi)* idols (1), *Madan Peedam* (2), *Putathan Peedam* (1), *Vangara Madan Peedam* (1), *Chudala Madan Peedam* (2), *Isaki Peedam* (1), *Melankarukali Peedam* (1), and *Karuppan, Irulan, etc* (21).⁶⁴

61. SNDP Report, *op.cit.*, p. 7

62. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Sri Narayana Guru, Vishwamanavikathayude Pravachakan*, Prabat Books House, Trivandrum, 1992, p.39.

63. *Ibid.*, p.38.

64. M.K. Sanu, *Sri Narayana Guru, op.cit.*, p.297.

The younger generations were highly interested in such reforms. As soon as the order to abolish temples came from Swamiji young and old with iron tools broke into pieces those huge idols and also stopped sacrificing goats and hens, at the *Amman kovil* there. Swamiji was extremely happy to see the devotion and hygiene practiced by the people of *Kokkotu*. His entire reform movement aimed for brahmanisation and sanskritisation.

Though Swamiji favoured building temples earlier lately he was reluctant in doing so as known from Murkoth Kumaran's biography about him. He disliked spending money over modification, festivities and wasting money on temples. In 1917 he gave a message and stated:

Now do not encourage building temples. People are now not having firm belief in temples. It could become a matter of regret over the amount of money spent on building temples. Things have changed so much. But people would not heed to the notion of stopping the construction of temples. If compulsory, let them built a small temple but let the main temples be schools. Efforts should be made to collect money to construct schools.⁶⁵

Swamiji also shouldered the responsibility of abolishing serpent worship in some places in Kerala. He said that this should be removed and here one should plant some medicinal herbs or plants. It should be protected when

65. Murkoth Kumaran, *Sri Narayana Guru Swamikalude Geeva Charitram*, SNDP Sangam Trust, Sivagiri, 1998, pp.264-265.

grown and gardens should be made there so that people could take rest.⁶⁶ He had even taken initiative in removing some *sarpakavus* with his own hands. As per the census report of 1921, 16,000 temples were dedicated to *chattan* and *chamundi*. In the census report of 1931 published after three years of Swamiji's demise the number of such temples were reduced to 9000.⁶⁷ That means there was a drastic reduction in the numbers. Later also such numbers dwindled. He was against animal sacrifices. He said, "Killing the poor innocent animal as sacrifices to God, is not going to bring glory to any one."⁶⁸ The very positive aspect of the temples that he made was that he allowed even the very subordinate pulayas to worship there. The ezhavas were asked to consider the lower classes like the pulayas and the parayas as their own brethren. Such ideas are conveyed in his poem *jatinirnayam*.

Verse 1

Man's humanity marks out the human kind

Even as bovinity proclaims a cow.

Brahmin hood and such are not thus- wise;

None do see this truth alas!⁶⁹

66. Pazhampalli Achyuthan, "Guruvinte Karmapadhathi," in G. Priyadarsanan (ed.), *SNDP Yogam Platinum Jubilee Smaraka Grantham*, *op.cit.*, p. 61

67. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1931*, Travancore Government Press, p.213.

68. T. Bhaskraran (ed.), *Sri Narayana Guruinte Sampoorana Krithikal*, Mathrubhumi, Kozhikode, 1985, p.504.

69. Nataraja Guru, *op.cit.*, p.29

Guru tried to state that there was no difference between man and man. The caste system was baseless in all ways. Like language and customs there may give an appearance of variety to the species but they are only superficial factors of no importance intrinsically to biology.⁷⁰

Verse 2

One of kind, one of faith and one in God is man;
Of one womb ,of one form; difference herein none.

Verse 3

Within a species, is it not, that offspring truly breed?
The community of man thus viewed, to a single caste belongs.⁷¹

Without being a biologist in any modern sense, the Guru is able as any scientist to state the role of interspecific sterility. Guru Narayana establishes the undoubted fact of human solidarity whatever may be the approach of one kind genetically, of one fundamental faith religiously and of one supreme value considered under the many synonyms of God or the Grand Dharma.

Verse 4

Of the human species is even a Brahmin born
As is the pariah too
Where is difference then in caste as between man
And man?⁷²

⁷⁰.*Ibid.*, p.277

⁷¹.*Ibid.*

⁷².*Ibid.*, p.285

Both the brahmin and paraya in the pure light of reason or contemplation although may be historical counterparts are essentially one in human content.⁷³

Verse 5

In by gone days of a paraya woman, the great
Sage parasar was born
As even he of vedic aphorisms fame of
A virgin of the fisher-folk.

From this verse it is seen that the great sage of the past, Parasara and Vyasa, were born to mothers of lower castes, castes, which were severely humiliated and ostracized by the higher castes. Guru's aim here is to reveal to all that these saintly characters, Parasara and Vyasa who were recognized everywhere as ancestors of holy cherished memory and worshipped as such by all castes in every home, in the Hindu world are themselves outstanding reminders that mere prejudice lingers around the notion of caste, since they come from the much abused and misunderstood paraya line and not from the brahmins stock at all. Hence here is the ultimate contradiction to be faced by the brahmins that they are not only accepting and adopting, the paraya Guru but putting him on the topmost pedestal as a sage of supreme value from the vedic point of view.⁷⁴

73. *Ibid.*, p.287

74. *Ibid.*, p.291.

The messages and ideologies of Narayana Guru created a sense of self respect and independence among the lower castes as well as castes. The farmers and labourers suppressed and oppressed in the lowest stratum were brought into the political consciousness by Gandhiji. What was done in the social life of Kerala by Sri Narayana Guru was also the same. The agricultural, national and democratic movements of later Kerala were to receive tremendous influence from the messages and institutions founded by Sri Narayana Guru and his followers.⁷⁵

Guru played a very unique role in promoting education among the lower classes for their upliftment. He gave the famous slogan 'Educate and Flourish'. In reply to the *mangalapatram* submitted to Guru by the members of Cherai *Vijnanavardhini Sabha* he said:

Since education leads every society to development we should see to spread of education in our country. It is not possible for everyone to pass higher education tests. So let the rich, take the initiative to organise the poor and send them abroad to get better learning. It will be definitely beneficial for our society. Sanskrit education need not be highlighted now. Let us stress on gaining English education which is of importance now. Women also should get education. Never neglect the importance of education.⁷⁶

75. E. M.S. Nambudirippad, quoted in Sachidananda Swami (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.70.

76. P.K. Balakrishnan, (ed.), *Narayana Guru*, NBS, Kottayam, 1968, p.73.

In the same message Guru stressed the importance of industrialisation. He realized that economic freedom was necessary and that would be attained only by industrialisation. He said, “Copra and coconut husk, plenty in our land are taken abroad and transferred into goods, that we buy from the foreigners paying exorbitant prices. To eradicate this situation we should teach our children about industrialization. This could be done if the rich people paid attention to promote industrialisation in our land.”⁷⁷ He asserted the importance of establishing cultural organisations and libraries so that the people could benefit from them.

He was dead against the practices of *kettukalyanam*, *thirandukuli* and considered them as sheer waste and meaningless events. He personally took initiative in stopping a *kettukalyanam* at Karimkulam at Neyyatinkara which was conducted by a wealthy person who was his disciple and follower. On that occasion he said, “We have put a stop to the *kettukalyanam*. It is our desire that in future none of our people should conduct this unwanted custom”.⁷⁸ That was inviolable mandate. With that *kettukalyanam* and connected perverse customs made their exit not only from the ezhava community but also from the other communities. Its abolition outright was a major event showing Guru’s power of command on the community.⁷⁹

77. *Ibid.*, p.74.

78. *Ibid.*, p.529

79. Vijayalayam Jayakumar, *Sri Narayana Guru, A critical study*, D.K. Print World, New Delhi, 1999, p.70.

Most of his reforms affected the feudal life of Kerala with maximum impact. He was against the primitive forms of marriages and enforced a new marriage pattern where mutual respect between the couple mattered a lot. He exemplified the need of simplicity in marriages and urged people to reduce expenditure concerning marriages and other practices like *pulakuli*, *pulikudi*, and *sanchayanam*. He spoke against *marumakattayam* which was the backbone of feudalism in Kerala. He argued that a legally married wife and the children whom she bore were certainly eligible for a reasonable share of her husband's property.⁸⁰

He disliked the profession of ezhavas that was mainly toddy tapping. He gave the famous message, "Liquor is poison; don't make it. A toddy tapper's body smells, cloth smells, house smells everything that he touches smells."⁸¹ He urged his followers to give away the profession of toddy tapping and do whatever they could do to abolish it. Sri Narayana Guru even went to the extent of asking people to excommunicate the tappers and drunkards to achieve self-purification, self respect and economic progress. His speech in a pulaya conference at Muttathara sought to raise moral standard and promote thrift. He tried to convince the poor landless labourers that liquor was a cause of idleness, poverty and crime.⁸² Slowly and steadily the ezhavas realized the negative impacts of toddy making and started taking up other professions .Due

80. P.K. Balakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.282.

81. Quoted in Murkoth Kumaran, *op.cit.*, p.180.

82. P. Chandra Mohan, "Growth of Social Reform Movement in Kerala," *op.cit.*, p.473.

to the influence of Guru and the consistent work of his disciples, T.K. Madavan and Sahodaran Ayyappan, a number of thiyyas stopped drinking toddy.

For the purpose of creating religious tolerance he convened the Parliament of religions in 1917, at Alwaye. It was the first inter-religious meet in India and second in world history. The first being the one held at Chicago in 1893. It created a conducive atmosphere for all the religions to coexist in Kerala.

The social reform movement of India deeply influenced in nurturing the growth of the feeling of nationalism all over India. It was the case in Kerala also. The teachings of Sri Naryana Guru and his activities led to the breaking of the colonial set up and promoted the feeling of national consciousness. He provided a congenial atmosphere to support the intellectuals and the organizers who had headed the national movement.⁸³

In the words of K. Damodaran, "Guru's reforms struck at the roots of the feudal social living pattern of Kerala. These reforms were not only beneficial to a single community or society but was very important as far as the growth of the national movement in Kerala .It was due to this fact that thousands of nationalists followed his foot steps."⁸⁴ The foremost among the followers who participated in the Indian national movement were T.K. Madhavan; C. Kesaven and others. Vaikom temple situated in Central

83. K. K. N. Kurup, "Kerala Samoohya Vyavastha Gurudeva Kalagattathil," S.Mohandas (ed.), *Vishwaguru*, S.N. Club, Trivandrum, 1988, p.7.

84. K.Damodaran, "Sri Narayana Guru," *Navayugam*, No.13, Aug. 1982, p.283.

Travancore was the centre of Orthodoxy and casteism and *avarnas* were not allowed to enter the roads leading to the temple. When T.K. Madhavan the organizing Secretary of S.N.D.P, became the member of Travancore Legislature he decided to take up the cause of the *avarnas*.

The Vaikom *Satyagraha* which was started as a result of his sincere efforts had all the blessings of Sri Narayana Guru. Swami visited three *ashramas* of the *satyagrahis* and this gave inspiration to them. He gave his vellore madam at Vaikom to the *satyagrahis* to show his cooperation to them and personally contributed thousand rupees to the *satyagraha* fund.⁸⁵ When he visited that ashramam and its kitchen he was happy to see a pulaya boy in the kitchen. He was glad that the seeds sown by him were proliferating and bearing fruit. In his conversation with the then S.N.D.P.Yogam Secretary, K.M.Kesavan he talked about the mode of the *satyagraha* and said that the will to suffer and sacrifice should be there. He said:

But there is no need to get drenched and starve. Enter where entry is banned and face the consequences. Take blows without giving them. If a fence is raised in your path do not turn back, jump it. Do not stop walking through the road, enter the temple, enter every temple, every body. If the offering of pudding is ready take it. Go to the place where free food is served in the temple and sit along with others. Let the government be informed of

85. N.V.P. Unnithiri, *Sri Narayana Guru*, NBS, Kottayam, 2000, p.153.

what you intend to do. One should not be fearful in laying down one's life. Those who think another's touch pollutes his should not be left unmolested in their so-called cleanliness. This is my view. Give publicity to all in the newspapers. Let people know that I subscribe to these views. But let there be no violence or show of force. Do not be perturbed by coercion.⁸⁶

In a public meeting at Vaikom he prayed for the success of Gandhian strategies and insisted letting only people of good conduct to be enrolled as the *satyagrahis*. We find that Narayana Guru had a very sincere and dedicated attitude towards the Vaikom satyagraha. He and his disciples were slowly linking the social reforms with the national struggle for independence. The Vaikom satyagraha and the Temple entry movement created a convenient platform for the activities of the Indian National Congress.⁸⁷

Hearing about the greatness of Sri Narayana Guru many Indian national figures had come to visit him. Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranatha Tagore were the foremost of them. Guru's ideologies had great impact on Gandhiji and the national movement. The political freedom was not possible without attaining social freedom. This message was conveyed to Gandhiji whose ideal life pattern was based on *chaturvarnya*. This topic happened to be highlighted in the discussions during his visit too. Looking at the leaves of a mango tree,

86. G. Priyadarshan, 'Narayana Guruvum Vaikam Satyagrahavum in G. Priyadarshan (ed.), *SNDP Platinum Jubilee Smaraka Grantham*, op.cit., p.144.

87. K.K.Rahulan, 'Yogam, T.K. Madhavent Kalagattathil' *Gurudevan Weekly*, August, 2002, p. 23

Gandhiji said, “Each leaf has its own peculiarity so too there is difference between human beings.” “Chew the leaves of the mango tree and they will taste the same” was Guru’s reply. This discussion seems to have changed Gandhiji’s belief in the *chaturvarnya* and caste stratification of the society.⁸⁸ According to C. Kesavan, the philosophy of Swamiji was solely responsible for the reformation which gained momentum afterwards. Narayana Guru struck at the roots of *chaturvarnya* and gave courage to Gandhiji to take it up further.⁸⁹ Gandhiji was totally a changed person when he left Sivagiri after his encounter with Sri Narayana Guru.

Guru was indeed a major force that prepared the downtrodden class to part take actively in the freedom movement which was gathering strength. The liberation movement of Narayana guru did the magic of transforming the teeming millions of Kerala, who were living like worms due to the cruel-caste based feudal oppression into a people of self respect.⁹⁰ It taught them the lessons of individual dignity, humanism and collective bargaining for further development. This philosophy of Guru awakened masses to liberate from bondage. It paved the way for the evolution of a progressive society of Kerala. Every social reformer from V.T. Bhattathirippad and Mannath to Ayyankali was getting inspiration from the Guru.

88. Vijayalayam Jayakumar, *op.cit.*, p.13.

89. C. Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, NBS, Kottayam, 1964, p.21.

90. N. Sasidharan, “Sri Narayana Guru and The Freedom Movement of Kerala,” in S. Mohandas (ed.), *Vishwaguru*, *op.cit.*, p.212.

According to E.M.S. Nambudiripad, "To the millions who toiled day and night, cutting wood and drawing water from the wells for centuries, Narayana Guru was able to generate the desire for development and was ultimately capable to make them believe that they were capable for development."⁹¹ About S.N.D.P., he said, that it gave voice to the grievances and demands of the non-caste communities in general and the most numerous and the most advanced among them, the ezhavas in particular. This organization was in outward form a religious social reform organization inspired and led by the saintly Sri Narayana Guru thus combining the same organizational elements of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Brahma Samaj, Vivekananda's spiritualism, Jyotibha Phule's revolt for the untouchable classes etc. Behind it however was the urge of the common people, the peasants, the artisans the newly emerging class of the manual wage labourers and middle class employees etc. who were groping towards some outlet for ventilations and grievances."⁹²

The Guru's activities enabled the new social and economic relations to flourish, after breaking away the colonial set up of the society. If analyzed so, the role that Guru played in creating a drastic reform in society and the ability

91. E.M.S. Nambudiripad, quoted in R. Prakasan "Sri Narayana Prasthanavum Keralathile Socialist Chintagatiyum," S.Mohandas (ed.), *Viswaguru*, S.N. Club, Trivandrum, 1988, p.266.

92 E.M.S. Nambudirippad, "Castes, Classes and Parties in Modern Political Development with Special Reference to Kerala," *Speech at World Conference of Malayalam Kerala Culture and Development*, Abstract of papers, Kerala University, Trivandrum, 1977.

by which he created an ideal situation for the Indian national movement to flourish keeps him in a position in par with other national social reformers of India.⁹³ T.K. Ramakrishnan was of the view that by wiping out casteism and superstitions, Guru created an atmosphere, where the messages of Indian national movement were taken in the right spirit by the people of Kerala.⁹⁴

SWAMI SIVANANDA PARAMAHAMSAR

Swami Sivananda Paramahamsar was yet another luminary who led a blissful life by inspiring his fellow human beings to fight against the traditional malpractices of Malabar. Born in north Malabar in Vatakara in a nair family Swami was like a ferocious wave who used his pen like a sword against a lot of superstitions and customs of Kerala. North Malabar, like Travancore was a worse centre of the evils of caste discrimination. He served the police department for a while and quit it for unknown reason. After leaving in cognito for a short while he landed back to Vatakara. Swami established *Sidha Samajam* in Vatakara in 1920, which was the centre of all his activities. Though situated in proximity to the commercial centre of Vatakara, *Sidha Samajam* is sagaciously secluded from the busy modern life even today. The life in the *Sidha Samajam* was somewhat primitive and its followers lived

93. K.K.N. Kurup, "Kerala Samoohya Vyavastha Gurudeva Kalagattathil," in S. Mohandas (ed.), *Vishwaguru, op.cit*, p.7.

94. T. K. Ramakrishnan, "Swatantrya Sandesam Janahridayangalil," M.Sarangadharan, (ed.), *Tirthadana Chintakal*, SNDP Trust, Varkala, 1999, p.38

together in a community life where there was no gender distinction.⁹⁵ One who enters the *ashramam* will certainly be stuck by the serenity and seclusiveness that the *ashramam* preserves and at the same time the reluctance of the members to mingle with outsiders otherwise in need of emergency. In the *ashrama* the members are taught *sidhavidya* a way towards *moksha* or salvation. Swamiji advised his followers ^{to} keep life (*Jeevan*) within himself and blend with God to seek salvation without letting *jeevan* away.⁹⁶ The practice of *sidhavidya* is conducting of the *jeevan* within us up and down inwardly and uniting it with *Iswara* (God), above us leading to *Jeevaswaraikyam* (union with God) and attain *moksha*.⁹⁷

Swamiji had written a text by name *Kerala Anacharam* in a very simple language in the form of conversation amongst a brahmin, a *samanta*, a nair, a *thiyya*, a *sanyasi* and a *pulaya*. This work expresses his views regarding the solitary priesthood of brahmins, and the caste hierarchy which they have conveniently created for their happiness and selfishness. In the book it is stated that *jati* and *ayittam* are created out of the pride of the upper classes. Only castes like *malayan*, *munootan*, *pulluvan*, *velan*, *parayan* and *kshurakan* existed. He substantiated it by saying, “Delivery is taken normally in our society by women of downtrodden classes and water is given to the child by

95. K.K.N. Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam Literature*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1998, p.37

96. Written on the walls of *Sidha Samajam*, Vatakara.

97. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Sidhavidyarthikalkkulla Natapadikramangal*, Sidha Samajam, Vatakara, 2003, p.3.

these women. So naturally the child becomes the caste of the women who do it.”⁹⁸ He continued, “when the delivery is done in hospitals, the body is touched by doctors of Hindu, Christian or Mohammedan religion or any one from brahmin to paraya caste. In hospitals there is nothing unusual in a paraya doctor taking the delivery of a brahmin lady’.⁹⁹ He criticized the *vannathimattu* by which the women of upper class gained purification after delivery by using a cloth washed and brought by women of *vannathi* caste. He sarcastically criticized the belief by which “The pond does not become impure if the piece of cloth is washed by a brahmin lady in the water there, but it becomes impure if a *vannathi* puts it in water.” He questioned, “What kind of intellect do the people of Kerala possess by holding up high such ridiculous beliefs?”¹⁰⁰ To him there were no *jati* differentiations. According to him the *jati* division of today is the creation of influential classes for preserving false identity. He said it was indeed unfair to discriminate any one as *nayadi* or *chandala*.¹⁰¹

Swamiji argued, “If unapproachability as a phenomenon should exist, one should not breathe the air that surrounds him because it is breathed in and out by all living beings. If we breathe in the air that is breathed out by low castes

98. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Kerala Anacharam*, Sidha Samajam, Vatakara, 1993, pp.4-5

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Ibid.*

101. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Lokasanthikulla Jeevitham*, Sidha Samajam, Vatakara, 1989, p.56.

then how does untouchability exist? It is low class people who cultivate the rice, which undergoes a long process before the upper classes relish on it. Many of the foodstuff. we eat are made by *chakliyans*, *parayans*, *pulayans* etc. It is they who make the food which sustain our lives.”¹⁰²

He resented to the idea of letting only the *savarnas* worship the Gods of their choice. It was not ideal for letting only the high-class men go to temples for worship.¹⁰³ It was improper to worship God in different names according to his ideologies. His disciple, Balan narrated an incident, when Swamiji openly resented the caste discrimination in the society. On one occasion there was strong objection from the upper classes when some pulaya inmates of Swami's *ashrama* went to bath in the *chira* (pond) at Lokanarkave in Vatakara. When heard about this incident Swami fixed a particular day for himself and the lower class inmates of his *ashrama* to go to the *chira* to question the supremacy of *savarnas*. A court summons was filed against Swami for his actions. However the verdict of the court was in favour of the inmates of the *ashrama*.¹⁰⁴ He promulgated inter-caste marriages and inter-dining with the members of lower castes. A marriage was solicited under his presence between a woman of lower caste and Vishwan Iyer, a brahmin. This incident was an example of how he tried to preserve his faith against caste discrimination.¹⁰⁵

102. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Jati Ennathu Enthu?* Sidha Samajam, Vatakara, 1994, pp.5-6.

103. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Lokasanthikulla Jeevitham*, *op.cit.*, p.59.

104. Talks with Balan, an inmate of *Sidha Samajam*, Vatakara, 24 July, 2004.

105. *Ibid.*

He criticized the *talikekettu kalyanam* among the aristocratic group of Kerala. He said, "According to vedas one who ties the *tali* is the husband. Without taking this into account the followers of *marumakkathayam* invite *nambudiris*, *kshatriyas*, *tirumulpadu* and tell them that they are capable of giving only a certain amount of money and gives coconut or so as per the contract. They then bring in ten to thirty children who are prepared for *taliketu*. How ridiculous is this? In most cases the man who ties *tali* for mother ties *tali* for their daughter. Even to grandmothers the same person ties it. So generations of women have the same person as husband. Is this not a crime?"¹⁰⁶ He has tried to make the people aware of the enormous amount spread on *talikettu*, which is a useless practice as all these girls get married to other men later and one who tied *tali* to her before her attaining puberty was virtually not her husband. In his belief *taliketukalyanam* was not legal and women should resent it before they were forced to do so.¹⁰⁷ He instructed his followers to keep away from practices like *tirandukuli*, *thottukuli* and giving away clothes (*vannathimattu*) to seek purification after delivery.

He also criticized the *sambandam* among the nairs. According to him "children born of this union are like dogs before their brahmin fathers. A father here is compelled to treat with discrimination children of his own blood born in nair women." *Marumakkathayam*, where the son had no legal right to his father's property, was not the proper way of inheritance.¹⁰⁸

106. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Kerala Anacharam*, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

107. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Lokasanthikulla Jeevitham*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

108. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Kerala Anacharam*, *op.cit.*, p.37.

Swamiji was a spoke person of women's freedom. His disciple Ramakrishnan said that he strictly spoke for providing women all freedom like men.¹⁰⁹ He expressed grief over the position of women who were compelled to jump in the funeral pyre of their husbands. On the other hand when the wife died, the husband without any hindrance tied another matrimonial relationship and lived a happy life. In his opinion it were the ancestors who did not allow women seek education and got them tied to the kitchen.¹¹⁰

Swamiji was progressive enough to support widow remarriages. He was of the opinion that it was to exploit the weakness of women that widows were denied the right to education. According to him women should fight against such inequality and participate in philosophical discussions and political meetings during daytime. He openly criticized the *dasiyattam* of olden days, which led to the moral degradation of women.¹¹¹

He openly expressed his resentment against animal sacrifices and other primitive modes of worship. He lamented, 'It is really without any sympathy that animals like goats, hens and even human beings are killed and are offered to idols. Then they enjoyed on liquor and lost their self-control. Our ancestors were indeed very cruel'.¹¹² He was against the superstitions in the temples. At Kottiyoor temple, before the *choti* of *edavam* (May-June), believers take

109. Talks with Ramakrishnan, Swami In-charge of Sidha Samajam, Vatakara,

110. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Kerala Anacharam*, *op.cit.*, pp.47-48.

111. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Lokasanthikulla Geevitham*, *op.cit.*, p.58.

112. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Kerala Anacharam*, *op.cit.*, p.49.

twenty-eight days rituals, which are known as *neyyamruth kalam* (month of observing certain rituals associated with the temple). Believers enjoy sumptuous food on these days in the name of God. During *ilanirattam* (peculiar dance that the devotees did when they brought tender coconut to God) they used erotic languages, which were appreciated and repeated by all. He ridiculed such practices and also sympathised with the practice of animal sacrifice at Kodungallur.¹¹³

His disciple Balan, explained his ideology and stressed on his belief against *vigraharadhana* (idol worship) and importance of *moksha* (salvation). He refuted the beliefs of idol worship and worshiping of Gods in temples. In his work, *Lokashemaprakasika* he has stated that if one believed that God, dwelled in temples and followed rituals in that name, the life within ones self would only deteriorate without attaining anything remarkable. Balan said, “To him worship of God meant the worship of one’s own self.” A verse by Swamiji written in *Lokshemaprakasika* exposed this idea of Swamiji:

Hrishtameeshwaram twakta
Pratishta pratimam bajeth
Karastha payasam Twaktha
*Karpurasyagulam pible.*¹¹⁴

The meaning of which is “If one let go the God that dwells in one’s heart it is like forsaking the *payasam* in ones hand and licking the *payasam* that drips

113. *Ibid.*, p.54.

114. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Lokashkemaprakasika*, Sidhashramam, Vatakara, 2003, p.60

off the hand.” In the same way worshipping idols of Gods would not lead to salvation. He would only live in the chain of rebirth. According to him one should worship where God lived and it was within one’s own self.

Pashanaloha manimrinmaya vighraheshu
*Puja punarjanana bogakari mumuksho.*¹¹⁵

In *Lokashemaprakasika*, he criticized use of ganja, and tobacco.¹¹⁶ He was against consumption of liquor. He wrote, “One who consumes liquor indulges in dirty practices and creates problem to others and it destroys the life within one’s self.”¹¹⁷ He continued, “If God is the beloved of one who worships him why does he take lives mercilessly of his followers in the same way as of who do not worship him. If he ardently loves his followers he should be showing special love to them.”¹¹⁸

He denied any distinction on the basis of caste and said that *sidha* students should not be following any particular religion but should live on the principles of universal brotherhood. He should not follow *pulabali*, *ieetu*, *maatu*, or any *mantras*; he was supposed to worship the God within one’s self other than letting *jeevan* (life) go outside.¹¹⁹ In his opinion everyone who was interested in establishing peace should fight against such superstitions.

115. *Ibid.*

116. *Ibid.*, p.61

117. *Ibid.*, pp.40-41.

118. *Ibid.*, p.57.

119. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Sidhavidyarthikalkulla Natapadikramangal*, *op.cit.*, p.1.

Festivities in temples-like *arattupooram*, *tira*, *tottam*, *velichapadu* were all born of wrong concepts.¹²⁰ Through his life we find him opposing the beliefs associated with temples and Hindu religion and was a true revolutionary.

In another important work, *Sidhavedam*, *moksha sutra* (attainment of salvation) is taught by *Guru* to his student. It is in the form of conversation, clearing the student's doubts about God, rituals and attainment of salvation. The student asked whether going the temples, following rituals and offering sacrifices were the right ways to serve God? He replied, "There is no use of such practices instead one should try to know God as he who lives in one's own heart."¹²¹ In the same work he has criticized the rituals associated with festival like *sivaratri*, *ekadasi*, etc. as meaningless. During these festivals people give up eating rice and eat other grains like wheat and ragi in order to please God and attain salvation. He argued, "If so there are western countries where people only eat wheat, ragi, corn, etc. everyday. Then why do not they get salvation."¹²² He tried to make the people aware that such customs were of no use.

He had a universal outlook to Buddhism, Christianity and Islam and said that they were God's religions. He believed that Buddha, Mohammed Nabi and Jesus Christ were born to rejuvenate their society. Churches, monasteries and temples have been built by people to facilitate idol worships. Here they

120. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Lokasanthikulla Jeevitham*, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

121. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Sidhavedam*, Sidha Samajam, Vatakara, 2004, p.84.

122. *Ibid.*, p,255.

conducted a lot of sacrifices, including human beings and animals. According to Swamiji these great men have been born to assert the facts that such ideologies were wrong. They tried to emphasize the worship of strength within one's self. All this great men spoke about the same ideal i.e., *iswara-matham* (the religion of God).¹²³

He was very much supportive of Gandhiji's idea of *satyagraha*. He ardently wanted to make the temple entry at Guruvayur a success. He even went to the extent of requesting the Zamorin to make the *satyagraha* a success. Swamiji pleaded him to let every one enter and worship in the temples under his jurisdiction so that it brought glory to his kingdom.¹²⁴

Swamiji also did not favour politics in his *Samajam*. *Sidha Samajam* strictly abided by the principles of Swami. Inmates spent a good time in involving in constructive activities along with a specific time for prayer. "Inmates other than old people and kids are expected to involve in construction," said Swami Ramakrishnan.¹²⁵

Swamiji gave the message of equality of caste and gender. He by his advance thinking and sharp criticism tried in all ways to put an end to the brahmin supremacy. He passed away after fulfilling his mission and purpose of life.

123. Sivananda Paramahamsar, *Jati Ennathu Enthu?* *op.cit.*, p.18.

124. Talks with Balan, *op.cit.*

125. *Talks with Ramakrishnan*, *op.cit.*

BRAHMANANDA SHIVAYOGI

Brahmananda Shivayogi born in Kollangode of Malabar in 1852 was a fearless revolutionary whose thoughts and activities had a drastic impact on the society of Kerala. A society under the terrible grips of untouchability and unapproachability on one side and severe political and economic devastation under the colonial regime on the other, found in Brahmananda Shivayogi, the role of a true torch bearer whose attitudes towards life paved a new path towards modernization of the Kerala society. E.M.S. Nambudirippad writes, “Brahmananda Shivayogi resented ideologically and philosophically through his activities, the atrocities in the society including the pseudo and fraud religious practices and beliefs here and also the prevailing feudal economic pattern of Kerala. He opposed idol worship as well as the modification and spending money for the sake of beautifying temples. He pointed out the fact that man belonged to a single caste, the human race and every other differentiation is futile.”¹²⁶ While E.M.S. Nambudirippad emphasized his progressive ideology in fighting against the discriminatory feudal pattern of Kerala, C. Achyuta Menon would like to remember Swamiji to have created a cultural revolution. He said, “The teachings of Brahmananda Shivayogi were very important because what India required was a spiritual and cultural revolution.”¹²⁷

126. E.M S. Nambudirippad on Shivayogi in *Saragrahi*, Golden Jubilee edition, Sidhashramam, Alathur, March, 2001, p.9.

127. C. Achyutha Menon, *Ibid.*, p.9.

He rejected idolatry, temples and rituals associated with it, caste, creed, religion and emphasized the aspects of human happiness. He brought light to the lives of many people, enabling them to break open the bonds of superstitions and other caste enigmas of the society, which prevented all sorts of modernization and hindered the growth of the feeling of nationalism and anti-colonialism. It is also believed that by his clarion call and inspiring messages, Swamiji infused new blood into the society of Kerala. Some of his contemporaries were wonder struck, many ridiculed him, and many others admired him. Nonetheless the quest for truth continued vigorously.¹²⁸ As a philosopher he never faltered in arguments nor bowed his head in submission. People who were in deep slumber were awakened. He showed them the right path to happiness. The miasma of superstitions and religious practices vanished at the touch of his valiant call. His teaching brought new light to many fumbling in the darkness.¹²⁹

As a brilliant philosopher Swamiji deeply studied the various aspects of Indian philosophy. And it was on the basis of strong evidences and visible facts that he followed his pursuits towards universalism, liberalism and rationalism. Due to his rebellious attitudes, Shivayogi during his lifetime and even after that continued to be a controversial figure.¹³⁰

128. K.K.N. Kurup, *op.cit.*, p.30.

129. P.V.Gopalakrishnan (ed.), *A Passage to the Bliss Supreme*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 2000, p.33.

130. Pavanan, in his preface to his work, *Brahmananda Shivayogi*, Cultural Publication Department, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1997.

Originally known as Karattu Govindan Kutty Menon, Shivayogi was born to a nair couple of Kollangode in Palaghat district. His parents were Kunjikirishna Menon and Nani Amma. Born in a typical nair matrilineal *tarawad* he had to suffer the evils of *marumakkathayam* and also was a witness to the worships, prayers, recitations and *poojas* in the *tarawad*. The young Govindan Kutty, though initially obeyed and practised the religious practices gradually began to show a revolutionary attitude against *poojas* and worships. His contemporary and a teacher, Nettath Vishwanatha Menon says, “On one such occasion the child Govindan Kutty argued against worshipping the Goddess and left home.”¹³¹ He began to think about the unnecessary expenditure behind such rituals and the meaningless way of invoking Gods with the help of priests and others. Govindan Kutty compelled them to worship by their own for the actual devotion and blessings of the God. He believed that there would not be any advantage in appointing some others for conducting the *poojas* and rewarding them. So it is clear to understand the growing questioning spirit against the traditions of his orthodox family.

When he grew up as a brilliant Sanskrit scholar, Govindan Kutty Menon took the post of a Sanskrit teacher in Calicut Ganapathi School. At Calicut he came in contact with the rationalist, C. Krishnan, a social reformer Dr.Ayyathan Gopalan, Manjeri Rama Iyer, an orator, Pulliyampattu Kunjikirishna Menon, a journalist, Chengalattu Kunjiraman Menon and

131. Nettath Vishwanatha Menon, quoted in C.Krishnan Kutty, *Brahmananda Shivayogi, A Social Reformer of Kerala*, Lulu Books, Kottayam, 2002, p.24.

T.M. Appu Nedungadi, the author of the historical work, Kundalatha and so on. It was here that Govindan Kutty Menon was brought into contact with the activities of Brahma Samaj at Calicut founded by Sri Ayyathan Gopalan, meant to reform the Hindu religion in the Bengal pattern. It was his associates here who impressed by his knowledge, devotion and reforming mentality and spirituality who named Govindan Kutty Menon as Brahmananda Shivayogi.

In his forty-seventh year he settled in Alathur, a peaceful village for his rest of his life. He founded the *Sidhashramam* there, which became the centre of his activities. There he rebelled against caste system, animal worship, *thirandukuli*, *thalikettukalyanam* and stressed the importance of female education. The orthodox groups rebuked and ill-treated him. Nobody however realized then that he was the preceptor of a reformation that was to happen soon.¹³²

Brahmananda Shivayogi preached the cult of *ananda* or bliss as the supreme. He could be called as the founder of the *ananda* cult. It was universal in its scope and its applications transcended all boundaries.¹³³ In 1918, *Ananda Mahasabha* was organized to spread *Ananda Matha*. To Swamiji the pivot of all the human activities was the human mind.¹³⁴ According to him these were the six arms of the *ananda* cult:

132. Biman Guruji, *Asathyathil Ninnu Sathyathilekku, A Biography on Brahmananda Shivayogi*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 2000, p.33.

133. P.V. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.34.

134. *Ibid.*

Bliss alone reigns supreme.

Absorption of the mind in itself is indeed the bliss eternal.

Conquest of mind is verily the greatest conquest.

Not to cause pain is indeed the greatest virtue.

Sacrifices and the like rituals lead but to ignorance and pain.¹³⁵

Ananda cult is the only natural religion to all. All else are but artificial and unreal. Such a philosophy, which placed mind above God, the *vedas*, soul worship, etc was indeed revolutionary and Shivayogi had to face opposition from all the corners. The *Ananda Samajams* which were established in many parts of Kerala urged people all over to place their reasoning and logical ability above the blind superstitions and fraudulent customs. *Anandamatham* greatly contributed to the social reform movement of Kerala. The powerful wars which Swamiji waged against the superstitions along with the boldness that he opposed the orthodox sections of the society greatly helped Kerala to change its old superstitious outlooks.¹³⁶ He practiced social reform by purifying one's self. His disciples Nirmalananda Shivayogi expressed his views regarding an individual's role in reforming the society. "According to Brahmananda Shivayogi man is like an object which has two sides. The inner side is compared to the mind while the outer side is to that of the society. It was the individual's duty to keep the mind and the society clean."¹³⁷

135. *Ibid.*, p.21

136. P.S. Velayudan (ed.), *Kerala Charitram*, Vol. II, Kerala Historical Association, Trivandrum, 1974, p.350.

137. Interview with Nirmalananda Shivayogi, the President of Sidhashramam, Alathur on 11.12.2003

Shivayogi was a prolific writer who wrote many texts in order to educate the masses and teach them the cult of *ananda*. They were *Anandadarsham*, *Anandavimanam*, *Mokshapradeepam*, *Anandasopanam*, *Ananadasootram*, *Sidhanubhuthi*, *Vigraharadhana Ghandananm*, *Anandamatha parasyam*, *Strividyaposhini*, *Anandakalpadrumanam*, *Rajayogaparasyam*, *Shivayoga rahasyam*, *Anandagunageeta*, *Anandadarsamsam* and *Anandaganam*. All the above texts urged the readers to place their rational thinking power above all the traditional beliefs and superstitions. His important ideologies and the various facets of the society, which he intended to reform is clear and precise in all his writings.

In his writings and through his activities Brahmananda Shivayogi was dead against the animal killings and the worship of Gods in fierce and primitive forms like *chattan*, *chamundi*, *badrakali* and so on. Swamiji ridiculed the practice of offering meat and wine to the deities. This does not mean that Swamiji was not against the worship mode of the *savarnas*. He opposed the luxury in temples and also the penance and torturing practiced by the yogis and *sanyasis* to attain salvation. In his work *Ananda Vimanam* he has written that caste distinctions and idol worship were not the orders of God.¹³⁸

He stated that the Hindu belief of performing hardship to oneself in the forms of fasting, *tapas* in various adverse natural conditions was futile and a waste of time. This would bring only unhappiness. He said, “*Tapas* brings only

138. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Ananda Vimanam*, Sidhashramam, 1980, p.11.

unhappiness. Long tours to Kasi, Haridwar, Rameshwar etc during heavy rains and scorching heat of sun, without eating food on time and not having proper sleep on time bring only unhappiness.”¹³⁹ One who suffered from hunger and of fasting in order to attain salvation did not attain salvation.¹⁴⁰

Vigraharadhana Gandanam is his work in which he has seriously rebuked the society of Kerala for wasting their energy and money on idol worship. He was stated, “Idols are not even capable for doing any activity which an ant or a mosquito is able to do. What is the use of worshipping a stone and offering *mantras* to idols, will that idol speak?”¹⁴¹ He continued, “Will the pot in which the curry is made and the spatula with which the curry is made know the taste of it? In the same way the idols will not even know about the flowers, fruits and the various offerings made to them. We do all such abused activities without realizing the fact that God stays in our hearts alone.”¹⁴²

In *Yogamahatma Bagavat Git Sagaram* of *Moksahpradeepam*, Shivayogi has written that instead of involving in constructive activities, Indians wasted their time and money in building temples, worshipping idols, practices like, *homa*, *tapas* and *thirthadana*. In his opinion it could be due to

139. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Ananda Suthram*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1997, p.35.

140. *Ibid.*, p.52.

141. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Vigraharadhana Ghandanam*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1999, p.3.

142. *Ibid.*, p.5.

the indulgence in these superstitions that Indians were denied the very basic right to be the sovereign governing power of the country.¹⁴³

Unlike Sri Narayana Guru, he was against the idea of brahmanisation of the society by following the *savarna* way of dressing, worshipping their Gods and dressing the way they dressed. He said, “There is a trend in the society to imitate the brahmins by the lower classes so they could feel to attain a higher position in the society. Earlier, only the *dwijas* wore the sacred thread. Now people of lower classes tried to imitate the upper classes. Such a blind following of the practices of upper classes has lead to the shortage of the sacred thread.”¹⁴⁴

Shivayogi criticized suffering torture and penance, the Hindu way of leading a pious life. Neither did he believe in the ideas of begging and collecting alms in order to get salvation. He said, “If salvation could be attained by wandering and collecting alms, all who lead life begging are holy men. If going naked and forsaking clothes bring salvation aren’t cows naked? Same way if *vanavasa* and eating only fruits bring salvation, those naked men who live in the forests, are not they eligible for salvation?”¹⁴⁵

Another feature of the society which he tried to abolish was the caste discrimination and caste system which existed in the worst form during

143. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Mokshapradeepam*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1997, p.11.

144. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Sidhanubhuti*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1998, p.11.

145. *Ibid.*, p.21.

Swamiji's time. He never hesitated in associating himself with the people of the lower classes. Ayyathan Gopalan has written that it was a wonderful sight to see Shivayogi sitting along with Kuttapanashan, a mukkuva, Krishnan, a thiyya, Sridharan Nambudiri, Surya Narayana Sharma, Shivarama Krishnayyer, Ramapanikkar, Parameshwaran Pillai, who were all savarnas, talking and preaching his ideas and philosophies at a time when the lower castes were living in utter servitude.¹⁴⁶ Shivayogi fought hard against the idol worship and casteism at a time when its grip over the society was awfully strong. Swamiji deserves a prime position among the social reformers of Kerala.

In the *Ananda Sutra* he has expressed his view strongly against the Vedas and Hindu orthodox classes. He says, "Like when poison added to milk, false ideologies on caste differentiation mentioned in the *vedas* make the lives of the people miserable. The Gurus and Hindu orthodox classes follow these fake ideologies. One should not follow the words of such *acharyas* and *vedasastras* and lead a blind life according to the *vedas*."¹⁴⁷

His important work the *Mokshapradeepam* was an eye opener to a lot of people who read it. In this work he has expressed the caste differences in Hindu society where the aristocratic castes oppressed the down trodden groups. It was because of caste differentiation in Hindu society that Hindus have deteriorated terribly fighting against each other by keeping the lower classes at

146. Ayyathan Gopalan quoted in Pavanan, *op.cit.*, p.220.

147. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Ananda Sutram*, *op.cit.*, p.26.

a bay and exploiting them.¹⁴⁸ Shivayogi has said that *rajayoga*, which he had propitiated was very clear and people of all castes, even those ousted from the society, criminals, people of mixed castes and women could attain it without any restrictions. He has preached that idol worship and casteism brought only disaster and adversities.

In *Mokshapradeepam* he has criticized casteism. He says, “A goat cannot give birth to an elephant nor an elephant can give birth to a goat.”¹⁴⁹ However it is not the case with man and women of higher strata and lower strata. There could be sexual relationship amongst high caste group and low caste groups invariably and give birth to children male or female, of any caste. Thus he affirmed that man invariably belonged to the same caste.¹⁵⁰ *Sidhanubhuti* also refers to his firm belief against caste differentiation like his other works. “People quarrel like dogs by saying, I am an Aryan, I am a Hindu, you a Buddhist and you a downtrodden etc.”¹⁵¹

He has stated that casteism was responsible for the deterioration of Hindus. In *Ananda Sutram*, he stated, “The more you give importance to caste differentiation and demarcations, the more you are moving towards misery. *Savarnas* keep themselves high above the lower castes and treat the lower castes with disgust. This leads to rising in the feeling of inequality, which

148. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Mokshapradeepam*, *op.cit.*, p.11.

149. *Ibid.*, p.173.

150. *Ibid.*, p.184.

151. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Sidhanubhuti*, *op.cit.*, p.14.

leads to fights and skirmishes among the people. This is how Hindus have deteriorated and are still deteriorating.”¹⁵²

In *Anandadarshamsam*, he has openly criticized the spiritual leaders and heads of various religions, or forcing people to commit crimes and fight against each other in the name of religion.¹⁵³ In the preface to the work, *Ananda Kummi*, Shivayogi himself has revealed that his aim was to unite all human beings who fight in the name of caste and religion in the name of one religion called *Ananda matha* and bring happiness to all. He also expressed his desire to create awareness against animal sacrifices.¹⁵⁴

In the paragraph forty-four of *Ananda Kummi*, it is written in verse form that caste differentiation and superstitions are the biggest enemy of mother India.¹⁵⁵ In paragraph hundred and three he has referred to mother India crying out of sorrow to see the people of India and her children fighting and crying in the name of religion.¹⁵⁶ He opined, “Untouchability and unapproachability will not give any peace to a society, which sticks on it. Even if home rule (self government) comes in India, the problems caused by religious bigotry will create problems.”¹⁵⁷

152. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Ananda Sutram*, *op.cit.*, p.71.

153. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Anandadarshamsam*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 2002, p.26.

154. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Ananda Kummi*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1999, p.17.

155. *Ibid.*, p.16.

156. *Ibid.*

157. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Anandadarsam*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1998, p.176.

In the preface to his work, *Ananda Sopanam*, he has compared religions with superstitions and traditions to jails, which denied freedom to individuals.¹⁵⁸ In his work, *Ananda Sopanam* there is a chapter on various letters by civilians and newspapers referring to the influence of Brahmananada Shivayogi to stop animal sacrifices in various temples. One such report from the newspaper reads so, “From time immemorial, at *Thottavaarathu Idayavanathu Bhagavati* temple every year in the month of *kumbha* as part of festivals and other ceremonies a crude and intolerable way of killing goats and hens as sacrifices is stopped by the awareness created by several kind and humane people of the locality. This awareness is attributed to Brahmananda Shivayogi and his theories of non violence published in his work *Mokshapradeepam*.”¹⁵⁹ In a *Bhadrakali* temple at Kodungallur there had been animal sacrifices from time immemorial. In the month of *Kumbha* to secure the blessings of the Goddess numerous animals were killed in front of the idol. But after gaining influence from teachings of Shivayogi and the ideologies that he imparted in his work *Mokshapradeepam* many people reacted against it and stopped all the atrocities.¹⁶⁰

Like Sri Narayana Guru, he also was against drinking and intoxication. In a verse of his work, *Sidhanubhuti* he stated, “Do not drink toddy and use

158. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Ananda Sopanam*, *Saragrahi Lekhanangal*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1997, p.4.

159. *Ibid.*, p.5

160. *Ibid.*

ganja, within one's heart there is toddy which gives every one *ananda* or bliss. Keeping on relishing it and that will bring you happiness.”¹⁶¹

Shivayogi was a witness to the overflow of Hindus to embrace Christianity mainly due to the activities of missionaries, Analyzing it he said, “In religions like Christianity there is no untouchability and caste subjugations as in the case of Hinduism. They do not cherish the doctrine of different castes in their religion as the Hindus do. As a result lakhs of Indians who fight against one another get attracted to the magnanimity of other religions and join them.”¹⁶²

Another progressive ideology of Swamiji was the importance that he gave to the education of women. He realized that a man's success in life is rather negligible without bringing his counterpart from the darkness and giving her light through education. Lalithambika Antarjanam wrote, “I remember how *Strividyaposhini* and *Jnanakummi* has helped me to retort against slavery and caste system. Shivayogi's contribution to destroy superstition will definitely not be forgotten by the people of Kerala.”¹⁶³

In his work *Strividyaposhini* published in 1899, Shivayogi had stressed the importance of giving education to women and he boldly opposed all those social evils like child marriages and stood for widow remarriages. According to

161. Brahmananda Shivayogi, Sidhanubhuti, *op.cit.*, p.12.

162. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Anandadarsam*, *op.cit.*, p.176.

163. Lalithambika Antherjanam quoted in Sudarsan Kunnathukal (ed.), *Brahmananda Shivayogi, Navodhana Guru*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1998, p.43.

him both the father and mother are equally responsible for the moral and physical upbringing of their children. He said, "As a child in his early years spent most of his time with his mother if she is educated she would be able to impart a better education for her child. If brought by ignorant mothers children will be as well be ignorant."¹⁶⁴ He said, "Women are kept without freedom in cages like parrots without getting education or enjoying life. What a pity to see the women waste their lives like this."¹⁶⁵ He quoted from puranas that the respectable Yajnavalkyan offered Gargi, his wife, *yoga* without having any doubt whether his decision would bring any misfortune to the society.¹⁶⁶

He kept on questioning the way by which females were denied education and wrote that they could gain knowledge about scientific truths and realities of life. Shivayogi was quite impressed by the way by which the Europeans gave freedom and education to women thus enabling them to eventually participate in the modernization of their nation. He asked, "Even being a widow, Queen Victoria ruled England successfully. Westerners give importance in educating their women counterparts. So what is wrong in promoting female education."¹⁶⁷ He ends his work *Strividyaposhini* demanding to promote mental happiness and moral welfare of both men and women through education, the most essential requirement of an individual.¹⁶⁸ Thus

164. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Strividyaposhini*, Sidhashramam, Alathur, 1998, p.5.

165. *Ibid.*, p.15.

166. *Ibid.*, p.16.

167. *Ibid.*, p.14.

168. *Ibid.*, p.15

Shivayogi's views on women's education were quite revolutionary in an age when everyone resented the very idea of imparting education to women.

Nataraja Guru wrote in the visitors diary at *Sidhashramam*, "I have always admired the boldness of protest that the Guru sounded with such firmness in his own time when Kerala was sleeping in negative forms of relativistic attitudes. Shivayogi's call has done much to clear the cloud of superstitions and ignorance and helped men and women to hold their heads high in self respect and with a high sense of human dignity."¹⁶⁹

Brahmananda Shivayogi also fought against the obnoxious practices like *thirandukuli*, *talikettukalyanam* and magical spells, which according to him lead to economic devastations of the society due to the luxury involved in such practices. This type of marriage was very ridiculous because the *tali* which was tied was cut off and the person who tied the tali was not given the hand of the same girl when she grew up. He criticized the grand feasting and wastage of money of such rituals.¹⁷⁰

He was a witness to the economic deterioration created by the *marumakkatayam* system in the nair *tarawads*. He said, "It is indeed a pity to see even in the big *tarawads*, fights happening between the *karanavars* and their nephews, without even giving their women the means for livelihood. This

169. Nataraja Guru on Shivayogi in the visitor's dairy at Sidhashramam during his visit on 15.9.1967.

170. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Vigraharadhana Ghandanam*, *op.cit.*, p.25.

difference of opinion between the *karanavar* and *anantharavan* resulted in the ruin of many ancestral *tarawads*.”¹⁷¹

In all his works he has boldly rejected the traditions and customs followed by the contemporary people. In his opinion about *Mokshapradeepam*, Nitya Chaitanya Yati writes, “While all over Kerala there were *poojas*, animal sacrifices and other kind of sacrificial offerings made to the God, Shivayogi lived a purposeful life that was meant to question all the superstitions and place it before the logic of one’s mind. *Mokshapradeepam* is written in a simple manner so as to create awareness among the uneducated people of Kerala to fight against caste hierarchy and idol worship.”¹⁷²

Thus we can conclude that Brahmananda Shivayogi was a prominent figure among the social reformers of Kerala. He founded the famous *Ananda matha*, the religion that was intended to reform the society. This has brought the superiority and greatness of non-violence, right thinking, right knowledge, manliness and *rajayoga*. It also stressed the worthlessness of *karmakanda* and propagation of false and immemorial rituals, customs, and usages.¹⁷³

The compassion to fellow human beings and animals that Brahmananda Shivayogi tried to highlight through his religion gave a new outlook to his philosophy. Brahmananda Shivayogi’s teachings and philosophy gave fresh life

171. Brahmananda Shivayogi, *Ananda Kummi*, *op.cit.*, p.15.

172. Nitya Chaithanya Yati , about *Mokshapradeepam*, in the outer cover page of the same work, *op.cit.*

173. P.V. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.11.

to a society suffering under the clutches of feudalism, thus helping its renaissance. Born one hundred and fifty years before in a *savarna* family, Brahmananda Shivayogi was very daring to fight against untouchability, his own caste showed towards the lower castes. At a time when believers built more and more temples to spread Hinduism, he rejected the worship of Gods of all forms.

K.P. Kesava Menon, evaluated him as foremost among the thinkers of human freedom. In the Visitors' diary at Sidhashramam he wrote, "Brahmananda Shivayogi was a rare divine person who expressed those matters relating to heavenly and worldly life in a very talented manner explaining it on the basis of logic and reasoning. Brahmananda Shivayogi was a saint who tried to develop the feeling of equality among the people of Kerala. His ideologies have acted as the foundation for the movement of Kerala and the labour movement, which arose from it later."¹⁷⁴

VAGHBADANANDA GURUDEVAN

Another important personality who by his activities had helped in creating a situation conducive for the growth of nationalist movement in Kerala was Vaghubadananda Guru. As many of those organizations in Bengal and other parts of Kerala, which favoured the growth of the feeling of nationalism, the *Atma Vidya Sangam* (founded by Vaghubadanandan) has helped in awakening

174. K.P. Kesava Menon, in the visitors' dairy kept in Sidhashramam, Alathur.

many people who were slumbering in darkness and brought them to the main stream of the national movement.¹⁷⁵

The role that Vagbhadananda played in the renaissance of the society of Kerala was remarkable. He bravely fought against many of the malpractices in the society like casteism, idol worship, animal sacrifices and inequality in the society. He was a staunch supporter of Gandhiji and the national movement. E. Moidu Moulavi has commented, “Vagbhadananda fought against the religious atrocities and inequalities in the society bravely. He fought against the lack of knowledge and darkness through his newspapers, *Abhinavakeralam* and *Atmavidyakahalam*. ”¹⁷⁶

He was a good combination of an erudite scholar, reformer, organiser, journalist and nationalist. He was born at Patyam, a village in north Malabar, to Vazhuvalappil Koran Gurukkal and his wife Vayaleri Cheeru Amma in 1887. His name was Kunjikannan and he had his early education under his father who himself was a well-known scholar and widely respected by the villagers.¹⁷⁷ He was a brilliant scholar when he grew up and became popularly known as V.K. Gurukkal. During that period gaining a lot of influence from the Bengal renaissance, Ayyathan Gopalan, a social reformer established an association

175. K.K.N. Kurup, “Adhunika Keralam: Charithra Gaveshana Prabhandhangal” in M.G.S.Narayanan (ed.) *Malabar Mahotsavam Souvenir*, Malabar Mahotsav Committee, Calicut, 1994, p.440.

176. E. Moidu Moulavi, in the Preface of *Vagbhadananthente Sampoorana Krithikal*, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, 1998, p.xxxv.

177. M.S. Nair, *Vagbhadananda Guruvum Samoothika Navothanavum*, Cultural Department of Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1998, p.20

that intended to rebel against the atrocities in the society. V.K Gurukkal was deeply interested in its activities, which acted against casteism and social inequality. Hearing about his brilliance, the great genius V.K. Gurukkal was called to Karapparamba which later became the venue of his activities. He was such a brilliant scholar, speaker on religions and philosophy that V.K Gurukkal was invited to many places for delivering eloquent speeches.¹⁷⁸ It was on such occasion that he was acquainted with Brahmananda Shivayogi, the great social reformer and intellectual. A wonderful teacher-student relationship bloomed between them and it was he who conferred the title *Vagbhadananda* for the marvelous knowledge he had on religion and philosophy.¹⁷⁹ At Kallai in Calicut, Vagbhadanandan founded the *Rajayogananada Kaumudi Yoga Sala* as a mark of his contact with Brahmananda Shivayogi in 1911.¹⁸⁰ He established *Atmavidyasangam* in 1917 at Calicut, which aimed the removal of superstitions, caste differentiation and social inequality from the society of Kerala. The *Atmavidyasangam* was a great force that helped the people of Kerala for social reform and revival.¹⁸¹

He was an editor of the newspapers like *Shivayogi Vilasam*, *Shivayoga Vilasam*, *Abhinava Keralam*, *Atmavidya Kahalam* and *Yajamanan*. They where

178. Interview with Bharati, daughter of Vagbhadananda Guru on 8.3.2002 in her house at Karaparamba, Kozhikode.,

179. M.S. Nair, *op.cit.*, p.26.

180. *Ibid.*, p.27.

181. K.K.N.Kurup, *Adhunika Keralam*, Charitra Gaveshana Prabandhangal, *State Institute of languages*, Kerala, 1982, p.75.

intended to spread his philosophical ideologies. He criticized the atrocities of the upper classes which the lower castes of the society had to suffer. Before his death in 1939 he had participated in various activities associated with the freedom movement of India and Gandhiji. Throughout his life he fought for a reformation of the society of Kerala. It was his aim to fight against the lack of knowledge, slavery and other atrocities. He urged the people everywhere to be vigilant against all superstitions and retort them.¹⁸² His clarion call was 'Awake, Remember the Creator, Arise and Fight for Justice' His philosophies and ideologies inspired and awakened the people from all walks of life. "He was a warrior" says G. Ramachandran, "who fought restlessly against casteism. Once listening to his brilliant speeches, religious bigots would bend their heads and refuse to speak about religion. Even before Gandhiji who named the downtrodden classes as Harijans, Vagbhadananda has said about them, "All are sons of Hari or Vishnu. All are brothers."¹⁸³ Of the various social activities of Vagbhadananda, the foremost was the fervour that he exhibited to retaliate caste discrimination shown by the *savarnnas*. He said that it was through crookedness that the influential class made the majority of the backward section their slaves.

Vagbhadanandan urged the people to realize that there was no reason to treat a pulaya, a woman, a sudra, a vaishya with contempt and in his opinion

182. K.K.Pavithran, *Vagbhadanandan, Atmiya Himalayathil* Inpriint books, Kollam, 1995, p.21.

183. G. Ramachandran, in preface of Vagbhadananthente Sampoorana Krithikal, *op.cit.*, p. xiii.

all were equals.¹⁸⁴ He has openly retaliated against the orthodox brahmin classes by creating awareness among the pulayas and downtrodden classes to show their disapproval against the atrocities practiced by the upper classes in the name of *ayitham*. In his article, *Hindukkal Ippol Entu Cheyyanam*, he opined, “Harijans are the favourites of Gandhiji and so each and every Hindu should help them fight for justice denied to them for generations, with utmost interest, dedication and sincerity.”¹⁸⁵ He conveyed the same idea of equality in his poems also. In his poem *Evarum Batha Harikku Makkal* he has written, “An individual was indeed a great person when he was able to treat a brahmin and a low class *pana* equally.”¹⁸⁶

He strictly forbade the primitive animal sacrifices associated with festivals in temples. He was able to awaken and arise the society to wipe off the dreadful practice of animal sacrifices in temples. By creating awareness against *ahimsa*, *Atmavidya Sangam* aimed to stop the practice with the active cooperation from the people of the society.¹⁸⁷ In his poem, *Ahimsaye Theduvin*, he writes about the plight of hen that is going to be killed in such

184. Vagbhadanandan, *Atmavidya*, Atmavidya Prasidhikarana Samiti, Kannur, 1991, p.65.

185. Vagbhadanandan, “Hindukkal Eppol Enthu Cheyyanam,” *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal*, *op.cit.*, p.822.

186. Vagbhadanandan, “Evarum Batha Harikku Makkal,” *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal*, *op.cit.* p.194.

187. M.S. Nair, *op.cit.*, p.78.

words, “likes to live longer, but, unable to express it, hen is sad and alas, tired of the human atrocities.”¹⁸⁸

He strongly believed that the forceful sights of animals and birds being sacrificed affected the women and children in a negative way. In his speech on animal sacrifices in temples, he cried painfully, “Brethrens, it is not a problem if you go with the belief and pray in *kavus*, it would not be a crime even if you bent shamelessly before the *velichappadu* shouting meaninglessly, and believed in all the nonsense that he murmured, but please do not let the poor creatures to be killed mercilessly. Atleast by remembering and thinking about your children, kindly do not let this atrocity happen any more.”¹⁸⁹ He was against the primitive mode of worshipping Kali, Chamundi and Kutichattan. In his article he asked the people, “Are you not ashamed to dance before these Gods in vulgar and ferocious forms after consuming liquor? Do you think that these Gods who are satisfied only being sacrificed with blood and liquor, are needed for your well-being?”¹⁹⁰

Vagbhadananda was strictly against the idol worship in the temples. He advised his fellow beings not to waste their time energy and money on worshipping idols who, do not hear or realize the money and energy spend on it. In his *Atmavidya* he says, “If not capable of doing nothing atleast feed some

188. Vagbhadanandan, “Ahimsaye Theduvinn,” *Vagbhadanandante Sampurna Krithikal*, *op.cit.*, p.193.

189. Vagbhadanandan, “Kavukalile Prani Himsa,” *Vagbhadanandante Sampurna Krithikal*, *op.cit.*, p.428.

190. *Atmavidya Kahalam*, 18 March, 1931.

grass to a cow, it will definitely bring you good. For one's purity of mind also it is ideal."¹⁹¹ According to him idol worship led the society to atheism as well as posed hindrance to the wellbeing of the society.¹⁹² In his opinion man should seek intellectual heights by fighting for justice, gaining knowledge and by procuring the ability to pardon even his bitterest enemy.¹⁹³ Unlike Sri Narayana Guru who believed in the sanskritisation of the primitive forms of worship by the lower classes, he was against all sorts of idol worships. Gurudevan has expressed the futility in following fasting and similar customary practices during the festivals like *sivaratri*, *ekadesi*, etc.¹⁹⁴

A lot of money was spent on marital functions and death ceremonies, which were customary and strictly enforced in the Kerala society then. Vagbhadanandan and his *Atmavidya Sangam* tried to create awareness against such customs and traditions, which led to economic impoverishment. As against lavish feasting and blind following of customs he emphasized the importance of prayer and thus tried to enforce the ideal of simplicity in family life.

In a strictly religious society practising unapproachability and untouchability at its peak, Vagbhadananda favoured inter caste marriages, inter dining between the members of various communities, high and low, widow

191. Vagbhadanandan, *Atmavidya*, *op.cit.*, p.178.

192. *Shivayogavilasam*, Book 2, Vol. 3, February, 1917, p.9.

193. Vagbhadanandan, "Manushyan Valaruka," *Atmavidyakahalam*, 9 October, 1929.

194. Vagbhadanandan, "Sivaratri," *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal*, pp.790-791.

remarriages etc., which were highly revolutionary. According to Swamy Brahmavathan the first ever inter-caste marriage in Kerala took place at the instance of *Brahasamajam*. It was when *Brahmasamajam* was working along with *Atmaviya Sangam* that this marriage took place.¹⁹⁵

Vagbhadanandan was very appreciative of the religions of Islam and Christianity, which did not practise caste discrimination of any kind. He argued that it was the denial of freedom in their own religion that promoted the Hindus to convert themselves into other religions. He hence requested the Hindus to give away casteism and live in harmony in order to bring glory to their religion.

Like Gandhiji, Vagbhadananda was also against toddy tapping, drinking it and making it as a way for earning one's living. During that period toddy tapping was the most common and traditionally accepted occupation of the ezhavas. He considered this occupation and this habit as harmful to the society as a whole. He pointed out that the thiyyas had all the circumstances here to live decently and peacefully. They knew cultivation and were capable of constructing buildings. Even at the juncture of reformation it was a pity to see the thiyyas making liquor and treating themselves as 'sinners' before the world.¹⁹⁶ He tried to make aware the people of the amount of torture that a drunkard's family had to suffer. He gave the message "na suram pibeth"

195. Brahmavathan, *Maharshi Vagbhadananda Gurudevan*, Thottapali, Ambalapuzha, 1971, p.103.

196. K.K.Pavithran, *op.cit.*, p.225

(*madhyapanam cheyyyaruth*).¹⁹⁷ In *Shivayogi Vilasam* he wrote, "Liquor consumption destroys one's physique, brings fatigue to one's senses as it is deadly poisonous."¹⁹⁸ He continued, "In the same way when beautiful and rare pictures are destroyed, when ink is smudged on it, consumption of liquor destroys, beauty, fame, intelligence and wealth of a person."¹⁹⁹ By all these activities he was making the lower castes capable to develop confidence and fight against injustice with their heads held high.

Vagbhadananda and his journals especially *Kahalam* and *Abhinavakeralam* have a unique place among the journals in North Malabar in the role played by them to arise national consciousness and support the Indian national movement. E. Moidu Moulavi, has stated that Guru supported the Indian national movement through his views in his papers.²⁰⁰ In his newspaper *Amavidyakahalam*, Vagbhadananda wrote articles supporting the national movement. In his article *Niyama Dwamsakar Aaru?*, he waged his pen like a sword against the British. He asked the Government whether they were not keeping away from the promises and laws responsible for the civil disobedience movement and the salt *satyagraha*? He questioned, "then who are the real breakers of the law, the British Government or the nationalists?"²⁰¹ This made

197. Vagbhadanandan, "Sadhacharam," *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal op.cit.*, pp.772-773.

198. Vagbhadanandan, *Shivayogi Vilasam*, Book, I, Vol. 3, May, 1914, p.3

199. *Ibid*.

200. E. Moidu Moulavi, in preface to *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal, op.cit.*, p. xxxiv.

201. Vagbhadanandan, "Niyamadhwasakar Aaru," *Atmividya Kahalam*, 23 April, 1930.

the administrators of Malabar ferocious. They asked him to apologise for criticizing openly the British rule. Vagbhadananda however never bothered to apologize to the British officials.²⁰²

As a journalist, Vagbhadananda supported Gandhiji and his constructive programmes, like the propagation of the khadi, destruction of caste system and the picketing of liquor shops.²⁰³ His call to support Gandhiji at the meeting held at Azhiyur gave inspiration to the various communities to accept Gandhian tactics and fight against British rule. He worked strongly in favour of the Vaikom *satyagraha* and the Guruvayur *satyagraha*, both meant to fight for the rights of the *avarnas*. He appreciated the work of T.K. Madhavan and his efforts to make Vaikom *satyagraha* a success. He supported the *satyagrahis* at Guruvayur *satyagraha* and talked against colonialism and stressed the need for gaining for the lower classes, right to worship the Lord, at a meeting held under the auspices of Mattanur Madhusudhanan, at Guruvayur.²⁰⁴

Orthodox Hindus started a newspaper by the name *Sanatana Hindu* to wreck the Guruvayur *satyagraha*. No one other than Vagbhadananda was capable to wipe away the orthodox beliefs and their adherence to casteism in his writings.²⁰⁵ Some orthodox Hindus expressed through *Sanatana Hindu* that

202. Dharmaraj Kaloor, Interview, 8.3.2002, at his residence in Karapparamba, Kozhikode.

203. Vagbhadanandan, *Atmavidya Kahalam*, 29 April, 1931.

204. M.S. Nair, *op.cit.*, p.108.

205. K.K. Pavithran, *op.cit.* p.230.

English education was responsible for trying to create a reformation against unapproachability and untouchability. He unleashed certain questions to them. “Is it due to English education that a poor Muslim who lives on selling fish free from beliefs connecting to *ayittam*? Was it because of English education that great teachers like Mohammed Nabi, Lord Jesus Christ, Lord Budha and Lord Guruvayurappan were against *ayittam* and social inequality?”²⁰⁶

About Guruvayur *satyagraha* he wrote that the great messages of kindness and love that Gandhiji sent from the Yervada prison was then reflected on Guruvayur, the centre of caste discriminations. Public have started acting against this unapproachability. In his article he has pleaded to reject unapproachability, totally, because it was painful even to a dog and that would be terrible for a human being to bear this through out his life.²⁰⁷ He has urged the people to accept Gandhiji’s call and follow his footsteps. He was a great admirer of Gandhian strategies. He wrote, “Gandhiji has come forward with the idea of temple entry for pulayas. Gandhiji’s victory will be faster, if the horrible caste rules are buried as soon as possible. The step that Gandhiji has taken in favour of temple entry cannot be defeated and if any one thinks to make it a failure that will remain his unfulfilled desire.”²⁰⁸ He was deeply

206. Vagbhadanandan, “Unarnnirikunnupolum,” *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal op.cit.*, p.849.

207. Vagbhadanandan, “Navayugarambham,” *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal, op.cit.*, p.849.

208. *Ibid.*, p.837.

moved by Gandhiji's aura and said, "If ever Indians have a God today, it is no one else other than Mahatma Gandhi."²⁰⁹

In his article, *Oru Pandithante Sahasikatha*, he has ridiculed an Orthodox Hindu, Sridharan Nair who has written an article in *Sanatana Hindu* on the condition of the *savarna* majority. Sreedharan Nair wrote it was shameful to tell that the glory and fame of Guruvayurappan was crossing the boundaries of India and reaching abroad by the activities of the Guruvayur satyagrahis. Nair was of the opinion that using foreign clothes did not bring any harm to India. Vagbhadananda retorted ridiculously. In this article he expressed his hatred against importing foreign clothes, He tried to make the people aware of the impoverishment of the Indian economy that it created.²¹⁰

He criticized Ramachandra Iyer, a *savarna*, who in *Sanatana Hindu* wrote that entry to temples should be prohibited for downtrodden classes. Iyer had written that *vedas*, *smritis* and *puranas* are written to serve the purpose of the *savarnas*. He made a scathing attack on Iyer by replying after quoting from the *upanishad* which read, "Vishwamitram Cha Chandali." He emphasized the fact that as Vishwamitra was a pulaya according to the puranas. *Gayatri Mantra*, which was his creation actually, belonged to the pulayas.²¹¹

209. Vagbhadanandan, "Sanatana Hinduvile Vaichitryam", *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal op.cit.*, p.862.

210. Vagbhadanandan, "Oru Pandithante Sahasikatha", *Atmavidya Kahalam*, 9 February, 1933.

211. Vagbhadanandan, *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal, op.cit.*, p.830.

When on certain occasions the savarnas were very adamant of not letting the sudras to the Guruvayur temple he wrote that it was their last and final attempt to preserve their false supremacy.²¹² He tried to make the lower class people aware of the fact that their hard earned money that they had offered to the God was relished by the *savarnas* without even letting them to enter the temple and see the Lord.²¹³ He ridiculed the *savarnas* by saying that it was their desire to relish exclusively on the income that they derived from the temples, which kept them away from supporting the temple entry agitations of the backward classes.²¹⁴

He wrote in depth very sensitively about the pain and tortures that the *satyagrahis* had to bear in the British prisons. Orthodox Hindus in *Sanatana Hindu* wrote articles criticizing the sincerity and dedication of the *satyagrahis*. Vagbhadananda was furious to read it and wrote, how unfair it was to criticize those *satyagrahis* who with a lot of sincerity and devotion tried to liberate mother India. T.M. Krishna Iyer at a *savarna* meeting ridiculed the *satyagrahis* by saying that they were not righteous in their practices and were disobeying their parents, old beliefs, Lord Sri Ram and Ramayana. At this instance Vagbhadananda urged every one not to believe in these words and instead

212. Vagbhadanandan, "Sanatana Hindukkalude Antima Branthikal," *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal, op.cit.*, p.847.

213. Vagbhadanandan, "Unarnnirikunnupolum," *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal, op.cit.*, p.847.

214. Vagbhadanandan, "Satyagrahikal Sambramikkunnupolum," *Vagbhadanandante Sampoorana Krithikal, op.cit.*, p.844.

support the *satyagrahis* who even at the pain of death were trying to get those rights to their future generation that which were denied to them from time immemorial.²¹⁵ He ridiculed the *savarnas* saying, “The strange thing about the writers of *Sanatana Hindu* is that it is a pity and matter of shame that Mother India gave birth to those people who complain about the *satyagrahis*. In fact they should be compassionate to those *satyagrahis* who are beaten and tortured in the prisons, for the sake of liberating mother India from colonial rule.”²¹⁶

Inter dining and inter caste marriage conducted by *Atmavidyasangam* with the blessing of Vagbhadananda had serious impact on the society of Kerala that was waiting impatiently for reformation. Though it boosted the morale of the followers of the freedom movement, the orthodox segments face it with disgust and stubborn reactions.

He was a spoke person of equality of the women. He said, “Women should have equality and freedom, but in our society their condition is worse than of cattle and dogs where their male counter parts have pushed them in darkness and servitude.”²¹⁷ Vagbhadananda was against servitudes of all kinds. He said in order to attain freedom one should not subdue himself to any external force or coercive power. He wanted his followers to gain control over his senses so that no one would dare suppress them.²¹⁸

215. *Ibid.*, p.50.

216. Vagbhadanandan, *Atmavidya Kahalam*, 2 February, 1933.

217. Vagbhadanandan, “Manushyante Kadama”, *Atmavidya Kahalam*, 21 August, 1929.

218. Vagbhadanandan, “Swatanthryam Sambadikkuka”, *Atmavidya Kahalam*, 30 October, 1929.

Vagbhadananda gave his blessing to the workers of *Atmavidya Sangam* to directly participate in the Indian national movement. Many of his disciples after gaining inspiration from him have actively participated in the Indian struggle for independence.²¹⁹ M.T.Kumaran Master of Azhikode, Kannur, T.V. Ananthan of Chovva, Kannur T.V. Kutty of Chombala, K. Kumaran of Koyilandy, Dr. A.Chandu of Kozhikode, P.Achuthan of Alavil were few among them.²²⁰ Gaining inspiration from Gandhiji to discard foreign clothes and use only *khadi*, Vagbhadananda towards the end of his life wore only *khadi* to promote it. He realized the importance to oust the foreign masters from our country and always supported Gandhiji's way to gain independence. It was during the Guruvayur satyagraha that an orthodox believer by name Pulpakara Narayanan Nambudiri wrote an article ridiculing Gandhiji and his policies. In his article Nambudiri insulted Gandhiji by asking ten questions to which Vagbhadananda retorted violently by answering scientifically to the questions in a long article written by him. To this Pulpakara could not reply. It was this article that was published by the name *Gandhijiyum Sastra Vyaghyavanavum*.²²¹

Vagbhadananda was not only interested in the social upliftment of the downtrodden classes but also in their economic wellbeing and their safety. He wrote and spoke about the economic exploitation of the rich and the colonial

219. Interview with Dharmaraj Kaloore, *op.cit.*

220. *Ibid.*

221. *Ibid.*

government on the poor. Swami Brahmavathan has explained about his economic ideology as such. “A person who saves an *anna* leaves another person starving. A person who amasses a lot of wealth make a lot of people go starving. So no man has the right to amass wealth meant for the common wellbeing of his fellow beings. Nature has endowed water and air equally to everyone.”²²² We can find a communist – socialist bend of mind in Vagbhadananda’s thoughts. Marxist Leninist principles got an easy footing in Northern Malabar because of these socialist ideologies that Vagbhadananda preached. *Abhinava Bharata Yuvak Sangam* of A.V.Kunjambu that meant for the upliftment of the downtrodden classes and the Uralungal Labour Society of Vadakara gained inspiration and momentum from Vagbhadananda’s teachings. Vagbhadananda stood foremost not only in removing the casteism from the society of Kerala but also to make his followers staunch fighters of the national movement against british colonialism. He was found presiding over the meetings of *Abhinava Yuva Sangam* at Karivallur founded by A.V. Kunjambu.²²³ In 1936 in commemoration with the first anniversary celebration of Abhinav Bharat Yuvak Sangh, Gurudevan spoke where he asked its supporters to try in creating a situation congenial for the growth of national consciousness in rural Kerala. He also spoke at the meetings held associated with a strike in a brick company in Feroke, supporting the labour classes against the rich owners. It was a strike where A. K. Gopalan the

222. Swami Brahmavrutham, *op.cit.*, p.210.

223. K.K.N. Kurup, *Adunika Keralam, Charitra Gaveshana Prabhandangal*, *op.cit.*

Communist leader participated and Gurudevan was highly in his favour of his activities.²²⁴

Vagbhadananda was also against *thirandukuli*, *talikettukalyanam*, *vannathimattu* and such irrelevant customs, which economically deteriorated most of the sections of the society. With the powerful activities of *Atmavidya Sangam*, *vannathimattu* was removed from 400 houses of kunnothuparambu at Kannur a stronghold of *Atmavidya Sangam*.²²⁵ He made people aware that *thalikettukalyanam* which had no significance was an insult to womanhood. He also realized the importance of upliftment and development of women in the society. A women's wing of the *Atmavidya Sangam* was started to provide support to women's development programmes. He requested the women of the pulaya community to throw away the *kallumala*, which they wore as a mark of their low caste birth.²²⁶

After leading a heroic and selfless life for the reformation of the society of Kerala, Vagbhadananda Gurudevan passed away in 1939. E.M.S. Nambudirippad has written, "Though not able to get as much reputation as Sri Narayana Guru, Vagbhadananada born in northern Malabar played a very valuable role in promoting development in the society. He who was even more efficient in his ability as an orator and in his knowledge than Sri Narayana

224. *Ibid.*

225. *Ibid.*

226. *Ibid.*

Guru, first through *Brahmasamajam* and later through the *Atmavidya Sangam* fought against casteism, idol worship, prohibition of liquor and was able to make even some *savarnas* his disciples. It is beyond doubt that he played a significant role in the development of the northern Malabar society.²²⁷

Thus we can see that the intellectuals played a very significant role in making the people develop their consciousness to retort bravely against the superstitions of the society. Their ideologies had mass appeal because of their simplicity and rationality. It was the courage and confidence that the people gained from these maestros that boosted their morale to participate in the national movement.

227. E.M.S.Nambudirippad, *Keralam Malayalikelude Mathrubhumi*, Thrissur, 1969, p.281.

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CHAPTER IV

TRENDS OF NATIONALISM

Nationalism implies the identification of the state or nation with the people or at least the desirability of determining the extent of this state according to ethnographic principles.¹ Nationalism is a modern ideology that originated in different parts of the world recently, i.e., from the eighteenth century. It was not until the eighteenth century that nationalism in the modern sense of the word became a generally recognized sentiment increasingly moulding all public and private life.² The modern world is divided into nations that consisted of population possessing a historic territory, shared myths and historical memories, a mass public culture and language, a single economy, a Government and so on, which are some of the features of nationalism. Nationalism itself can be defined as an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual potential nation.³ Ellie Kedourie is of the opinion that nationalism as a doctrine holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics, which can be ascertained and the only legitimate type of

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1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.XVI, Encyclopaedia Britannica Ltd., William Benton, London, 1964, p. 145.
 2. Hanskohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*, D.V. Nostrand, Princeton, 1955, p.59.
 3. Anthony. D. Smith, 'Theories of Nationalism' in Michael Leifer, (ed.), *Asian Nationalism*, Routledge, London, 2000, p.1

Government is national self-government.⁴ He has also emphasized that nationalism must be organized into a world of nation-states.⁵ Hanskohn has asserted that national state is the ideal and only legitimate form of political organization.⁶

A perennial theory on nationalism is primordialism. This theory holds that nation is a primordial category or one founded by primordial attachments.⁷ This primordial attachment could be either genetic or cultural about which scholars differ. A second paradigm related to nationalism is perennialism. By this scholar means that nation existed from time immemorial and is perennial. According to this theory nationalism is simply the ideology and movement of an already existing nation.⁸

The third paradigm is that of a modernist approach popularised by Ernest Gellner, Anthony Giddens, Eric Hobsbawm, Michael Mann and Benedict Anderson. Gellner is of the view that in earlier days, in agro-literate societies, nationalism was not a very required phenomenon. By contrast in modern technologically advanced growth-oriented societies, population has to be mobile and literate, fluid and homogeneous.⁹ A single literate, culture must

4. Ellie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, Widenfield and Nickolson, London, 1970, p.28

5. *Ibid.*, p.29.

6. Hanskohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*, *op.cit.*, p.10.

7. Anthony. D. Smith, *op.cit.*, p.2.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1983, p.3.

come to embrace and unite elites and masses. In these circumstances, the nation and nationalism act as the cement for mobile population in industrial cities. Gellner has also stated that nationalism is a political principle, which holds that political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment can be best defined on the terms of this principle. Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of this principle or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment.¹⁰ Tom Nairn who has advanced on Gellner's theory stated the pivotal role of imperialism and capitalism. According to Nairn, nations and nationalism are the products of the jagged and uneven spread of capitalism resulting in incorporated violence in the capitalist world.¹¹

Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined communities* has stressed that it was the conjunction of a new technical invention, print, a new system of production, capitalism and the fatality of linguistic diversity that ensured the success of a nation and the diffusion of nationalism across the globe. John Bruely on other hand claims that he would do well to confine nationalism to the political sphere, and regarded it as a strictly political movement for the seizure of state power.¹² Ellie Kedourie says that, "nationalism as a doctrine argues

10. Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism as a Product of Industrial Society," in Monsterrat Guiberneau and John Rex (ed.), *Ethnicity Reader; Nationalism as Product of Industrial Multiculturalism and Migration*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1997, p.52

11. Tom Nairn, *The Break up of Britain; Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, New Left Books, London, 1977, p.6.

12. John Bruely, *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993, p.21.

that humanity must be organised into a world of nation states.”¹³ The basis of nationalism in the opinion of Eric Hobsbawm is similar. He said the basis of nationalism of all kinds was the same, the readiness of people to identify themselves emotionally with their nation and to be politically mobilised as Czechs, Germans, Italians or whatever a readiness which could be politically exploited.¹⁴

Nationalism though originated in Europe, made its strong repercussions in the third world countries under the control of European powers. Ellie Kedourie is of the opinion that nationalism in Asia and Africa was intimately connected with the existence of imperialism and colonialism.¹⁵ The Europeans by virtue of their control over the political machinery of the colonies, economically and politically exploited the people, which often led to resentment on parts of the ruled. The denial of democracy as well as development had been the strongest condemnation of the colonial states voiced by the forces of anti-colonialism.¹⁶

Rights of an individual along with the growth of democracy grabbed the limelight of European history in the nineteenth century. Its waves swept over the third world countries also. When the ideas of political emancipation

13. Ellie Kedourie, *op.cit.* p.29.

14. Eric Hobsbawm, *History of Civilisation; The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, Vintage Books, New York, 1989, p. 143.

15. Ellie Kedourie, *op.cit.*, p.8.

16. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Nationalism, Democracy and Development*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p.1.

and individual freedom stirred the brains of the people, they could no longer bear the attitude of being servile to the alien rulers. It is a true fact when Marguerette Rose Barnett said, "Nationalism is a way of democratically linking autonomous individual to the nation-state."¹⁷ E.H. Carr has emphasized the role of individuals in the growth of nationalism. He said, "It was the individual, who in society, gave all the drive and push for nationalism to grow."¹⁸ Nineteenth century was so passionately devoted to individualism and democracy and nationalism seemed to be a natural corollary of both.

Though the third world countries imbibed the ideology of nationalism in its right way and utilized this phenomema to drive out the colonial masters from their motherland.¹⁹ There are variations about the nationalism in Europe and Asia. The inspiration behind European nationalism could be this in Hanskohn's words, "The garb of nationalism, clothes on one hand the human aspiration for equality and dignity and on the other hand passion of power over the others."²⁰ According to Partha Chatterjee, "Compared to that of India, in Europe, nationalism was also a part of the history of modernity and progress, marked by rapidly expanding activities, the growth of liberal political institutions and the emergence of national culture and practices. For

17. Marguerete Rose Barnet, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New York, 1970, p.7

18. E.H. Carr, *Nationalism and After*, Macmillan, New York, 1945, p.2

19. Partha Chatterjee, "Transforming a Political Theory, Early Nationalist Thought in India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XXI, No.3, January, 1986, p.120.

20. Hanskohn, *The Age of Nationalism*, Harper and Row, New York, 1962, p.XVI

nationalism in Asia and Africa this was not the case. In many of these countries, nationalist sentiment and movements have been associated with traditionalism, liberal political regimes, religious fundamentalism, racial hatred and anti-modern ideologies. So in India national movement though primarily was a fight against imperialism, was also a fight for social justice, emancipation of man, and destruction of caste differentiations.”²¹ Thus what Frank Furedi has told was true about India. Nationalism is seldom an independent variable, but rather a form through which a variety of responses, aspirations and interests are expressed.²² The nationalist movement here aimed at wiping the caste differentiations, gender bias, social equality as well as economic sevility. Thus in India nationalism and national consciousness was not a bourgeoisie phenomenon, but a pan-India, multi class, multi communal and multi linguistic composite movement.²³

It was during the British rule that India as a nation-state in the modern context came into existence. One of the most important effects of British rule was to provide an environment in which nationalism could develop.²⁴ Though the intention of the British was exploitation they created a unified administration, better means of transport and communications, printing press

21. Partha Chatterjee, *op.cit.*, p.120.

22. Frank Furedi, *Colonial wars and the Politics of Third World Transformation*, I.B. Publication, London, 1994, p.21

23 Rasheedudin Khan, *Bewildered India, Identity, Pluralism and Discord*, Har Anand Publication, New Delhi m 1994, p.9.

24. Eugenie, F. Irschik, *Political and Social Conflict in South India*, California University Press, California, 1969, p.2.

and education in India. It was this development that promoted Nicholas Dirks to say about the British rule in India that this legacy provides a different, even redeeming sense of colonial history.²⁵ The anti-imperialist scholars certainly would disagree with Dirk's opinion. The disastrous rule of the colonial imperialism in their opinion created the ideal condition for nationalism to bloom in India. While commenting on nationalist awakening in India, R.Suntharalingam opined, "What was remarkable about this new phenomenon was the way in which the subject people in the third world countries fashioned this ideology into a formidable weapon to eject the European intruders from their shores. Nationalism in short acted as the solvent of western colonialism in Asia and Africa."²⁶

The British educational system that showed no caste discrimination for admission to schools, missionary activities which gave even the poor and petty pulaya a promising and helpful life, the printing press which enhanced and encouraged the spreading of western ideologies of equality and liberty of life, all gave tremendous boost for the ideology of nationalism and freedom to flourish in India. Before the advent of British due to lack of unified transport and communication system the centre could not effectively control the local, regional, political, social and economic issues. To preserve and maintain their central imperial rule, the British physically united the country and thereby they

25 Nicholas Dirks, (ed.), *Colonialism and Culture*, Michigan University Press, Michigan, 1992, p.18.

26 R. Suntharalingam, *Political and Nationalist Thought 1852-1891*, Rawat Publication, 1980, p.338.

laid the material basis for the development of modern nationalism.²⁷ Telegraph, railways, unified system of administration and law, all are in fact the legacies of colonial rule, though primarily introduced for the cause and convenience of the Europeans.

Western education which spread over India created a middle class intelligentsia that began to question the logic behind colonialism. The intelligentsia of India quickly became acquainted with the democratic views of the west. In the words of Hanskohn., “They quickly became nationalists, democrats and socialists. Cavour, Mazzini, Kossuth, Parnell and Mill became their teachers and heroes.”²⁸ Bengal grasped the currents of renaissance rather quickly under the patronage of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda and others came to the socio-political scene. Sooner then organizations like Arya Samaj, Aligrah movements and prominent reformers like Ranade, Vidyasagar and others took the initiative for reforming the society. They tried to save the society from the various superstitions and customs, which haunted it. Until then encouraged by orthodox groups, sati, infant marriage, discrimination towards women and caste differentiation began to be criticized under the garb of renaissance.

They had the motive of building a sound basis for the solution of common national problems such as the socio-economic growth of the country

27. Shanker Ghose, *Political Ideas and Movements in India*, Allied Publications, Bombay, 1975, p.192.

28. Hanskohn, *A Study of Nationalism in the East*, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., London, 1929, p.118

on the basis of techniques introduced by the phenomenon of capitalism, the acceptance of de facto equality between the sex, the eradication of the obstacles hindering the free evolution of new generations, the change of religious system and the dethroning of brahmins from the high pedestal sanctifying his monopoly of the culture and his sole intermediation between God and the ordinary human beings.²⁹

These reformer intellectuals set a major trend in Indian nationalism by giving it a tincture of 'cultural nationalism'. They realised the major drawback of Indian society and tried to project the glory of India's past. The articulation of 'cultural nationalism' revolves around firstly the beliefs concerning the distinctness, integrity, uniqueness and superiority of one's cultural and secondly the claim that such a culture is the proper and legitimate repository of collective and determinative power.³⁰ The glory of India's past and her culture became a weapon in the hands to attack the westerners. The credit for such a feeling to occur was the work of orientalist in the languages and cultural past of India. These three dimensions of 'cultural-nationalist' ideology, *vedic* brahminism at its core, a pan Indian territorial extent and an antagonistic polarity with the West/modernity became the sacred tenets of the new civil religion and it undermined all further elaborations and controversies.³¹ The

29. Sukbir Choudhary, *Growth of Nationalism in India (1857-1918)*, Trimurti Publication, New Delhi, 1973, p.51.

30. G.Aloysious, *Nationalism without a Nation*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, p.131.

31. *Ibid.*, p.23

cultural-nationalists had their own drawbacks, being elite in its character and devoid of involvement of masses in its threshold. However the movements initiated by them were the expressions of national democratic consciousness of an English educated social group in India.³²

Meanwhile the Indian National Congress (INC) founded in 1885 gave an organizational support and impetus for the spread of nationalism. The early Indian nationalists associated with INC were liberals, happy with constitutional reforms of Britain. They remained secluded from the masses because the leaders stuck to constitutional reforms devoid of much mass support. The snail's pace of reforms they adopted created rift among some of the leaders that promoted them to choose extremism and terrorism against the colonial rule.

Not much later the ideas of socialism crept into the minds of Indian nationalists. It was when such ideas gathered momentum in the West. The educated Indians realised the drain of wealth to England and started writing about economic liberalism and the threats imposed by colonialism on Indian economy. R. C. Dutt and Dadabai Naoroji were the pioneers with this outlook. The wrath against the British was economic rather than political in the writings of Dadabai Naoraoji and R.C. Dutt. They could not gather popular support as done by Gandhiji later, however they embarked a new trend to the nationalist movement of India.

32. K.K.N. Kurup, *Socialism and National Change, The Role of Malayalam Literature*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1998, p.23

A major event that boosted the spirit of the nationalists was the partition of Bengal in 1906. The partition of Bengal inflamed national sentiment but it also exposed the fissures within the national movement and with India itself.³³ The British exploited to a great extent the disunity among the various segments of India's national movement. The decision of Lord Morley and Lord Minto to create separate electorates crystallized nationalism in India around electoral politics. However the real political consciousness was lacking during this period.³⁴

An ideal shift from this pattern was witnessed with Gandhiji taking the threads of national movement in the early 1920s. At this juncture the emphasis shifted to 'political nationalism'. 'Political nationalism' has been associated with some form of a democratization process within society and emergence of the masses in to the public sphere. It was definitely with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi and his mighty policy of *satyagraha*. It was from the 1920 that Indian National Congress as an organization began to consistently represent the nation as an entity, which stood above less salient division of community, caste, class or gender.³⁵ After 1920, we see fights against colonialism and casteism happening simultaneously. Depressed and backward classes made their presence felt strongly in the national movement at this

33. Meghnath Desai, "Communalism, Secularism and the Dilemma of Indian Nationhood," in Michael Liefer (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.97.

34. *Ibid.*, p.122.

35. Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity, Making of Middle Class in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p.134.

stage. Gandhiji, the politician knew better than others that the focus of any principled activity must be to alleviate the suffering of the poor. He did it with political action, by creating a strategy for national deliverance from colonial rule, by enforcing the discipline of constructive work and the spiritual search for truth among the freedom fighters.³⁶ According to Dhanagare it marked a turning point in the Indian national movement, which under a new leadership, began to swing from its previous purely elitist pre-occupations to the task of mobilizing the masses (including the peasantry) into mass agitations.³⁷ About the significance of mass participation, Frank Furedi wrote, "Moreover the masses by their very existence represented a formidable political force. Although their actions were unpredictable no credible politician could afford to ignore their aspirations."³⁸ National leaders like Gandhiji could effectively implement his ideologies though at times the masses behaved violently. Through the synthesizing talents of Gandhi, Nehru and many other nationalist leaders, political consciousness was blended with cultural consciousness to produce visions of modernity, which had an Indian content. In a very real sense they mobilized and reshaped Indian traditions to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing postcolonial world.³⁹

36. Vithal Rajan, "Gandhi; The Colonizing Object," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLI, No.15, April 2006, p. 1427.

37 D.N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movement in India (1900-1920)*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p.21.

38. Frank Furedi, *op.cit.*, p.134

39. Harold A. Gould, *The Hindu Caste System*, Chanakya Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, p.391.

The last stage of Indian nationalism was destroyed of its splendour when communal nationalism crept into it in the final stages. The British exploited to their possible extent the communal fragmentation of India. The solid resistance from the nationalists however forced the Europeans to grant political independence to India in 1947. In the words of Meghnath Desai, "Thus at its birth, India was not the nation that the congress party wanted, one which corresponded to its theory of nationhood, an undivided India, nor was Pakistan what Jinnah wanted."⁴⁰

Coming to Kerala the growth of national movement was rather slow here. First of all the state was divided into three provinces, Travancore and Cochin under separate princely rule and Malabar under the British. All these states took the threads of nationalism with varying intensity. It took decades probably till the 1920s for nationalism in the real political sense to happen in Kerala.

However various social movements that tried to eradicate caste system slowly prepared a fine stage for political nationalism to bloom here. Every segment of the society was embittered with superstitions and atrocious customs. Backward classes were suppressed for centuries in the name of caste probably unparalleled anywhere else in the world. The frustrations led to severe upheavals. "Many social movements also respond to people's frustration with a sense of injustice towards political and economic forces beyond their

40. Meghnath Desai, *op.cit.*, p.110.

control.”⁴¹ Before political nationalism made its way in, caste nationalism had consolidated its hold in Kerala. The reason behind it was that to the millions of depressed classes here political liberty was a luxury when compared to the necessary social freedom. Caste became the root cause for social reform and movement against oppression. About caste in the words of Rajini Kothari, “It can at once be a traditionaliser and a modernizer. It has the potential of being a two pronged catalyst, a purveyor of collective identity and annihilator of the same hierarchical order from which the collective mobility is drawn.”⁴²

Sri Narayana Guru and his reform movement among the backward classes became the pioneers as far as ‘caste nationalism’ was concerned. The ezhavas of course was the prominent backward section of Kerala who tried to crave for modernity and reform. What Smelsner had said was true about the ezhavas of Kerala. “Movement and protest occur with regularity, they cluster in time, they cluster in certain cultural areas, they occur with greater frequency among certain social groupings.”⁴³ They have their inceptions in a condition of unrest and derive their motive power on one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life and on the other hand from wishes and hopes for a new

41. Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fieuntis, ‘Nine Thesis on Social Movements’ in Ghanshyam Shah (ed.), *Social Movements and the State*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2002, p.32.

42. Rajni Kothari, ‘Rise of Dalits and the Renewed Debate on Caste’ in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *State and Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, 1997, p.444.

43. Smelsner, N., *Theory of Collective Behaviour*, Routledge and Kegan Ltd., London, 1962, p.1.

system of living.⁴⁴ The revival movement initiated by Guru created vital changes in the growth of nationalism by helping the subaltern segments is the society aware of their potential for development. It was an attempt towards transformation to political nationalism.

Foremost is that these movements are viewed as attempt to change existing social relationships, process or institution. Consequently they are differentiated from the normal, the status quo, and the conventional in belief and action.⁴⁵ The importance of these movements as in the opinion of Blumer is the potential they generate. He said, In so far as they effect transformation in the way in which the people perceive, think, feel and at the same time generate. Sporadic form of protest and conflict, they create the condition out of which more effective and specific social movement may develop.”⁴⁶

Sri Narayana Guru's slogan of oneness of caste brought about social revolution in Kerala. E.M.S. Nambudirippad opined so, “For it gave expression to the dissatisfaction felt not only by the peasant but by the middle strata as well, against the outmoded system which kept some caste below others.”⁴⁷ In

44. Blumer, H, “Collective Behaviour”, In Mc Clung Lee (ed.), *Principles of Sociology*, Barnes and Noble Ltd., New York, 1969, p.99.

45. Joseph R. Gusfield, “Social Movements and Social Change,” In Louis Kriesberg (ed.), *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Jai Press, London, 1981, p.318.

46. Nick Crossley, “Social Unrest, Movements, Culture and Identity,” Nick Crossely (ed.), *Making senses of Social Movement*, Open University Press, Philadelphia, 2002, p.29.

47. E.M.S. Nambudiripad, *Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1967, p.124.

fact the advance of nationalism in our period was largely a phenomenon carried by these middle strata of society.⁴⁸ Attempts of Narayana Guru got tremendous applause among the back ward classes and the thiyyas specifically. Brahmananda Sivayogi, Sivananda Paramahamsar, Vagbhadananda Gurudevan, Chattampi Swamikal and many others were spoke persons of equality of human beings. Each and every caste tried for rejuvenation during this period. Like the intellectual reforms, mentioned above there were beacons of lights in various castes who worked strenuously for modernizing their communities.

Following the footsteps of Sri Narayana Guru, various organizations cropped up in Kerala for reform. One such was the Nambudiri Yogakshema Sabha that was organized in 1907. The orthodox views of the Sabha persuaded V.T. Bhattathirippad and K.N. Kuttan Nambudiri to form the Nambudiri Yuvajana Sabha, the radical wing of Yogakshema Sabha.⁴⁹ They stressed on the need of education of nambudiri boys and girls and resented many of the evil practices in the society. Bhavatratan Nambudirippad at the South Annual session of Yogakshema sabha said that a nambudiri was no longer ready to enslave his to life to any segment of the orthodox group which, hindered development and not to any vulnerable traditions and customs.⁵⁰ V.T. Bhattathirippad commented about Yogakshema Sabha that this Sabha was

48. Eric Hobsbawm, *op.cit.*, p.156.

49. V.T. Bhattathirippad in C.P. Sreedharan (ed.). *V.T yude Jeevitha Smaranakal*, NBS, Kottayam, 1983, p.94.

50. Bhavatratan Nambudirippad in an article , *Unni Namboodiri*, Vol. 7, No.3, 1926.

meant for cultural and economic upliftment of nambudiri from its beginning itself. Its fate was to fight against the old degraded customs and traditions.⁵¹ The radical and educated youth, under the guidance of V.T. Bhattathirippad ardently hoped to see the nambudiris reforming to suit their lives in the changing political and economic scenario. These thoughts are reflected in *Mathrubhumi* that quoted the words of Vidvan Krishnan Nambudiri this way, "It is high time that the nambudiris stop to spend their time eating and sleeping. Instead of being ridiculed by others they should but involve timely in finding employment in small cottage industries such as manufacturing textiles, claymodelling etc and then find a solution to the unemployment."⁵² *Yogakshema Sabha* was dead against polygamy and joint family system. "It was the joint family system that made a nambudiri lazy without having any responsibility. To end polygamy all nambudiris should marry from their own communities instead of keeping *sambandham*."⁵³ V.K. Narayana Bhattathiri in the 29th meeting of *Yogakshema Sabha* said, "When people of other communities are changing and remodeling lifestyles, a nambudiri can not be a mere onlooker of such development and live a life that was led by his predecessors centuries ago."⁵⁴

51. V.T. Bhattathirippad, "Ormakalude Narunilavil," *V.T yude Jeevitha Smaranakal*, *op.cit.*, p.94.

52. *Mathrubhumi*, 5 May, 1939.

53. Speech by Chelloor Itti Ravi Namboodirippad at Cheruthurati Yogakshema Sabha Meeting, 1939, *Mathrubhumi*, 31 May, 1939.

54. Speech V.K. Narayana Bhattathiri, 29th Yogakshema Sabha Meeting, *Mathrubhumi*, 22 January, 1936.

V.T.Bhattathirippad was a spoke person of the upliftment of the nambudiri widows and wrote for their education and developments. He waged his sword against pushing aside the young nambudiri women into the darkness of *illams* and furiously agitated as to why no one was listening to her sobs and sorrows. He urged the nambudiri youth to come forward and give her a fruitful life.⁵⁵ Women started attending the Yogakshema Sabha meetings, in response to the radical reforms in their community and prominent among them, Smt. Parvati Nenmeni Mangalam requested the Yuvajana Sangam to take the issue of educating nambudiri girls, seriously so that at least next generation of nambudiri girls get a peaceful life, as nothing is more important than giving them necessary education.⁵⁶ To remove the inequality among various Hindu castes V.T. Bhattathirippad requested the people to break the age-old bonds of caste system. In Alathur in his speech in 1933, he even went to the extent of saying we should set fire to the temples if those were the causes of all superstitions.⁵⁷

About his activities in politics he even volunteered in the Ottapalam political conference presided over by T. Prakasan. He had not only cherished the anti brahmin reforms but also the anti British ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and

55. V.T. Bhattathirippad, "Vidhavayude Geevitham Thaliraniyunnu," in C.P. Sreedharan (ed.), *V.T.yude Geevitha Smaranakal*, op.cit., p.180.

56. Speech by Parvathi Nenmeni Mangalam, 13th Annual Conference of Nambudiri Yuvajana Sangam, *Mathrubhumi*, 30 December, 1931.

57. Speech by V.T Bhattathirippad in Bhavirupam (ed.), *V.T. Evideyundu: Thiranjadutha Krithikal*, Olive Books, Vatakara, 1991, p.68.

his colleagues. The reforms and progressive ideals initiated by V.T. Bhattathirippad were first intended to change the traditional moorings of the society. However in the long run- the movement stood by all democratic progressive activities.⁵⁸ "V.T.Bhattathirippad was born in the same Malabar that gave birth to Madhavan Nair, K. Kelappan, K.P. Kesava Menon, Abdurahiman Sahib and Moidu Maulavi. He was part and parcel of the spirit of nationalism that they possessed. He was very much interested in the activities of Sri Narayana Guru, Sahodaran Ayyapan, and M.K. Gandhi. It was not a sheer expression of support that he showed to such movements, but his ardent desire to be part of the success of national movement. More than supporting nationalism however his destiny was to save the nambudiri community from its age old superstitions."⁵⁹

Chattampi Swamikal shouldered the major responsibility in bringing radical changes in the nair community. He was a close contemporary of Sri Narayana Guru, which enabled a lot of nair folk to get acknowledged with the Sri Narayana doctrines. This made the nairs realize the futility and vulgarity of many of the customs that they followed. How Sri Narayana Guru made his impact felt on the people of other sections of society is clear in the words

58. K.K.N. Kurup, "Tradition Versus Modernity: A Study of Social Reform Among the Nambudiris of Kerala," *Dravidian Studies*, Dravidian University, Kuppam, October, 2002, p.24.

59. M.G.S. Narayanan, "V.T. Communisathinte Appurathekulla Yathrayile Marga Niridesakan," in C.P. Sreedharan (ed.), *V.T.yude Geevitha Smaranakal*, *op.cit.*, p.78.

of Mannath Padmanabhan, “Fulfilling his life’s mission on earth, Narayana Guru is not only the hero of ezhavas but is truly a memorable figure to all Keralites.”⁶⁰

The nairs were keen about eradicating many of the old practices in their own community such as *sambandham*, *marumakkathayam* etc. It was the Keraleeya Nair Samajam founded in 1905, which aimed at uniting the different sects within the nair community. Its function was later taken up by the Nair Service Society whose pillar was Mannath Padmanabhan. Individual partition of joint family became the rallying slogan of the nairs, then of nambudris and ultimately of all caste Hindus. Abolition of matriarchal family and its substitution by the patriarchal family became the slogan of all progressive Hindus. All progressive Hindus demanded the abolition of polygamy and other outmoded forms of marriage.⁶¹ In a meeting of the nairs, at Pattambi, K Madhavan Nair, stressed on the futility of joint family system. He said, “we have to strive hard to save our society from this evil. Is there a single family in Malabar where the *karanavas* and nephews lead a life in harmony?”⁶² After a lot of agitations the nairs codified a bill, which became a law in 1925. It codified and consolidated laws among the nairs in respect of marriage, inheritance, succession, partition and management of family property.⁶³

60. Mannath Padmanabhan, *Mannathinte Sampoorana Krithikal*, Kidangur A.N. Gopalakrishna Pillai, (ed.), Vidyarthi Mithram Publication, Kottayam, 1977, pp.117-118.

61. E.M.S Nambudirippad, *Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, *op.cit.*, p.125.

62. *Mathrubhumi*, 16 January, 1930.

63. P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement of Kerala: 1885-1938*, Vol. 2, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1972, p.484.

Ayyankali and Karuppan initiated the need for equality among the backward classes. They realised the need of educating the backward classes. Attempts to reform also found a place among the Muslims. The person behind Muslim renaissance was Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi who had close relationship with Sri Narayana Guru. He started publishing the newspaper *Swadeshabimani* in 1903 and was instrumental in patronising Ramakrishna Pillai. He was keen to publish in his paper articles, those national issues, which arose national consciousness. In the lines of Sri Narayana Guru he formed *Islam Dharmaparipalana Sangam* and *Jama-Athul-Irshad* to reform the Muslim society, which was suffering from its own inherent weaknesses.⁶⁴

About such organizations T.K.Ravindran remarked, "In Travancore, the great reform movements starting from below, from the traditionally depressed classes have transformed the whole society structure producing a remarkable intellectual and social awakening. They served as the predecessor of the national movement also."⁶⁵ The case was the same with such movements in Cochin and Malabar too. This period was certainly the renaissance of Kerala. The renaissance was able to nurture various forces that bloomed in the colonial society and helped to cherish the feeling of nationalism. By synthesising material and spiritual forces the movement could uplift the downtrodden and tried to redefine the society of Kerala. A new wave of thought swept the

64. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 1974, p.516.

65. T.K.Ravindran, *Vaikam Satyagahra and Gandhi*, Sri Narayana Institute of Social and Cultural Development, Trivandrum, 1975, p.17

country. It tried to synchronise traditional values with modernity, tried to create an India with new vision. This ideology uprooted the structure of colonial society. It was at this juncture when nationalism and renaissance started complementing each other.⁶⁶

Among the intellectuals there were many educated people who tried to raise the issues of caste discrimination and equality in the placement of Government jobs. G.P. Pillai was a pioneer in evoking political consciousness by becoming the power behind the historic Malayali Memorial of 1891. Dr.Palpu was another figure who could not get a profession in the Government service due to his caste positions. He wrote a book, *Treatment of Thiyyas in Travancore*, in which he expressed the irrational treatment suffered by the backward classes in all fields. He was deeply devoted to Sri Narayana Guru and was chiefly instrumental behind the formation of SNDP to revive the rights of the backward classes. The ideologies that were reflected by Kumaranasan through his poems, and the inter-dining and inter-marriages among members of various castes that were promoted by Sahodaran Ayyappan were indeed measures that could not be forgotten in connection with the transformation of the society of Kerala.

The early twentieth century was when political nationalism began to show its head in India. Masses came to be more and more attracted to the nationalist cause of the country against colonialism. Though there was a lull in

66. K.K.N. Kurup, "Indian Navothanthinu Gurudevante Sambhavana," *Gurudevan*, August, 2002.

the emergence of national movement here, the inspirations given by the social reformers, the ideologies of political emancipations conveyed by the press and literature, attracted the masses of Kerala towards the nationalist movement. Political activism in Kerala continued only after 1915 with the activities of the Home Rule Movement. It was under the presidentship of Annie Besant in 1916 that a conference with a political outlook took place, which was the Malabar conference. Public showed unexpected enthusiasm in the conference convened by Kolliyot Vasudeva Raja. Thousands attended the conference from various parts of the district.⁶⁷

The Malabar conference conducted five meetings, the last being the one in 1920. Along with the labourers there were landlords and Rajas. Cheriyeellan Raja of Kozhikode, Nilambur Eleyaraja, Mannarkadu Moopil Nair, Mankade Udayavarma, and K.C. Virarangan Raja were among the delegates of the conference. This was infact an intermixture of people of different strata of society.⁶⁸ There was wide spread resentment against the Montague-Chelmsford reform of 1919. The Khilafat and the Non Cooperation Movement under the Gandhian leadership inaugurated a new awakening in the political consciousness of Kerala. The Manjeri congress of 1920 favoured non-cooperation to the Governmental in the Gandhian pattern. The resolution passed in the Manjeri conference proved that Kerala was not further behind any

67. A.K. Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, Kerala Samsthana Congress Committee, Thrissur, 1935, pp.378-379.

68. *Ibid.*, p.402.

other region in India as far as political consciousness was concerned. Decision was taken to follow the policies of Government rather than following the personal vested interests of influential landlords to mobilize the people. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was formed in 1921. Its first meeting was convened at Ottapalam, the same year, which was presided by T. Prakasam. When KPCC was first formed K.Madhavan Nair, was nominated the secretary. V. Gopala Menon was the joint secretary and K.V Kunjunni Menon was the office secretary.⁶⁹

The Mappila rebellion, which took place in 1921, gave the national movement of Kerala a communal touch. The British as far as they could, tried to portray the rebellion as a communal conflict that existed between the Hindus and Muslims of Malabar. But in fact the poverty and *Janmi Kudiyan* system, which eventually left the poor farmers penniless, were responsible for the rebellion to have broken out among the Mappilas who were agricultural labourers. Analysing on the Malabar rebellion, K. Madhavan Nair has opined that among the Mappilas who revolted in Malabar, there were only a few Mappilas who belonged to the upper section of the society.⁷⁰ Conrad Wood has written, "Indeed reports after reports on Mappila outbreak indicates that the great majority of the participants were wage laboureres, poor tenants and the like with a sprinkling of *mullas* of barely distinguishable economic standing,

69. Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, KPCC Publication, 1985, p.32.

70. Article by K. Madhavan Nair, 'Malabarile Mappila Lahala', *Mathrubhumi*, 2 August, 1929.

criminals on the point of having their career cut short by authority, the chronically diseased and men who were rather comfortably settled earlier but who often had experienced economic decline.”⁷¹ The Mappilas of Eranad were mostly poor who were left with nothing even for their bare existence after giving their share to the landlords. Struggling with miseries, he saw before him his landlord who extracted all his earnings, living a heavenly life. This in turn led to hatred for the landlords and his poverty, attracted him to the glory that dying in the name of the religion brought to him. Thus he was willing to commit any crime in the name of religion.⁷²

It is a fact that the Mappila Rebellion had economic causes. The British rulers portrayed it by the name of fanaticism. MacGriger, the Malabar collector stated, “The reason of the rebellion was agrarian for sure and I believe that fanaticism in the name of religion was a strong weapon against the terror unleashed by the land lords.”⁷³ In the words of another British official F.B.Ivans, “It was not mere fanaticism, it was not agrarian trouble and it was not destitution that worked in the minds of Ali Musaliyar and his followers. The evidence conclusively shows that it was the influence of the Khilafat and non –cooperation movement that drove them into this crime.”⁷⁴ The newspaper

71. Conrad Wood, *The Mappila Rebellions and Its Genesis*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987, p.9.

72. K. Madhavan Nair, *op.cit.*

73. Mac Griger quoted in K. Mohammed Koya, “*Mappila Lahala*,” *Deshabhimani*, August, 28, 1955.

74. F.B. Ivans in *Tottenham Report on Malabar Rebellion 1922*, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

The Times reported in an article “The Mappila Lessons” so, “It is indisputable that the out break was mainly due to Mohammed agitation working amongst ignorant fanatics, though the suffering and the economic distress had incidentally something to do with it.”⁷⁵ Most of the scholars of today opine that the reason behind Malabar rebellion was agrarian. According to K.N. Panikkar, “In the background of the economic conditions of the peasantry, the pattern of rebel activities and the classes to which the participants belonged it is reasonable to suggest that the rebellion was a continuation of the agrarian conflicts of the nineteenth century.”⁷⁶

Meanwhile in Travancore in 1918, a Civic Right league was formed under the leadership of E. J. John and T. K. Madhavan. This was to enforce equality to all citizens without showing any bias in the name of religion, sex and creed. This organization was a result of the programme of the progressive sectors of the backward classes, Muslim and Christians who found themselves treated with discrimination and unable to take up jobs in the public service of Travancore. To bring forth equality to all citizens a petition was filed by the Civic Rights League. It was a mass petition signed by 26,000 people representing 26 lakhs backward classes and presented on 1st January 1920 to Diwan M. Kunhan Nair.⁷⁷ The civil right movement unified people of all

75. “The Mappila Lessons,” *The Times*, 10 September, 1921.

76. K.N. Panikkar, “Peasant Revolt in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century,” in A.R. Desai, (ed.), *The Peasant Revolt Struggles in India*, Oxford University Press, 1979, p.623.

77. C.N. Somarajan and C. Sivadasan, *Poura Samathwavadam Thiruvithamkooril*, The State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum, 2001, p.74.

communities without any inequality on the basis of castes and religion. In which way, the movement helped to shape the political consciousness of Travancore, and give it a national and universal outlook, can be understood from the words of the authors of the civic right movement:

In this occasion it is necessary to compare the civic right movement of 1918–1922 and the Malayali Memorial of 1891. Malayali memorial was written just to safeguard the interest of a couple of aristocrats. Though it claimed to have taken interest of all sections of the society, it certainly has proved to have taken the interest of the aristocrats of nair society. On the other hand the civic right movement of Travancore seemed to have represented the interests of 26 lakhs out of 40 lakhs of Travancore. It had the participation of Christian, Muslim, ezhavas, nadar, pulayas, parayas, kammalars etc. Even a section of radical and progressive nairs like Chenganeshherri Paramesharan Pillai was at forefront to lead the movement. The fight for civic rights was not like the Memorial of 1891. Ever since submitting the petition in 1920, the movement took a very progressive and universal outlook and was able to shake the traditional society of Kerala and gave it the outlook of a proletarian mass movement.⁷⁸

The popular movement had a subaltern touch in it when in Malabar was getting ready for a *kudiyan* agitation “It was during this phase that a *kudiyan*

78. *Ibid.*, p.74.

agitation was launched in Malabar which emphasized the *kudiyans* permanent right over the land, to end *melcharth* and *polichezhuthu*.⁷⁹ To stop evacuations of labourers, to ensure a *kudiyan's* right to sell or mortgage the land he possessed were the demands of *kudiyan* agitation. The Congress and *kudiyan* agitation often functioned hand in hand. The *jenmis* often tried to suppress the growth of petty peasants.

The Vaikom Satyagraha of 1924 was a major event that gained the limelight of the period after the rebellion of 1921. It was feather in the cap as the social reformers were concerned, as it was the beginning of a successful war against caste discrimination with the support of the masses. The Vaikom Satyagraha gave a national importance to the problem of *ayittam* of Kerala. T.K. Madhavan, a true disciple of Sri Narayana Guru was able to impress Gandhiji to take up the issue with the wholehearted support of the Indian National Congress.

The temples of Kerala before the activities of the social reformers kept the backward classes at bay, without even letting them use the public premises and roads that led to the temples. Vaikom temple was one of such temples where brahmanical prejudice was its worst. Vaikom was a small village in Travancore, important for a temple that was exclusively used for devotion by the upper crest of the society. The roads leading to the temples were also completely forbidden to the low caste Hindus. Under the initiative of K.P.

79. K. Damodaran and C. Narayana Pillai, *Kerala Swathasnthrya Samaram*, The State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum, 1957, p.25.

Kesava Menon, A.K.Pillai, T.K. Madhavan, K. Kelappan and Kurur Nilakandan Nambudirippad, a full-fledged Satyagraha was decided to be held at Vaikom.⁸⁰ The *Dewaswom* authorities and the government offered a stiff resistance to the activities of *satyagraha*. When the *satyagraha* under the leadership of K.P. Kesava Menon tried to march towards the temple surroundings, the government forces prevented them from it. Its leaders were sentenced to imprisonment to let the spirit of the *satyagrahis* down. But the *satyagrahis* neither lost their confidence nor resorted to any sort of violence. Gandhiji who nursed the Vaikom *Satyagraha* was profoundly happy to see in Vaikom his ideal of *sathyagraha* surprisingly enable to gain progress without resorting to violence. He gave confidence to the *satyagrahis* by boosting their morale through messages in young India. In his article, "The Removal of Untouchability - The Duty of Hindus", he said, "In order to save Hinduism from the wretchedness of untouchability, we should be willing enough to shed our blood like water."⁸¹

Other than having gathered the support of backward classes, Vaikom struggle had a novel feature of getting support showered on it by the savarnas. The Nair Service Society (NSS), under Mannath Padmanabhan staunchly believed in the social justice of the downtrodden classes. Under his active leadership the N.S.S. decided to leave one of its schools in the precincts of the temple completely for the use of volunteers in the temples. A decision was also

80. *Ibid.* p.25.

81. *Mathrubhumi*, 30 August, 1924.

taken by the upper castes to request the Maharani Regent of Travancore to withdraw the prohibitory order while the procession was on its move to the temple. People from all walks of life without any caste or creed discrimination participated in it.⁸² T.K. Madhavan's mother served wheat porridge to Mannath padhmanabhan in silver bowl and to others in special vessels. Madhavan on this occasion said that it was the "khaddar" vessel. Then a dummy of *jati* devil was put to fire. Lots of pulayas out of their happiness to see this crowded around mannath and gave him *avil*, which they themselves made. Mannath was extremely happy to take it.⁸³ Such incidents show how the society of Kerala had come out of the niche of casteism in which they were living for thousands of years.

Vaikom *Satyagraha* was certainly the impact of the ideologies of Sri Narayana Guru. Writers differ in opinion as to whether he supported the *satyagraha* or not. Sri Narayana Guru though did not participate in it gave support to the leaders of the *satyagraha*, who were mostly his devotees. He had on one occasion visited the *satyagraha* camp.⁸⁴ He wore a *khaddar dhoti* and shawl. He decided to weave cloth, wear *khadhi* and ordered to supply thirty *charkas* (spinning wheels) to Aluva *Advaitashramam*. His disciple Swami Sathyavratam, delivered a speech in which is said that Swamiji was deeply supportive of the *satyagraha* and it was due to lack of time that he could not

82. *Mathrubhumi*, 6 November, 1924.

83. *Mathrubhumi*, 8 November, 1924

84. *Mathrubhumi*, 4 October, 1924

visit the camps.⁸⁵ Though he led a *sanyasi's* life, he tried to inspire his fellow citizens. He was ready to weave *khadhi* on *charka* himself. On the victory of *satyagraha* he intended to build a school for promoting education there, which would be better than any other institutions to keep away superstitions and ignorance. He requested every one's contribution in that venture. At a great conference of the *thiyyas*, held under the auspices of SNDP, he staunchly supported the cause of the Vaikom *Satyagraha*, talked about the responsibility of the *thiyyas* towards it and prayed for its victory. He also inspired the ordinary citizens to participate in the *satyagraha* and prayed for its success. An elderly woman of 50 years from Kottatu came to the camp as the *satyagraha* volunteer. She had visited Sri Narayana Guru the previous day and it was with his blessings and advice that she had joined the camp as a volunteer.⁸⁶

The *satyagrahis* had to go through many adversities but their determination was at its peak. *Mathrubumi* reported, "Due to flood and hindrance to postal communication, Vaikom was isolated from other areas. When a flood was at its worst, volunteers stood in water up to their neck and participated in *satyagraha*. In the eastern entrance of the temple while *satyagrahis* were in water, people who passed by them, poked them with sticks due to compulsion from the opposers of *satyagraha*. Floods brought severe loss and scarcity of food. On that time, SNDP *yogam* bore the expenses of food for the volunteers and it was without distinction on the basis of caste."⁸⁷

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Mathrubhumi*, 1 July, 1924.

87. *Mathrubhumi*, 24 June, 1924.

Gandhiji had arrived at Vaikom and visited, Aleppey, Panmana, Chevara etc. He met the orthodox members, The Maharani Regent, the Dewan, and Mr. Pitt, the Commissioner of Police and made an agreement on the *Satyagraha*. In the agreement it was decided to open the roads used by *savarnas* to the lower castes but the sanctum of the temple would remain closed to them. Gandhiji called the settlement a bedrock of freedom.⁸⁸ Gandhiji visited Sri Narayana Guru in his *ashrama* and after his conversation with Guru, he who was a strong believer of *Chaturvarnya* system eventually became the spoke person of the downtrodden.

The *satyagraha* continued for a year. Talking on the gain of *satyagraha* K.P. Kesava Menon told the representatives of *Swarat* about the change it had brought to the ideology of caste discrimination. The reporter asked him, "A lot of men were imprisoned, a lot of money spent, lot of people were spending their energy for more than five months. What results have the Vaikom struggle brought?" To this question Kesava Menon answered:

There are lots of preconceived notions about Vaikom. The aim of the *satyagraha* was not only to gain permission for the *avarnas* to use the road that lead to the temple for their use but it was a full fledged war against *ayitham*. All over the country are creative resentments against the worst custom of *ayitham*. This itself glorifies the victory of *satyagraha*. Madras legislative Council in fact passed a resolution on the free movement of low castes in its

88. K.P.K. Menon, *op.cit.*, p.134.

last meeting, which is a major result of *satyagraha*. It was due to their movement that untouchability has got national importance. While this programme gave an opportunity for the *avarnas* to become conscious of their freedom, it gave the *savarnas* an occasion to scrutinize the way they treated the *avarnas* and the gross inequality that they practiced in the name of *ayittam*. Over and above all this *satyagraha* helped in giving a better picture as of plans and activities of the Congress and created political consciousness in the minds of *avarnas*. Thus by unifying people of various sections, and providing a strong support to the activities of the Indian National Congress in Kerala, Vaikom *Satyagraha* became the forerunner of the national movement in Kerala.⁸⁹

In 1928 at Payyanur, the fourth Kerala State Congress was convened under the President ship of Jawaharlal Nehru. He made aware the audience of the meeting the need to attain equality along with the emancipation from the colonial rule. This Congress session provided a fresh boost to the activities of congress in Malabar. In 1930, Gandhiji launched the Civil Disobedience. He violated the laws of the foreign rule by collecting salt against the salt rule on 6th April 1930. This achieved the national wide attention. In Kerala the movement of protest was under the leadership of K.Kelappan. A public meeting was held in Thalassery where Hindus and Muslims attended in order to create interest in

89. K.P.Kesava Menon's interview with the representatives of *Swarat*, *Mathrubhumi*, 18 September, 1924.

Gandhiji's programme and to gather volunteers. K Kelappan, Madhavanar, Harishwaran Thirumumbu, and Kunji Krishnan Nambiar tried to evoke public interests.⁹⁰ By then masses became peculiarly interested in opposing foreign rule and they were confident and appreciative to the efforts of the Congress party. At Payannur under the president ship of C.H. Govindan Nambiar a conference was convened in which a large number pulayas set their clothes unto fire. A Muslim accepted *khadar* and boycotted all the foreign goods he wore.⁹¹

At Kozhikode, under K.Kelappan's encouragement, lot of people gave up their foreign coats and shawls. Keralites showed a very positive response to the Civil Disobedience Movement. Wherever Congress committee workers went, the volunteers very generously and enthusiastically helped them.⁹² Congress leaders on the other hand inspired and encouraged the masses. At Putukkote, K.Kelappan and Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad inspired the masses by stating they were on the path of *dharmayudha* (righteous war). He said, "Gandhiji like Srikrishna to Duryodhana had made known everyone his plan of actions. Let the British also come forward and stop foul methods and fight with confidence against us."⁹³ People attended this conference in bulk. A positive sign was the attendance of many women in the meeting. Keralites initiatively participated in the Salt *Satyagraha* at Payyanur under the leadership

90. *Mathrubhumi*, 29 March, 1930.

91. *Mathrubhumi*, 8 April, 1930.

92. *Mathrubhumi*, 2 April, 1930.

93. *Mathrubhumi*, 29 March, 1930.

of K.Kelappan. Under Kelappan's leadership, 16 volunteers took coconut shells and small sacks. The crowd followed them and they reached the riverside. Even though salt officers of the British Government had sowed soil up side down and rain had poured in but still there was enough and more salt to be taken. Thousands took salt, under the leadership of Kurur Nilakantan Nampudirippad, Kunji Sankara Menon, Madhavanar and they all became part of the civil disobedience movement. Then they sang the national songs and went back. In the meeting convened in the evening about five thousand people gathered.⁹⁴ When Gandhiji was arrested and a massive gathering of five thousand people assembled in Kannur and then there was pin drop silence. Kannur had never seen such a huge public meeting. After the speeches by the leaders like, A.C. Kannan Nair and Sankara Nambiar, lots of people assembled there pledged not to use foreign clothes again.⁹⁵

Along with the boycott of foreign clothes the leaders encouraged the masses to prohibit the liquor sale also. Picketting was held in many places including Chalat, Koothu Parambu, Naduvannur, Cherukunnu, Kambin, Kannur and Quilandy.⁹⁶ It was noted that the number of drunkards were reduced. In a speech made in association with a peaceful *satyagraha* in Kozhikode, freedom fighter Gopala Menon encouraged the people to take efforts to educate the ignorant masses, about the harm in consumption of liquor and the devastation that foreign goods created to our industries.⁹⁷

94. *Mathrubhumi*, 24 April, 1930.

95. *Mathrubhumi*, 4 April, 1931.

96. *Mathrubhumi*, 5 April, 1931.

97. *Mathrubhumi*, 9 May, 1930.

K. Madhavan Nair wrote in *Mathrubhumi*, the wide spread applause gained by the civil disobedience movement in Malabar, forty days after the beginning of the *satyagraha*. "Even the bitterest of its enemies will agree that it shook the day to day lives of the masses. Kelappan's bravery, Krishna Swamy Ayyar's sacrifice and Mohammed Abdurahiman's spirit of nationalism, made even the cowards brave fighters of freedom."⁹⁸ The repercussions of *satyagraha* was felt from Kanyakumari to Kasaragode. Though some *jenmis* of south Malabar and some Mappilas in North Malabar tried to oppose it in the beginning, most of the *jenmis* were supportive of the *satyagraha*. Radical youth among *jenmis* gave full-fledged support to *satyagraha*.⁹⁹ Not only in Kozhikode but also in the whole of Malabar the *satyagraha* got a strong support. Many leaders were arrested during the civil disobedience movement. Despite the massive co-operation to the movement, Gandhi had to withdraw it as per the Gandhi-Irwin pact.¹⁰⁰

Along with the civil disobedience movement the Guruvayur *Satyagraha* grabbed the limelight among the other events of the time. Like Vaikom *Satyagraha*, Guruvayur *Satyagraha* was a struggle against social injustice but it could not be viewed as a different one from the national movement of Kerala. Its role in giving a fresh impetus to the national movement of Kerala cannot be looked down upon. It was a struggle by the downward classes with the full

98. *Mathrubhumi*, 23 May, 1930.

99. *Ibid.*

100. Perunna K.N. Nair, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

support of Indian National Congress and a good number of progressive savarnas. This *satyagraha* could evoke national interest in the social issues of the small state of Kerala. The INC could not ignore the fight for social equality. The intention of the national movement in Kerala was not just to get freedom from the yoke of imperialism. It was a march towards modernity in all senses. The revolution passed in favour of temple entry at Vatakara, was put before the KPCC *Yogam* when it met at Calicut. In consequence K. Kelappan, Moyyarath Sankaran Nair and A.K. Gopalan travelled all over Malabar to propogate this event of action. 25th September of 1930 was observed as the temple entry day.¹⁰¹ From all over India there were requests to the Zamorin, the temple trustee to open the temple to *harijans* but it found no results. This included the requests of Gandhiji and Rabindranath Tagore also. In a speech organised by the Bombay Malayalee Samajam, K.Kelappan specifically stressed the need of a struggle in Guruvayur and the need for conducting temple entry agitations. He said, “We see atrocities committed in the name of religions and caste mainly in the darkness of superstitions surrounding temples. One should not boycott temples because everyone is responsible for its proper functioning and the wealth associated with temples should be used for the common good all people. This could never be achieved without agitation.”¹⁰²

The leaders of the national movement did not want to treat with difference, the civil disobedience and the temple entry agitation. They wanted

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Mathrubhumi*, 6 July, 1931.

to make one complementary to the other. In a speech at National Conference at Pudukkottai, K.Kelappan said:

The civil disobedience is a weapon that could be used not only against the paramount political power but also against any atrocity or injustice. This civil disobedience is *Satyagraha* itself, which firmly believe in truth and *ahimsa*. If the liquor shop picketing wasn't successful anywhere it means that its volunteers weren't following the path of non-violence. Every individual including the poor pulaya has right over the temples and so it becomes the responsibility of the Congress to secure for the pulayas the right for worship in temples. The support extended to the pulayas might create resentment from the upper classes. At this juncture of fighting against the mighty British power a division amongst us is least favourable. But these prejudices of the upper class cannot be nurtured and cherished. The Congress might lose the support of a couple of its upper caste members, but by favouring backward classes congress can win over the support of thousands of people, who have been deprived of their basic rights. So the Congress has decided to take up the cause of the downtrodden people's right for temple entry.¹⁰³

103. *Mathrubhumi*, 6 June, 1931.

Prior to the agitation of Guruvayur, in the meeting of Congress there, K.Kelappan said:

The Lord who gave the great *Gitopadesa*, who refused the invitation of king Duryodana and instead visited Kuchela in his hut, one who ate *avil* from the dirty piece of cloth in which Kuchela brought, who was born among cowherds; the brahmins have kept in place away from the poor and downtrodden. They do not let the poor visit the God, who is infact a 'Deenabandu' (the relative of the poor). They have made the Lord one who is greedy of milk porridge, a *jenmi* who is greedy and not kind to the poor. Temples should be one for worshipping God, not for one's greed of food served there. It should not be for those who live a lavish life out of the money that is collected in a temple. It is left for every Hindu to save God from such an imprisonment and make his name 'Deenabandu' a truth'.¹⁰⁴

When the day for starting agitation approached, authorities took steps to create hindrances. Boundaries of thorns and big coconut trunks were erected in all the four passages. In between a path was left just for a car to pass through. In the east fort the thiyyas could infact proceed till a banyan tree but boundaries were made twenty furlongs further in the east.¹⁰⁵

104. Speech of K.Kelappan at the Guruvayur Congress Meeting 1931, *Mathrubhumi*, 21 June, 1931.

105. *Mathrubhumi*, 29 October, 1931.

When Jawaharlal Nehru visited Kozhikode in 1931, he said, “*Ayitham* was the worst issue that Kerala had to fight against. The prime aim of the Congress should be to revive the backward classes. Congress should fight not only for political emancipation but for economic and social equality also. A freedom devoid of social equality and economic freedom is something that the Congress doesn’t wish for. Downward classes should wage wars and resentment against oppression. They should take part in the national movement. It would be they who lose by keeping away from the national movement.”¹⁰⁶

The Temple Entry *Satyagraha* Committee President, Mannath Padmanabhan, also had a similar outlook as that of Nehru. According to him *satyagraha* was only a way to show the authorities that their earnest urge to enter and worship the temples, which could not be prevented by any Government or any power. On this occasion he said, let *avarnas* come to the temple on the Guruvayur *ekadesi* day and break the superstitious beliefs of *savarnas*. As a result let the Zamorin’s *kovilakam* (royal palace) and Hinduism get purified.¹⁰⁷ On *ekadesi* day lots of people assembled around the temples. They greatly exceeded the number of people inside. The aims of *satyagraha* and its ideologies along with the dedication of *satyagrahis* attracted people towards them. People wept seeing K.Kelappan and other leaders standing bare footed under the scorching light of the sun.¹⁰⁸

106. *Mathrubhumi*, 31 May, 1931.

107. *Mathrubhumi*, 21 November, 1931.

108. *Ibid*.

Satyagraha invited national wide attention and attracted more and more people. It had Gandhiji's blessing and the support of Vallabai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. *Mathrubhumi* reported that after a month of *Satyagraha* that it had brought greater results than any other movements against untouchability that preceded it. Till now unapproachable castes could only come to a distance of 2 furlong away from the passage in the east but now they could come till $\frac{1}{2}$ furlong from the tower, where boundaries of thorn were made by the temple authorities. This has been due to the victory of non-violence and the determination of the participators.¹⁰⁹ Outside the temple the *savarnas* were forced to walks close to the parayas and pulayas. Hence there should not be *ayittam* inside the temple too. If the *satyagraha* could bring tremendous change in the mentality of common people, it was certainly one of its great achievements.¹¹⁰

Distress and tension from the upper class was exhibited in their meeting, where K. Kelappan was present. M.Krishna Sastri, Poomelli Manaychal Namboodiripad, Purannur Divakaran Namboodiripad, Puthizathu Narayanan Menon and P.G. Nair were the *savarna* leaders present in the meeting. They exhibited their anxiety over the developments. Pandathil Narayanan Namboodiripad said that a change of the existing laws created fear in them. Palancheri Narayanan Nambudiri said that this custom of *ayittam* was dear to God, other wise Kerala would have perished long before.¹¹¹ In the *Savarna*

109. *Mathrubhumi*, 22 November, 1931.

110. *Mathrubhumi*, 4 December, 1931.

111. *Mathrubhumi*, 25 September, 1931.

Congress, K.Kelappan said, “*Satyagraha* is a way to truth and it is a divine weapon. The same ideology is going to be enacted in front of temples that deny entry to *avarnas*. Congress has never thought of any unfair method of bringing the *pulayas* and *parayas* for worship inside the temple without gaining the right for it. Congressmen are not dangerous.”¹¹² To propagate the ideology of *satyagraha*, Dr. Rugmini Amma, M.Karthiyani Amma, Mannath Padmanaban, C.Kuttan Nair, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudirippad, K.P Kayyalakal, K.N. Kunju Krishnan and K.Kelappan were nominated.¹¹³

On 1st November, the *satyagraha* began and K.Kelappan said that the *satyagraha* has brought an unprecedented awakening in the scenario of Kerala.¹¹⁴ People from far and near assembled to make the agitation a success. Thorned boundaries did not create a problem before the will power of the *satyagrahis*, followed by a thick crowd. A victory to the *satyagraha* occurred when the men for daily wages who supposed to prevent and check the *satyagrahis* from entering temples gave up their job due to the humility in doing so and old priests were willing to conduct *pujas* in the temple even after the *satyagrahis* continued their fight. This information was reported by some people to K.Kelappan.¹¹⁵

Satyagraha went on with more and more people joining it. On 26th December, 1931 volunteer captain A.K.Gopalan was beaten up bitterly by the

112. *Mathrubhumi*, 24 September, 1931.

113. *Ibid*.

114. *Mathrubhumi*, 7 November, 1931.

115. *Mathrubhumi*, 3 November, 1931.

orthodox classes cruelly. He fainted then and there in front of the public. They who were watching this got infuriated and removed the thorned boundaries. This enabled all including the lower classes to go till the tower and worship the God.¹¹⁶ The violation of traditions led to the closing of temples for a month. K. Kelappan started fasting and demanded the opening of temples to all. But the Zamorin was not willing to take any action. K. Kelappan had to give up *satyagraha* because of Gandhiji's order to do so as per the letter written by the Zamorin to Gandhi about the problems that the *satyagraha* created to svaranas. In a referendum held a Ponani taluk after the *satyagraha*, 77% of the Hindus favoured entry of the down trodden classes. Thus Guruvayur *Satyagraha* in its approach was able to evoke a national interest into the social and political problems of Kerala.¹¹⁷

The temple entry agitation did not bring any change to the economic condition or the social set up of Kerala. It did not enforce economic equality nor created a situation conducive for economic development. But the communists under N. Krishna Pillai certainly used it as a device that led to the growth of national movement in Kerala.¹¹⁸

Though the Guruvayur *Satyagraha* was not successful in gaining in its demands, it kindled a new era of social equality and political maturity to the freedom fighters. In a speech conducted by Malabar Harijan Seva Sangham

116. *Mathrubhumi*, 3 January, 1931.

117. *Mathrubhumi*, 17 November, 1936.

118. *Deshabhimani*, 5 October, 1969.

M.P.Shankunni Nambiar said, "Temple entry cannot be an issue further late than now." Though of different castes temple entry is a right, which no Hindu can forfeit. It is not only to remove untouchability but also to ensure every individuals right to worship the God of his choice. *Mathrubhumi* reported, "About the success of Vaikom and Guruvayur *Satyagraha*, it is to be remembered that, there has not been any activity that has gained national and world wide attention like these, which show their importance."¹¹⁹

G. Ramachandran, the Secretary of All India Harijan Seva Sangam, requested the Governments of Travancore and Cochin and the temple trustees of Malabar to let open all Hindus to worship. He said, "If the Government offers permission, keeping certain prejudices and reservation to the *harijans* it will undermine the glory of all temple entry movements and create more dissatisfaction and unhappiness among the Hindus."¹²⁰ Even the upper classes took certain steps towards temple entry of the down ward classes. They presented a petition to the Maharaja of Travancore stating their opinions. They wrote that it was due to injustice in Hinduism that promoted members of low castes to convert to other religions. It was unfair to keep away the *ezhavas* from all the opportunities because they were forefront in education.¹²¹

Pressures from all sides made the Maharaja come up with his historic proclamation of letting all Hindus, irrespective of all castes or creed coming for

119. *Mathrubhumi*, 3 April, 1931.

120. *Mathrubhumi*, 31 March, 1931.

121. *Mathrubhumi*, 7 November, 1931.

worship in the temples under his control. The glory of this proclamation spread far and wide. The proclamation read so:

Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has through out the centuries adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicited that more of our Hindu subjects should by reason of birth or caste or community be denied the solace and consolidation of Hindu religion, we have decided and hereby declare orders and command that subject to such rule and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion in entering or worshipping the temple controlled by our Government.¹²²

There was appreciation from every corner of the country that promoted the King of Travancore to take such a decision. *Mathrubhumi* reported the comments of national leaders on its success. C. Ragajopalachari remarked that ever after the great Asoka no King had ever taken such a decision that brought so much of peace and happiness to its subects. Gandhiji said that with this proclamation, avarnas got an equal right and status with the *savarnas*. The

122. *The Temple Entry Proclamation of 1931*, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

example of Travancore King was to be followed by other Kings too. Vallabai Patel described it as the greatest result that Gandhiji's anti untouchability programme had ever achieved. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer said it was a glorifying incident of a renaissance era, which would never be forgotten. He added that an orthodox King had taken such a great decision to revive the religion that he loved.¹²³ In Kochi, The Thiyya Yuva Jana Sangam convened a meeting in which Sahodaran Ayyapan spoke. He said, "If Manu has written *Smriti*, that written by him has been reinterpreted by the Travancore King. In fact Gandhiji had also kept aloof the problem of untouchability. Temple entry agitation was at first started by Sri Narayana Guru and was taken up by T. K. Madhavan his disciple. In the same pattern the King of Kochi should also give freedom to his subjects. He insisted ezhavas to permit the pulayas worship and enter their temples."¹²⁴

Meanwhile the activities of the Indian National Congress and its withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement did not satisfy many of the members of the Congress as well as the masses. The younger generation of the Congress started coming with their lack of belief in the Gandhian strategies. This led to the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934.¹²⁵ In the words of Nehru "In India as elsewhere two forces developed: The growth of

123. *Mathrubhumi*, 11 December, 1936.

124. *Mathrubhumi*, 31 December, 1931.

125. K. Gopalan Kutty, "The Integration of Anti-Land Lord Movement with the Movement Against Imperialism - The Case of Malabar, 1935-1937." *Studies in History*, Vol. III, No. 1 and 2 December, 1981, p.202

nationalism and the urge for social justice. Socialism and Marxism became the symbols of this urge for social justice and apart from their scientific content had a tremendous emotional appeal for the masses.”¹²⁶

The repercussion of socialism had its impact on the political scenario of Kerala too. Many of the active Congress workers, took up to the ideologies of socialism and Marxism which strengthened the growth of trade unions, and organization of agricultural workers, teachers, industrial labourers and may be specifically noted that the Congress Socialists widened the scope of national movement incorporating different classes and sections through their caste organisation and converted them into anti-colonial, anti-feudal and anti caste organizations.¹²⁷ These three fold movements when combined together had articulated the national movement even in the rural areas. Women also participated in these movements.

Karshaka Sangam based on the socialist principles started fighting for the cause of the very poor agricultural labourers. The organisation demanded tenancy legislations supporting the labourers which was hitherto unattended by any organization, even the congress. In the early phase of 1936 to 1942, the Kisan sabha had been a united organisation consisting of different section of peasants like the rich, middle and dwarf among the agricultural labourers. As a

126. Jawaharlal Nehru, “India-Today and Tomorrow,” *Speeches in Azad Memorial Lectures*, Published by Orient Longman, for Indian Council for Cultural Relation, London, 1960, p.13.

127. K.K.N Kurup, “Nationalism and Social Change, The Role of Malayalam Literature,” *op.cit.*, p.63.

united force they were mobilized against the landlordism and the British empire in India. It was during this period that national movement was brought to the grass root level of Kerala.¹²⁸

The active involvement of the various classes without any discrimination in the national movement strengthened the ideologies of Communism and Marxism in Kerala. The Communist began to play a very important role in mobilizing labour and in projecting revolutionary ideas even before they were able to organize themselves into an effective party.¹²⁹ The ideologies of Communism overruled the Gandhian ideology of the Congress. The Communist party was first formed in Kerala at the Congress Socialist Party meeting held at a village called Pinarai in Malabar in December 1939. In this meeting the entire Congress Socialist Party was transformed into a Communist Party.¹³⁰

E.M.S Nambudirippad has highlighted three major contributions of the communist party in his writings. They are: (i) The Communist party helped to bring a universal outlook to the Congress party. (ii) It led to the flourishing of anti colonial ideologies in the princely state of Kerala under various Rajas. (iii) The most important contribution it could bring to the political scenario of

128. K.K.N. Kurup, *The Agrarian Struggles of Kerala*, K.P.H. Publishers, Trivandrum, 1989, p.114.

129. C.N.Chittaranjan, "Communism, Gandhiji and Revolution," *Mainstream*, Vol. XLIII No.41, October, 2005, p. 3502.

130. *Ibid*.

Kerala is the whole-hearted cooperation of labourers, agricultural workers, teachers and students through various organizations.¹³¹

A visible demarcation of the ideologies of the congress could be noticed with the evolution of socialism and communism. Congress had hitherto followed a policy of non-intervention in the politics of the princely state of Travancore and Cochin. Because of this policy, that the Indian National Congress had adopted, it took years for nationalist ideologies against imperialism to grow and evolve in these states.

In Travancore a communal struggle in the form of abstention movement was launched seeking the rights of various communities for representation in the Travancore legislative assembly and to promulgate an act of representation, when British India was going ahead with the national movement. These leaders lacked national outlook, which can be attributed to their failure to go along with the mainstream of nationalist movement in British India¹³². The Travancore Congress was formed as late as 1938. Forming a political party during the abstention movement was ridiculed by their critics.

The abstention movement was the first communal struggle waged against the Government of Travancore.¹³³ Instead of creating a peaceful

131. E.M.S. Nambudirippad, in P. Govinda Pillai (ed.), *Sampoorna Krithikal*, Vol. 9, Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 2000.

132. Sumathi Haridas, *From Petition to Protest - A Study of the Political Movement in Travancore 1938-47*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Calicut, 2004, p.62.

133. *Ibid* p.61.

situation expected by the government, the constitutional reform of 1932 complicated the social political condition in Travancore.¹³⁴ It was primarily communal which paved the growth of communal politics in the state. In spite of its avowedly communal character, radical nationalists welcomed the movement as the first mass political movement in Travancore. It was this movement, together with the repression, which the government, launched against it, that led to the subsequent inauguration of Travancore State Congress with its central slogan of responsible Government.¹³⁵ However the state congress was weak and passive on many situations, which helped the Communist party to get a solid footing in the princely state of Travancore. Perhaps the Communist movement in Travancore might not have taken its roots, if the State Congress had taken a different stand in its policies. The State Congress failed to create an impression of a 'working party' and was a 'statement party' with no agitation worth the name, with a few exceptions offcourse which were launched by the party and background works done in this direction.¹³⁶ Withdrawal of agitation at the last stage adversely affected the fame of the party among the masses. This of course acted as a blessing in disguise to the leftist party and its work led to tarnish the State Congress as an ineffective political organisation which did not stand to its words and project the left organisation like Communist Party as a wing or party which could

134. D. Daniel, *The Struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore: 1936-1947*, Raj Publishers, Madras, 1986, p.31.

135. E.M.S. Nambudirippad, *Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, *op.cit.*, p.150.

136. Sumathi Haridas, *op.cit.*, p.184.

withstand all formidable tides and succeed in its ideals in their fight against the *Diwan*.¹³⁷

The Communist party got a stronghold in Travancore by organising and fighting for the rights of agricultural labourers and forming various coir workers unions, toddy tapping workers union and *beedi* workers union. It became a strong force to be reckoned with in the fight against the cruelty of the *zamindars* and the severe discriminations shown to the *verumpattakars*. The Communist Party attained the supports of the masses of all levels. Their strength lay in integrating the anti-colonial and anti feudal struggles in a manner not attempted by or acceptable to the Congress.¹³⁸

C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Diwan of Travancore, unrealising the strength that Communist Party had gained among its population, unleashed a reign of terror, aggression and dictatorial administrative measures. This was in 1945, when the camps of labourers supported by Communists in *Punnapra* and *Vayalar* were attacked by the police. The labourers fought bravely for the ideologies, they believed in the name of Communism and Socialism forsaking their lives. This was perhaps the only struggle in India in which all sections of working classes, industrial, agricultural, agro-industrial and others had joined together under the common banner. It was totally devoid of any communal virus unlike the other movements in Kerala. It was the culmination of a

137. *Ibid.*, pp.184-185.

138. K.N. Panikkar in foreward to P.V. Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed: Punnapra Vayalar 1946*, Konark Publication, Delhi, 1994.

struggle by a people in delinious heights of political distemper, long subjected to hideous oppression and severe social disabilities.¹³⁹ The movement was totally suppressed by the police. The revolt, though failed in realising the demands of workers, proved to be an important link in evolving radical consciousness¹⁴⁰. In fact the Punnapra Vayalar struggle was the culmination of the labour movement for socio-economic and political emancipation.¹⁴¹

The economic devastation during the second world war and the price hike of commodities led to the ushering in of Communist hegemony in many other parts of Kerala. As relevant from the mass agitations against the alien Government with strong communist support, violent mob activities occurred in Thalassery, Mattanur and Morazha. Peasant consciousness became a very important part of national struggle as witnessed by the peasant uprisings at Karivallur and Kavumbai. The Communist party became a crucial force behind the peasant uprising as a part of the national movement for freedom. The national movement also provided another crucial pre requisite for organising the peasantry into their own organisation and leading their struggle. Political cadre and workers activated by the national movement were to form the cadre of peasant movement as well.¹⁴²

139. P.V. Kaimal, *Ibid.*, p.192.

140. K.N. Panikkar in foreward, *op.cit.*, p.IV.

141. P.V. Kaimal, *op.cit.*, p.110.

142. Mridula Mukherjee, *Peasants in India's Non-Violent Revolution, Practice and Theory*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p.314.

A significant communist upheaval was witnessed in Kayyur a village in Kasargode Taluk. Class struggle and nationalist movement came to a close affiliation under the communist leadership in Kerala. Even in underground they activated the mass agitation against imperialism. They deviated in toto from the Gandhian ideology of non- violence. Their ideology was based on the theory of armed uprising and revolutionary wars by the proletariat. Here the activities of *Abhinava Bharatha Yuva Sangham* and *Karshaka Sangham* succeeded in uniting the working class and promoting strong nationalist sentiments among them.¹⁴³ Therefore military role of *sangam* under the influence of Communist ideology (Marxist-Leninist) finally contributed to the Kayyur riot.¹⁴⁴ In many respects this riot was a significant episode in the history of the peasant struggle and the nationalist movement of Kerala.

In their demonstration organised by the Communist cells Kayyur peasant agitated,

Let British rule perish
 Let Landlordism perish
 Let Peasants succeed
 Let Soviet rule triumph
 Do not pay rent
 Do not join the army
 Do not contribute to war fund.¹⁴⁵

143. K.K.N. Kurup, *Kayyur Riot*, Sandhya Publishers, 1978, Calicut, p.32.

144. *Ibid.*, p.34

145. *Ibid.*

Kayyur riot was a victory as far as the Communists were concerned. The events show the increased participation of common masses in the national movement. In the period, 1942-47, freedom struggle in Kerala gained further momentum. This was the last phase of freedom struggle. The trade union period had brought the working class to the forefront of freedom struggle. The Communist leaders of Travancore exhorted the labourers to consider the independence of the country as important as their economic demands.¹⁴⁶

The Communist movement helped in taking the national movement of Kerala to the grass root level, a significant development beyond the expectation of Indian National Congress. The glory of Communism lies on their popular support, which gave the proletariat the achievement of freedom from alien power as important as the social and economic freedom, which they stressed. The Communists had a dual intention for their activities by synthesising national movement with economic emancipation.¹⁴⁷ E.M.S Nambudirippad sums up the activities of the Communist party in such a way, "Within a short span of time, the Communists, worked among people of various groups, and upheld the ideas of political organisation and need for organising among themselves. This led to the establishment of the state of Kerala with a new outlook."¹⁴⁸

146. K.K.N.Kurup, *Agrarian Struggle of Kerala, op.cit.*, p.5..

147. *Ibid.* p. 97.

148. E.M.S. Nambudirippad in P. Govinda Pillai (ed.), *Sampoorna Krithikal, op.cit.*, p.364.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL REFORM AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT OF KERALA – A CONCLUSION

The social movement of the intellectuals had a lot of repercussions in the society of Kerala. They were successful in creating a new social order, after wiping away to a great extent, many social discriminations in the society. The role of intellectuals in this context, become an inseparable part of history of social and political movement of Kerala. According to Gramsci, “The replacement of one social order by another involved not merely a redistribution of power, but above all the creation of new civilization with a new world view. It is the magnitude of this endeavour that gives the intellectual his true significance in society and in history.”¹

Nationalism in Kerala can be viewed as the consequence of an awakening created by the intellectuals through their revivalist and reconstructing policies. The social reform movement had an important role in creating national consciousness. By strictly speaking against caste system and inequality, which were obstacles to national unity, they tried to create the democratic yearning among the masses. They were able to create a situation where the under-privileged strove hard for establishing their rights. The reform movement had the conception that political freedom could be attained only after attaining social emancipation. By encouraging the ideology of “rights of

1. Andre Beteille, *Ideologies and Intellectuals*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1980, p.32.

man” the reform movement could achieve the democratisation of the national movement of India. With their activities the intensity of the caste feeling was definitely on its decline. Grass root social mobility also became an inseparable part of the national movement with the labourers, farmers and peasants participating in it. The reformers mingled and maintained close relationship with the ordinary masses. This facilitated the direct impact of their teachings on the masses.

The growth of communist movement and labour movement in Kerala, that fought to achieve equality and solve the problems of labourers were directly related to the social reform movement. The basic ideology of equality was the goal of the communist thought also. It was the social awakening created during the renaissance period that led to growth of Communist movement in Kerala. Only in Bengal and Kerala, where the social reform movement had taken place, the Communist Party grew in its power. In state like Bihar inflicted with more misery, than that of Kerala, Communist movement did not emerge because there was no social reform movement there.² The depressed and backward classes were mainly the supporters of the Communist movement in Kerala. M.S.A. Rao is of the opinion, “All these developments in the late nineteenth century and early years of the present century, created a social atmosphere in which the depressed classes become aware of their basic civic rights and also felt that they could do something to

2. M.N. Vijayan, “Nammude Sahityavum Nammude Samooahavum,” M.N. Vijayan (ed.), *Navodhanathinte Padangal*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2000, p. 26.

redress their condition of relative deprivation.”³ National Movement became truly a subaltern movement in all aspects.

Peasants belonged to different ritualistic and caste groups. To organise them in an ideological level in the struggle against the dominant economic and caste groups was a difficult process. The illiterate peasants could not digest the ideology of Marxism-Leninism or its political philosophy of class struggle and economic determinism. There the indigenous social philosophy, which criticized priesthood and economic exploitation came to the help of peasant activists and the nationalists. The philosophy of Brahmananda Shivayogi, Vaghabadananda Gurudevan and other reformers helped the peasant activists in their ideological struggles against the dominant feudal classes.⁴

The development of the organised peasant movements in Kerala in the 1930s and 1940s also could be attributed to the social reform movement there. The impact of *Karshaka Sanghaval* on the traditional rural society of Kerala was immeasurable. The age-old weapons of the landlords; the social boycott was now affectively turned against them by these *Karshaka Sanghaval*. Those landlords who refused to give up their privileges found no barber to shave them, no washer women to wash their clothes and worst of all no washer

3. M.S.A. Rao, “Backward and class movements” in S.C. Malik (ed.), *Studies in Indian and Asian Civilisation*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1978, p.237.

4. K.K.N.Kurup, ‘Peasant and the Anti-Imperialist Struggles in Kerala,’ *Social Scientist*, Vol. 16, No.184, September 1988, p. 37.

women to provide the traditional (*mattu*) required by their orthodox women during menstruation and pregnancy.⁵

National Movement of Kerala was often seen accepting into its fold, the fight for social justice, which was extremely visible through the Vaikom and Guruvayur *Satyagrahas*. The social reform movement was the inspiration behind these movements. While the Vaikom *Satyagraha*, had its impact in Travancore, Guruvayur *Satyagraha* made its impact in Malabar. For the first time in Malabar, the movement focused the plight of the untouchables and it created social mobility, which was conducive for the success of the later political movements. It should be noted that it was only in these areas that the civil disobedience movement was strong and the workers movement grew in strength in the late thirties.⁶

Fight for social justice thus became an integral part of the national movement. These ideas of reviving the depressed classes were adopted by the national leaders including Gandhiji later. Gandhiji had envisioned the very same idea in his article on untouchability. "It is a sheer waste to attain self government, if in the country a person humiliates the feelings of his fellow beings in the name of touch pollution. This means of exploitation should be put to an end. Without achieving social equality, attaining Swaraj will be to lose it the next moment."⁷

5. Prakash Karat, "Struggle of Malabar Peasantry, 1934-40," *Social Scientist*, Vol.5, No. 56, March 1977, p.5.

6. K. Gopalan Kutty, "The Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931-32)," *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Part, 1-4, June-December, Vol.VIII, 1981, p.43.

7. M.K. Gandhi quoted in G. Kumarapillai, (ed.), *Gandhi Sahityam*, Vol.II, Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, Trivandrum, 1962, pp.419-420.

Vaikom and Guruvayur *Sathyagrahas* culminated in the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 which allowed people of all castes to enter and worship the temples of their choice. It was an expression of the changed outlook and marked the dawn of a new age of freedom and reconstruction for the depressed classes.

Another impact on the national movement was the rise of the feeling of rationalism, secularism and the growth of individualism. This was because promoting education and fighting against ignorance were appreciated and encouraged by the reformers. Large number of pulayas and other backward classes realised the need for getting educated. The percentage of literacy of pulayas and ezhavas were 0.09% and 1.57% respectively in 1891, it rose to 17% and 46.5% respectively in 1941.⁸ Though the role of Christian Missionaries in setting up schools deserve special recognition, social reformers definitely provided the urge and inspiration for them to seek knowledge and to attain a secular outlook. A change in the lives of backward classes especially the ezhavas also occurred. Ezhavas attempted to turn their back on the nineteenth century caste identity and embrace modernity for taking up reformed Hinduism and English medium education.⁹ This helped in the emergence of a middle class in the society of Kerala who played a very important role in the national movement.

8. Government of Travancore, *Census Report of 1941*, Travancore Government Press, p.162.

9. Fillippo Osella and Caroline Osella, *Social Mobility in Kerala, Modernity and Identity in Conflict*, Pluto Press, London, 2000, p.248.

The social reformers were serious advocates against the consumption of liquor. It was a serious programme of Gandhian constructive strategy that gained momentum during the national movement. Prior to the national movement the social reformers had ardently tried to make the people especially the backward classes aware of the destruction that liquor consumption brought. Na Suram Pibeth - *madhyapanam cheyyaruthu* (do not consume liquor) was an ideology that all the reforms tried to emphasise.

The participation of women in the national movement was also the result of the constructive and creative ideologies adopted by the intellectuals. They spoke for the upliftment of the women who did not step out of the four walls of their houses. They agitated against the loose marital bond which *sambandam* gave a woman as well as the devadasi system which was a disgrace to womanhood. A total change in the social set up, created a conducive atmosphere for women to participate in the national movement.

A change in the attitude of *savarnas* also was noted during the national movement. As a part of growth of the individualism, youths in the matrilineal *tarawads* found their identity being suppressed by the dominant *karanavars*. The youth retorted against the *marumakkattayam* and *sambandham* in their caste. This brought many of them into the forefront of the reform movements and also the national movement. They were successful in making acts supporting the *makkattayam* way of property inheritance and also making the *sambandam* invalid. Another change that was found in the attitude of *savarnas* was their new approach to the cause of the backward class. K.P. Kesava

Menon, K. Kelappan, Mannath Padmanabhan and a lot more of the upper classes spearheaded and sympathised sincerely the fight for social justice. This was certainly the impact of the teachings of social reformers of various communities.

Formation of organisation for the revival of their own castes and religion became a trend in Kerala after S.N.D.P was organised with the blessings of Sri Narayana Guru to revive the ezhavas. Mannath Padmanabhan anchored the Nair Service Society (N.S.S.), an organisation meant to save the nair caste from its weaknesses. V.T. Bhattathiripad founded the Nambudiri Yuvajana Kshema Sabha, Ayyankali, the Sadhu Yuvajana Paripalana Sangam and Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi, the Islamic Dharma Paripalana Sangam after gaining ample inspiration from Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangam. The activities of these caste organisations, helped in many ways for the radical reformation of their respective castes. Many radical youths of these organisations, participated in the national movement also, thus making it more democratic and universal in character. Sri Narayana Guru's message, "become stronger by organization" had a lot of relevance here. Evaluating the role of such organisations, E.M.S. Nambudirippad wrote, "In the caste-ridden society in Kerala such organisations could evoke self respect, self confidence and political confidence to thousands of peoples of backward classes. To those section of the society, socially backward even today, such organisations were the first to provide first lessons of political thoughts."¹⁰

10. E.M.S. Nambudirippad in P. Govinda Pillai (ed.), *Sampoorna Krithikal*, Vol. 9, Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 2000, p. 301.

The intellectuals could provide to the national movement, a rich supply of extremely sincere nationalists, who were their disciples. The social reformers other than Vagbhadananda did not participate in the national movement directly. But they provided boundless support to their disciples in taking the leadership of the national movements. The reformers had plenty of disciples who fought for social justice and also in the national movement. T.K. Madhavan and C. Kesavan who were actively involved in the national movement were the ardent supporters of Sri Narayana Guru. Sahodaran Ayyappan who conducted inter-dining among the members of different castes, had obtained the blessings of Sri Narayana Guru regarding this matter. Dr. Palpu, Kumaranasan and a lot more who supported the cause of the downtrodden, owed a lot to Sri Narayana Guru. A.V. Kunjambu, P.K. Choyi who participated in the national movement gained their influence from the contact they had with Vagbhadananda. Thus it is understood that the social reform indirectly influenced the national movement through their disciples.

The social reform movement also helped their lower classes to fight for their rights through constitutional agitation. They became aware of the fact that they were denied rights for education and employment in their own land. This resulted in the submission of the Malayali and the Ezhava Memorials. The native subjects of the Maharaja of Travancore, submitted to him a petition by name the Malayali Memorial in 1891. The memorialists demonstrated against the lion's share of state patronage and emoluments being doled out to

‘foreigners’ especially to brahmins from outside and demanded amelioration of their pitiable condition caused by their systematic exclusion from the higher and in the case of some, from lower grades of state services too.¹¹

The Malayalam Memorial was followed by the Ezhava Memorial in 1896 which stated that the political and educational disabilities in which the thiyyas of Travancore were subjected to, during that time, no qualification could secure to a thiyya any of those appointments, in his own native land unless he became a convert to Christianity or Islam or at least took shelter under mere Christian or Mohammedan name.¹² These two memorials helped the lower classes to secure jobs in the government services and assert their rights against the upper communities. These memorials were certainly the progressive steps taken by the depressed classes against the maltreatments they had been suffering for centuries.

On concluding we can see that the social reform movement in totality reestablished a new social set up by demolishing the old socio-economic feudal order. The intellectual injected in the minds of people the power of reasoning, which led to enlightenment in Kerala. According to Immanuel Kant, “Enlightenment is *Sapere Aude* – have courage to use your own reason. Enlightenment is man’s release from the self-incurred immaturity, which is his

11. P.N. Chopra, “Kumaranasan and the Social Reform Movement in Kerala,” in P.N. Chopra (ed.), *India’s Struggle for freedom, the Role of Associated Movements*, Vol.III, Agam Prakasan, New Delhi, 1985, p.545.

12. *Ibid.*

inability to make use of his understanding without directions from another.”¹³

This is the motto of enlightenment and this is the most important contribution of the intellectuals of Kerala to the society.

13. Neera Nanda, “How Modern Are We? Cultural Contradictions of India’s Modernity,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLI, No.6, February 2006, p.491.

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GLOSSARY

<i>Aiyni oonu</i>	: Special feast given to bridegrooms
<i>Ananda</i>	: Bliss
<i>Anand Matha</i>	: Religion of bliss
<i>Anantharavan</i>	: Junior member of the <i>tarawad</i>
<i>Annaprasnam or choorunu</i>	: First feeding of a baby with rice
<i>Antharjanam</i>	: Nambudiri woman
<i>Anuloma</i>	: Marital ties with men of higher castes
<i>Arattu, tira, tottam</i>	: Festivals
<i>Avarna</i>	: A Hindu outside the <i>savarna</i> fold
<i>Ayitham</i>	: Untouchability
<i>Chaturvarnya</i>	: The division of Hindu society in to four orders (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra)
<i>Cheruman</i>	: A low caste agrestic slave
<i>Chira</i>	: Pond
<i>Chothi</i>	: The fifteenth lunar asterism
<i>Devaswom</i>	: Property of the temple
<i>Diksha</i>	: A period of observing austerities by the relatives of the dead usually for 6 months or a year
<i>Gosha</i>	: <i>Purdha</i> used by <i>antharjanam</i>
<i>Homa</i>	: <i>Pooja</i> meant to invoke God

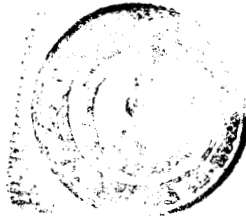
<i>Ilanirattam</i>	: Peculiar dance that the devotees did when they brought tender coconut to God as offering in certain temples
<i>Illam</i>	: Joint family house of the nambudiri
<i>Janmam</i>	: A type of land ownership
<i>Jenmi</i>	: Land lord
<i>Jnanin</i>	: One who has attained the knowledge of the spirit or light
<i>Kalari</i>	: Coaching centers of martial arts of Kerala
<i>Kanakkaran</i>	: One who holds the <i>kanam</i>
<i>Kanam</i>	: A customary tenure or lease
<i>Karanavar</i>	: Senior male member of the <i>tarawad</i>
<i>Karshaka sangham</i>	: Group of farmers
<i>Kathirmandapam</i>	: Raised floor with a ground roof beautifully decorated for marriages
<i>Kavu</i>	: Small shrine
<i>Kovilakam</i>	: Royal Palace
<i>Kudi</i>	: House of the depressed classes
<i>Kudiyan</i>	: Tenant
<i>Kuppappadu</i>	: Heap of rubbish
<i>Kuzhikanam</i>	: Improvement lease
<i>Madam</i>	: House of foreign Brahmin
<i>Makkathayam</i>	: System of inheritance by which a person's own children inherited the property

<i>Mannapedi</i>	: Fear of being out-casted when touched by a lower caste
<i>Manthravadi</i>	: ✱ Sorcerer
<i>Marumakkathayam</i>	: System of inheritance through a female line. A man's legal heir being the children of his sister
<i>Melcharth</i>	: Over lease
<i>Melmundu kalapam</i>	: Breast cloth controversy (Shanar rebellion)
<i>Mlecha</i>	: Barbarian, non-Hindu
<i>Moksha</i>	: Salvation
<i>Nair</i>	: Hindu sub-caste
<i>Namakarana</i>	: Naming ceremony performed preferably on the 28 th day of child birth
<i>Nambudiri</i>	: High caste of Kerala
<i>Neyyamruthu kalam</i>	: Month of observing rituals associated with certain temples
<i>Oottupura</i>	: A place where food was served to Brahmins
<i>Oozhiyam</i>	: Forced labour
<i>Padinjatti</i>	: Interior room of a traditional nambudiri house
<i>Pamputhullal</i>	: A ceremony in which the fearful concussion of the body occurs as if God has entered the body
<i>Pattam</i>	: Rent
<i>Payasam</i>	: Sweet porridge
<i>Pinta adiyantharam</i>	: Feast given on the sixteenth day to neighbours and friends on the death of a senior member of the family

<i>Polichezhuthu</i>	:	Renewal of tenancy rights
<i>Prathiloma</i>	:	Consorting with men of lower castes
<i>Pulasambandham</i>	:	Ties of pollution associated with death
<i>Pulaya</i>	:	An agrestic slave
<i>Pulikudi</i>	:	Literary means drinking of tamarind juice. A function during pregnancy
<i>Punyaham</i>	:	Consecrating water
<i>Sambandham</i>	:	Nambudiri-Nair marital relationship
<i>Sanchayanam</i>	:	A ceremony to collect the skeleton remains of the cremated
<i>Sapatnis</i>	:	Fellow wives
<i>Savarna</i>	:	High caste Hindu
<i>Smartha vicharam</i>	:	Trial to prove whether an <i>antharjanam</i> has committed adultery
<i>Srardham</i>	:	Death anniversary
<i>Talikettukallyanam</i>	:	Function relating to tying the <i>tali</i> on nair girl before puberty
<i>Tapas</i>	:	Penance
<i>Tarawad</i>	:	Joint family house of the nairs
<i>Thirthadanam</i>	:	Pilgrimage
<i>Thiyya</i>	:	A backward caste of Kerala
<i>Tirandukuli</i>	:	Ceremonial bath after the first menstruation
<i>Upanayanam</i>	:	An occasion of wearing the thread as a caste symbol by brahmin

- Vannathi* : Washer woman
- Vannathi mattu* : A ceremony by which the women of upper class gain purification after the delivery by using a cloth washed and brought by woman of *vannathi* caste
- Velichappadu* : Oracle
- Verumpattakkar* : Tenant at will
- Vidyarambham* : Ceremony associated with the beginning of education for a child in the third or fifth year
- Viruthi* : Land granted rent free to brahmins

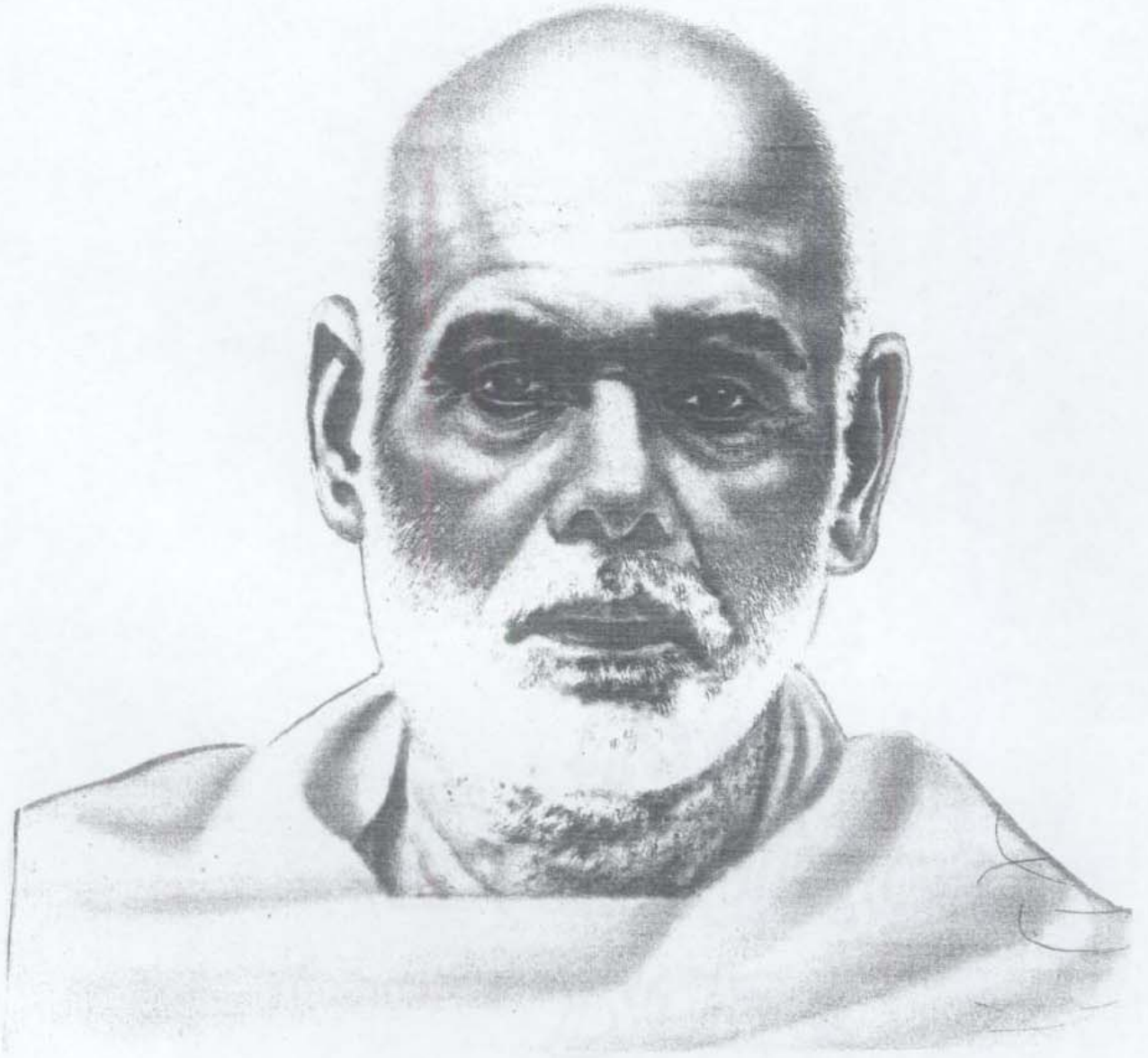
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APPENDICES



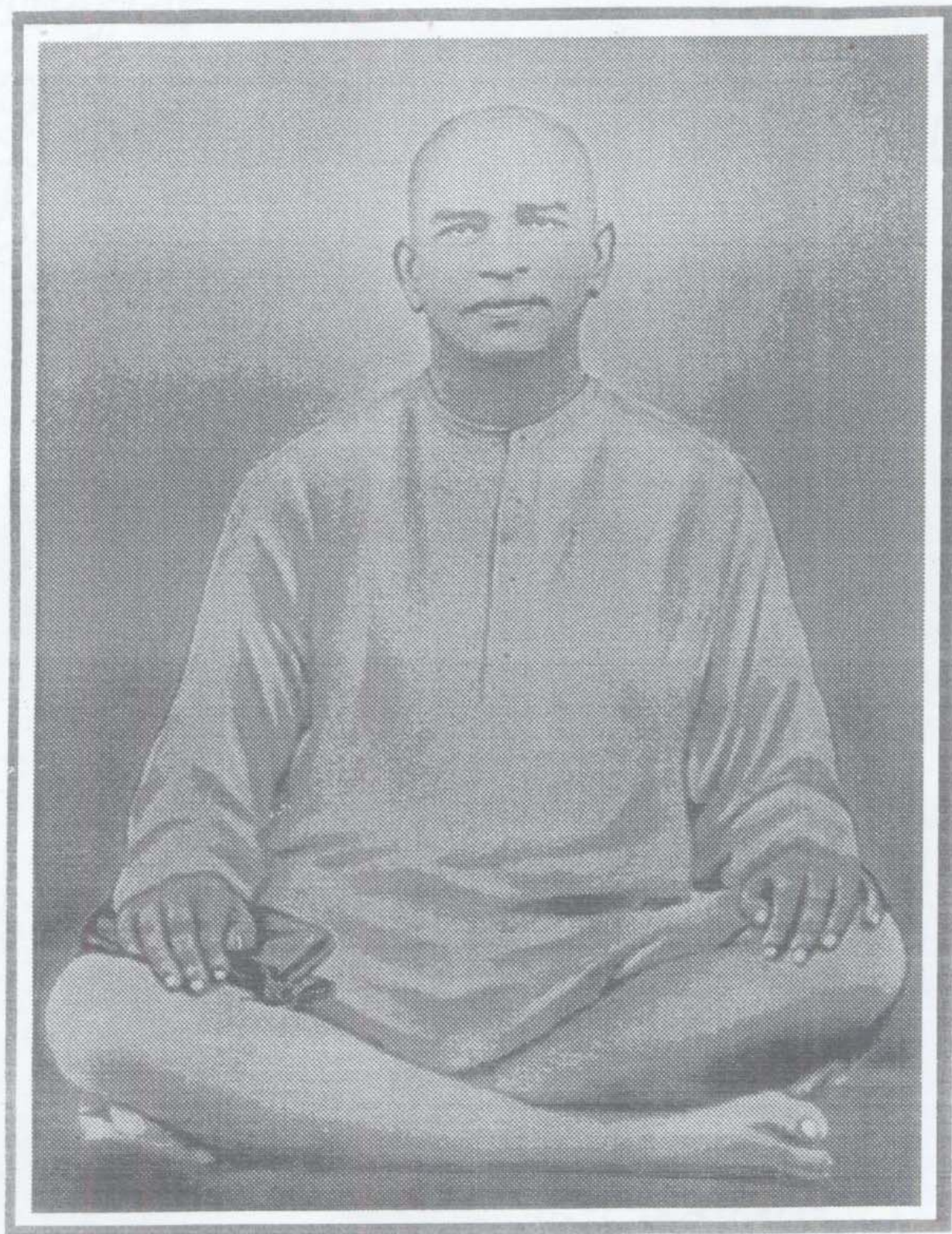
CHATTAMPI SWAMIKAL



SRI NARAYANA GURU



SWAMI SIVANANDA PARAMAHAMSAR



BRAHMANANDA SHIVAYOGI



VAGHBADANANDA GURUDEVAN