

**SOCIAL LIFE IN SOUTH MALABAR (1921-1947)  
RELIEF, REFORM AND NATIONALISM**

**Thesis  
submitted to the University of Calicut  
for the award of the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in History**

**MUHAMMEDALI T.**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**2003**

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## DECLARATION

I, Muhammedali T., hereby declare that this thesis **Social Life in South Malabar (1921-1947) – Relief, Reform and Nationalism** is a bonafide record of research work undertaken by me, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

C.U. Campus,  
11.11.2003.



**Muhammedali T.**  
Research Scholar  
Department of History  
University of Calicut.

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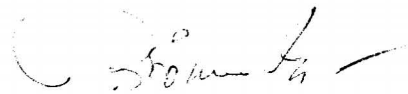
**2003**

Dr. K.T. Mohammed Ali  
Rtd. Professor and Head of the Dept. of Islamic Studies  
University of Kerala.

## C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the thesis **Social Life in South Malabar (1921-1947) – Relief, Reform and Nationalism** submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Calicut, is a record of bonafide research carried out by **Muhammedali T.** under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any degree before.

Farook College,  
11.11.2003



**Dr. K.T. Mohammed Ali**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MCRC.	- Malabar Central Relief Committee.
SMRNH	- A Statement on Measures of Relief and Need for Help
BSMP	- B.S. Moonje Papers
NMML	- Nehru Museum and Memorial Library
NAI	- National Archives of India
RAK	- Regional Archives Kozhikode, Calicut.
DMRT	- Devdhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust.
MM	- Malayala Manorama, Kottayam.
CDS	- Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram.
EPW	- Economic and Political Weekly.
PPRM	- Peasant Protests and Revolts in Malabar.
SIS	- Servants of India Society.
AICC	- All India Congress Committee.
KPCC	- Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee
CWMG	- Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.
MMB	- Malabar Marumakkathayam Bill of 1929 introduced by K. Madhavan Nayer in Madras Legislative Assembly.
MAS	- Modern Asian Studies
INC	- Indian National Congress

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## INTRODUCTION

Malabar has carved out a commendable space in modern Indian History on account of it being witnessed a series of revolts against the state-landlord collaboration from the second quarter of nineteenth century to the first quarter of ~~nineteenth~~<sup>twentieth</sup> century. A large amount of historical and sociological literature have been produced over the phenomena. These works have brought out various facets of economic, social, cultural and political life of the people of the Malabar prior to 1921. To the exception of one,<sup>1</sup> such works over the post-revolt Malabar are lacking. This is not to undermine the value of works produced on Kerala History and Society. But they bring in the question of *positionality*.<sup>2</sup> A look from a distant angle would make us oblivious of many details inscribed on the object. A shift in position from Malabar to Kerala involves the subordination of the past before the imagination of the future. Treating Malabar which was part of the colonial empire on par with Cochin and Travancore which were only under colonial influence by way of residentship would often results in analytical disjunctions.

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<sup>1</sup> Menon, Dilip, M., *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India – Malabar 1900-1948*, Cambridge, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion over positionality see Sen, Amartya, "History and the Enterprise of Knowledge" (Inaugural Address), in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Kolkatta, 2000-2001.

This work attempts to study the social life of post-revolt south Malabar. The reduction of the scope of the study to south Malabar is deliberate. This is not out of any kind of regionalism or geographic consideration. The consideration here is that it is south Malabar that has a history of revolts during the colonial period.<sup>3</sup> Thus, this study attempts to delineate the working of various forces that shaped the social and cultural behaviour of the people, in the last three decades of colonial rule in India, in an area where colonialism confronted obstinate opposition. This is not to confine our considerations to the impact of the revolts including the final and most devastating one in 1921.

The social and cultural development that entailed the rebellion of 1921 in south Malabar should not be examined ascribing autonomy to the rebellion as a catalyst. Such a consequentialist approach will isolate the changes in the wake of the rebellion from the process of deep rooted social transformation which was on the wheel almost a century before the rebellion. From the first quarter of nineteenth century onwards the subcontinent of India was treading through a process of transformation. South Malabar was not an exception to this, for it was very well a part of the subcontinent which was subjected to economic and cultural colonialism of Britain, and as such vulnerable to both coercive and persuasive forays of colonialism. This is not to play down the

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<sup>3</sup> Among 32 revolts listed, only one belongs to the North Malabar. See Dale, Stephan, F., *Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922*, New York, 1980, pp.228-232.

role of the rebellion in the process of transformation in Malabar especially in south Malabar, but to stress the point that the changes in the social and cultural fabric of Malabar in the wake of rebellion should be placed in the general context of the subcontinent-wide process which had begun well by the beginning of nineteenth century.

This naturally brings in the question of colonialism both as an economy and culture colonialism effected basic changes in the economic structure of the subcontinent of India. The formation of colonial capitalist economy had obviously created corresponding changes in the social world. A study of social life during colonial period thus, should examine the basic economic changes. But this is not to argue for economic determinism. Explaining social world only in relation to economy is reductionism. Now it is generally accepted that superstructure too have autonomy as a catalyst in social change.<sup>4</sup> Post-orientalist criticism and post-colonial studies have brought out the various ways of how colonialism ensured their dominance through a cultural project in the colonies.<sup>5</sup>

We now accept that colonialism has altered the cognitive domains of both the colonizer and the colonized which produced a situation conducive for

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<sup>4</sup> Althusar, L., "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" in *Lenin and Philosophy*, London, New Left Books, 1971.

<sup>5</sup> See Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York, 1978.

colonial domination.<sup>6</sup> We know how colonial forms of knowledge unleashed an epistemological violence when it reduced the natural and social world of India into a set of manageable 'facts' through various kinds of investigative modalities.<sup>7</sup> In addition we are also aware of the intricate process of introduction of modern normative categories which redefined and displaced the existing normative hierarchies and generated new indigenous forms of regarding and representing the natural and social worlds.

Along with colonialism comes the question of nationalism. A study of a period which marks the conclusion of colonial rule in India naturally should involve the phenomena of nationalism. The Rebellion of 1921 itself was a tumultuous entry point of political nationalism in Malabar. But Nationalism is not merely a politics. It is also a culture that developed in the modern milieu. An important thing is to be borne in our mind here is that nationalism in a colonial situation cannot escape from the colonial understanding of the natural and social world of colonies by the colonized. At the same time the colonized always hark back to his traditions to fight out the colonialism. Such a situation has created a dual world of 'inner' and 'outer' domains of a national culture.<sup>8</sup> The contours of the 'inner' domains were drawn through imagining a

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<sup>6</sup> See Memi, A., *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Boston, 1967.

<sup>7</sup> Cohn, Bernard, S., *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, Delhi, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial world: A Derivative Discourse?*, Delhi, 1986.

traditional world in a way that would go along with the compulsions of 'outer' domain. This was instrumental to the development of an exclusionary nationalist culture in India.

This study, thus, tries to uncover the role of economic and cultural factors in effecting changes in the social world of Malabar embarking on positions on colonialism and nationalism mentioned above. Finding the limitation of a pure historical method to approach the problem, the study draws from other disciplines. A statistical method is followed in explaining the economic changes. Though statistics is deceptive, we have few other methods to understand the pattern of changes in the economy and society. For the rest of the work the main source is archival data both official and personal. These are corroborated with newspaper reports, biographies and autobiographies. At times the study draws from methods of cultural and literary criticism.

The work is presented in four chapters followed by a conclusion. Chapter I is an exposition of situations in which the rebellion of 1921 took place and to outline the trajectories of the rebellion with a view to uncover the various dimension of the rebellion.

Chapter II is an examination of the developments in the economy of south Malabar and its impact on the society. Based on the colonial registers and census reports, an attempt is made to draw the pattern of economic life

prevailed during the period under study. This will enable us to relate the cultural and social practices of the people with the economic life.

Chapter III is a detailed enquiry into the volume of relief work in Malabar especially in South Malabar in the wake of the rebellion. The exposition of the details of the relief work is followed by an analysis of the relief work of entire agencies to find out their priorities and politics.

Chapter IV tries to comprehend the entire work of reformist attempts among the different sections of Malabar gentry with particular reference to the reform activities during the period under study in South Malabar. The entire reformist attempts are being explained both in the general context of colonialism and nationalism and in the specific context of the rebellion of 1921.

The work is concluded with a brief summing up of the prominent findings of the work. However this is not an exhaustive presentation of all findings in the work. Findings are presented along with the exposition and examination of themes in the chapters.

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# CHAPTER I

## THE REBELLION

Malabar came under the British control with the conclusion of the third Anglo-Mysore war in 1792. English East India company had its strong presence in Malabar coast by the beginning of eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century the company had acquired unrivaled political influence among the local rulers.<sup>2</sup> But the conquest of Malabar by Haidar Ali had told on the fortunes of East India Company in Malabar. As part of a general rivalry for power between Mysorian rulers and English East India Company they fought a series of wars which are called Anglo Mysore wars. Malabar, an important one among the many regions contested for, was made to cede to English East India Company with the treaty of Srirangapatnam in 1792 between Tipu Sultan and the Company.

### **Malabar under Colonial Rule**

British took up the control of Malabar at a time when the traditional rule based on customary laws and practices in Malabar had been disrupted by the Mysorian rule. Mysorians had set up a rule of state and a centralized

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<sup>1</sup> By 24 October 1699 Company had settled at Tellichery. The factory completed the building of a fort there in 1708. See Logan, *Malabar*, Vol. 1, Trivandrum, 1981, pp.92-93.

<sup>2</sup> Panikkar, K.N., *Against Lord and State*, OUP, Delhi, 1989, p.2.

administration in Malabar. They especially interfered in the traditional land relations and the mode of sharing agricultural surplus in the region.<sup>3</sup> State snatched jenmi's share of surplus produce. In addition to this open disregard for the customary positions of jenmis, they were also socially humiliated. More over, a fear of compulsory conversion, the substance of which is yet to be proved, is said to have led to the flight of a large number of Nambuthiris and Nayars to Travancore and other places in the wake of Mysurian invasion.<sup>4</sup> Malabar came to the hands of English East India Company at a time when it was successfully practicing "ruling for profit" instead of profit seeking through trade elsewhere in India.<sup>5</sup> Naturally the first attempt of the Company in Malabar was to exact maximum amount of revenue without coming into conflict with the population in general. This was materialized through the introduction of the new land revenue system.

In general the company followed Mysorean pattern of assessment and collection of the land revenue. But a core change was made in the existing settlement. Where as Mysorians made revenue settlement with Kanakkar (tenants), British did it with Jenmis (landlords). More significant here is the fact that Jenmi was recognized as the absolute proprietor of the land. Almost

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<sup>3</sup> Kareem, C.K., *Kerala Under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, Cochin, 1973, pp.212-215.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.183-187.

<sup>5</sup> By now British had successfully practiced in Bengal raising money through various kinds of extortions and exaction and to consider it as the "Investment".

all British officials who enquired in to the land tenures of Malabar perceived that traditionally Jenmi was the owner of the land and Kanakkar as tenants.<sup>6</sup> Even the excellent criticism of this theory by an experienced British official has been disregarded by other British official.<sup>7</sup> Thus, all along the British period Jenmis were considered as the absolute owners of the land in Malabar.

The collection of land revenue continued to be based on assessment and rates adopted from the schedule provided by Tipu Sultan at the time of the treaty. The joint commissioners learned that the land revenue collected by Tipu Sultan was 6,69,885 star pagodas or Rs.20,09,655 and proceeded to collect this amount by farming the revenue to local chieftains.<sup>8</sup> But when government found revenue arrears accumulating in the farming system government under took the responsibility of revenue collection directly in 1801.<sup>9</sup>

In the early years there was no agreement on the calculation of revenue to be taken from ryot. It was only in 1805 that a declaration was made after most patient enquiry about the mode of calculating pattern, in consultation with principal Maharajas, Head Nambuthiris and Mukyastans in each district,

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<sup>6</sup> Innes, C.A., *Malabar Gazetteer*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, pp.305-308.

<sup>7</sup> The argument of Willim Logan that in pre-British Malabar, there was no ownership equal to *dominium*, but only some rights got little acceptance in Colonial circles. See *ibid.*, pp.306-308.

<sup>8</sup> Panikkar, K.N., note 2, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> Innes, *Op. cit.*, p.328.

that a unanimous principle of calculation was declared. Thus in case of rice lands the cultivator should retain one-third of the net produce after deducing from the gross produce 'the seed and exactly the same quantity for expenses of cultivation.' The residue to be shared in the proportion of six-tenths to the government and four-tenths to jenmis. Likewise in the orchard land one-third of produce was allotted to the cultivator and the remainder is to be divided equally between government and jenmis. Similarly the government share on the produce of dry land is half of what jenmis got as *varam*.<sup>10</sup>

The net result of the colonial land revenue policy was the reformulation of traditional mode of production and surplus exaction to suit the economic and political designs of colonial state. The provision of ultimate ownership of land to the jenmis resulted in the rise of a class who could control the economic activity of the area in alliance with colonial masters. At the same time the tenant class including *Kaanakkudian* and *Pattakkudians* were put at the mercy of the landed class. Thus now British has a powerful class of people with whom they could negotiate in economic as well as political affairs. In this situation Jenmis emerged as the 'natural leaders' of the area.

Colonial administrators always sought to legitimize their measures in the name of tradition. As regard the changes brought about in the land

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<sup>10</sup> Innes, Op. cit., p.330.

relations, British portrayed themselves as the restorers of traditional order. Their administrative reports are shoot through with the image that they were responsible for bringing back the traditional order of Malabar at a juncture when the Mysorians had destroyed the social and political fabric of Malabar. They rescued a region that was "split in to a number of kingdoms and principalities; a prey to the bigotry of late Mohammadan conquerors; abandoned by its principal landholders; and distracted by the degeneration and rapacity of Mappila banditry."<sup>11</sup>

Actually, British were inventing a new tradition which suits their colonial designs. But the fact was that the invented traditions were largely accepted especially in the post Mysorian milieu. Those who fled from Malabar during Mysorian invasion to Travancore were called back and were provided with economic and social positions stronger than that they possessed traditionally. So it is no wonder that the British got applause from those who were at the upper rungs of the social hierarchy when their position were restored and made safe and secure.

Coupled with the political realities, these attempts knowingly or unknowingly had started creating a cleavage between the 'Muhammadans' or 'Mappilas' on the one and the rest of the population on the other. It is obvious that the wrath of Rajas and Nayers who felt the ferocity of Mysorian invasion

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<sup>11</sup> Logan, W. Quoted in Miler, E.J., *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, Bombay, 1976, p.102.

had fought from the side of British against the Mysore rulers. At that time British had promised Rajas and Nayars that if they heartily and obediently aided the British in the war against Mysore rulers the British would at the conclusion of peace.

"...retain them upon reasonable terms under the protection of the company and agree to their becoming the dependents and subjects of the Hon'ble company . . . that in order to secure a willing obedience from Malabar chief, we should be contented their paying a moderate tribute, provided they will give company advantageous privileges for carrying on a commerce in the valuable production of their country."<sup>12</sup>

At the same time Mohammedans and Mappilas were represented as conquerors and bandits in the colonial discourse with the British occupying an elusive position. The portrayal of the 'Muhammedan conquerors' and the exposition of 'Mappila banditry' in the colonial discourse allowed the British to sharing spaces in the enunciatory planes with those placed traditionally at the upper rungs of Malabar society. Thus British presented themselves to be the protectors and allies of the traditional system. Coupled with this discursive strategy, the land revenue policy provided the colonial government the image of the restores of the traditional order. This legitimized the role of British in

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<sup>12</sup> Report of Joint Commissioner I, p.65 quoted in Ibid., p.102.

the affairs of Malabar. In this way they could easily buy the obedience of Rajas and Nayars who ultimately became Company's managers and officials.<sup>13</sup> And now British could respect them through recognition and subordinate them through protection. As a result British got a handy class of people who were acclaimed as the natural leaders of Malabar and were used as effective intermediaries between the exploitative colonial apparatus and exploited subjects in Malabar.

The introduction of trade monopoly in salt, tobacco and timber and the intervention of government in the manufacture and sale of liquor had produced negative impact in the fortunes of those employed in these spheres. The manufacture of salt which was quite extensively undertaken along the Malabar coast<sup>14</sup> was gradually declined after the introduction of monopoly in 1806. Even though the sale alone, not manufacture, of salt was a government monopoly local markets of salt began to wane as government alone was allowed to be the seller as well as the buyer of salt. Consequent steep hike in the retail price on the one and rather low arbitrary price at which government bought from local manufacture brought the local manufacture to the brink of collapse. The giving up of the manufacture of salt for sale in the coast in

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.103.

<sup>14</sup> Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol. II, Madras, 1988, pp.479-82.

1823 indicative of this decline in the manufacture of salt. Consequently the local gentry were made to buy imported salt at a high price.<sup>15</sup>

The monopoly in tobacco trade also produced steep rise in the prices. The rise in the prices was so high that the sale of tobacco deeply declined after the introduction of monopoly for the peasants and labourers, who formed the main consumers, could not afford the enhanced price.

The monopoly of timber trade adversely affected those engaged in the timber trade and the building of ships and vessels. To the timber merchants and workers engaged in felling trees and preparing timber, the monopoly brought a sudden and certain dislocation, if not total ruin.

The state interference in the manufacture and sale of toddy and arrack also told on the fortune of local manufactures. Taxes on *katti* and *chatti* was enhanced in 1801-02. Only knives and stills stamped by government were allowed to use for tapping and brewing. The introduction of tax farming in 1869 is reported to have produced magical effect with over 300 percent increase in the collection.<sup>16</sup> This shows growing weight of taxes on the shoulders of tappers and brewers. In 1898-99 Molasses arrack was introduced to avert a threatened failure of supply of toddy arrack.<sup>17</sup> Government

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<sup>15</sup> Panikkar, K.N., Note 2, p.12.

<sup>16</sup> Innes, Op. cit., p.376.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.376.

accorded permission to sell Molasses arrack exclusively to a private company. And the fate of local brewers was decided when government prohibited the consumption of toddy arrack in 1906.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Outbreaks**

It was when Malabar began to feel the weight of the changes effected in the spheres of land relations and trade by the colonial authorities that Malabar witnessed a series of uprisings of Mappilas. Started in 1836 there occurred 32 uprisings before the final one in 1921. A thing seriously considered here is that except two all these uprisings are concentrated in Ernad and Walluvanad taluks in South Malabar. South Malabar proved to be a hot bed for British sovereignty since the very inception of their rule. Manjeri Kurikkal and Unnimutha Muppan who were the prominent Mappila chiefs of Ernad had created prolonged headache for the British in its early years.<sup>19</sup> They defended the expansion of British sovereignty to their area of influence. But the Mappila 'out breaks' was an entirely new phenomena. These outbreaks were not the brainchild of a leader or a chief who possess some authority and power. Apparently these were attempts to kill persons who were understood to be the immediate enemies on economic, social or religious ground and die fighting rather heroically with the government fares.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.376.

<sup>19</sup> Panikkar, Note 2, p.57.

The only source to understand the character of these outbreaks are the reports of district authorities prepared to send to the government and some document collected by the official as part and parcel of these reports. These outbreaks show, in general, some common features.

As we have already noted at most all of these occurred in Ernad and Walluvanad taluks of Malabar District. All the assailants hail from the lower order of the Mappila Muslims of the said region. Majority of them were tenants who were petty cultivators, with rarely more than one acre, usually much less, to farm.<sup>20</sup> Next tenants come labourers, petty merchants and unemployed. Victims were mainly belonged either to landed sections in the society and government administrative and legal authorities. In some cases Mappilas and the lower class persons become victims.<sup>21</sup> A significant feature of the outbreaks is the articulation of rebels with in a religious ritualistic form. Mappila who initiated these attacks planned to become *shahid*. In most cases they performed a series of rituals to prepare themselves for a heroic death. Once decided to go for *Jihad*, they divorces their wives dressing in fresh white cloth, perform a *moulid* etc. All these are indicative of his determination to die fighting as a '*Mujahid*'. Nothing will lead us to believe that the rebels were fighting optimistically his enemies to defeat them and to gain something. The ultimate end seems to have been their martyrdom before

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<sup>20</sup> Dale, S.F., *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922*, OUP, New York, 1980, p.232.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.230-32.

which they try to finish those elements which bring them miseries in their life. So a common pattern of these outbreaks were; first go to the house of a jenmis or a British servant, to get food and arms collected from them – in some cases through requests and if the request did not work, through force including killing and looting and in some cases killing the owner of the house or his relatives as servants. Then he proceeds to a suitable place – in many cases temples – to pitch themselves at for the last fight with the military forces of the government. All such clashes with a few exceptions ended up with the death of all the rebels who fell fighting the army or government forces.

As this type of uprisings were a new phenomenon government sought to deal with them. H.V. Conolly, the district collector of Malabar from 1840 to 1855 during whose tenure the uprisings became identifiable and dangerous, was the first one who paid attention to the enquiry into and interpretation of these uprisings. It was during his tenure that Mr. Strange, a judge of *Sadr Adalat* was placed on special duty with the main intention of enquiring in to the disturbances, their causes and remedies.<sup>22</sup> The submission of his report entailed the passing of Act XXIII and XXIV of 1854 and the rising of a special force of police. These were the most repressive acts for Mappilas because the Act 23 had provided for the fining of the entire Mappila village to

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<sup>22</sup> Innes, Op. cit., p.81.

which the rebels belong to and Act 24 declared the possession of Mappila was knife illegal. But, notwithstanding the heavy penalties and stringent action for the part of government, Mappila out breaks continued, though at longer intervals, with all typical forms. The continued occurrence of the uprisings even after severe actions on the one and on the basis of some petitions received by the government from tenants on the other made the government realise that Mr. strange had undermined the agrarian content of the discontent. Ultimately William Logan, who had the experience of being the district collector of Malabar was appointed special commission to enquire into land tenure and tenant rights in Malabar, and to consider the best means of removing another Mappila grievance of long standing, the difficulty of getting from their Hindu landlords, sites for mosques and burial ground.<sup>23</sup>

What is important for us here is that the analysis and findings of these commissions on questions of causes for the uprisings expose to the economic and social moorings of the political and religious behaviour of Mappilas in the rebel region. During the enquiry of Mr. Strange, Mappilas always accused of the oppression of the landlords. But he seems to have trapped in the deep-seated British perception of Hindu-Muslim difference. He pointed out that while Mappila tenants attributed out breaks to the exactions of their Jenmis, Muslims did not suffer disproportionately from evictions or the imposition of

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<sup>23</sup> Innes, Op. cit., p.81.

renewal fees (*polichezhuttu*) and that there were many cases in which Muslim as well as Hindus evicted Muslims. Yet all of the attackers in the outbreaks were Muslims and all of these victims were Hindus. This ultimately led him to conclude that the real cause of the outbreaks was the religious fanaticism. And the remedies he put forward was directed towards removal of fanaticism.<sup>24</sup>

But he could not betray the situations prevailed in the rebel area. In his conclusion and a supplemental letter he discussed whether it was necessary to take any action to regulate Malabar land tenures. He could not best acknowledge the role the oppression of landlords as a prominent propeller of the uprising. 'The Moplahs, as I have notices, complain of Hindu landlords ejecting them at shorter intervals than what is prescribed by ancient usage of the country and *this is an evil which to some extend prevails*.<sup>25</sup>

As have already seen when the Acts and measure directed towards the defusion of rebellion proved futile, the special commission under William Logan was constituted. The main intentions of this one was to enquire in to the agrarian issues involved in the outbreaks. He started from where Mr. Strange concluded. His appointment was specifically to enquire in to how far the agrarian issues were responsible for the outbreaks and find out a way for

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<sup>24</sup> PPRM, pp.183-84.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp.181.

providing land for building mosques and burial ground for Muslims. Analysing 2200 petitions from 4021 person corroborating it with official documents he found that the root cause of the out breaks was the oppression of the land lords. He argued that the identification of Jenmis as the exclusive proprietor of the land is against the customary practices prevailed in the pre-British Malabar. This one according to him was the result of British haste to find out an Indian equivalent of the British dominion. Jenmi was a kind of office which conveyed social, military and political authority along with the right to a percentage of the harvest in the area covered by Janmam grants. The jenmis did not, therefore, have absolute control over the land to dispose of as he chose and he had to share the produce with two other groups, the *kanakkar* and the actual cultivators – respective high-caste Nayars and Ilavers in the traditional hierarchy. Thus unlike Strange, there was no confusion for Logan to conclude. For him the end of the outbreaks can only be attained through a restructuring of land tenure system of Malabar. He suggested that (a) the only person interested in the soil to whom the government should look is the actual cultivator, (b) the landlord's power of oust must, in public interest, be curtailed, (c) the landlord is perfectly entitled to take a competition rent, provided he is dealing with the capitalists and (d) the tenants must have the full value of ancient customary law entitling them to sell improvement on their holding.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Logan, W., *Report of Malabar Special Commission* i. lxxxiii, quoted in Dale, Op. cit., p.173.

But these suggestions were not well accepted in the British administrative circle. The fate of these recommendation was decided when it was put to the examination of another commission Sir. T. Madhava Rao. Though the new commission was inclusive of Logan himself, the other members could not see the need for any action on the line of Logan's suggestion. Government brought in some inadequate legislation in 1887 when the compensation for Tenant's improvement act was passed. Even the minimal hope of the peasant was faded as British courts interpreted the act in favour of the landed classes. When he found a quantitative increase in the evictions after the passing of compensation for Tenant's Imponent Act, Bradly, the acting collector of Malabar recommended some additional legislation to contain the growth of evictions. In 1896 jenmis were prevented from using the power of distraint contained in the Madras Rent Recovery Act of 1865, and in 1900, the Tenant's Improvement Act was amended. Even these measures were too ineffective. In 1911 Innes argues that comprehensive tenancy legislation was still a necessity in the district due to the prevalence of rack-renting, capricious evictions and more generally, the social tyranny of the jenmi's class.<sup>27</sup>

The inadequacy of these reforms is pretty clear from the fact that despite severe repression of the rebels through various means including

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<sup>27</sup> Dale, S.F., Op. cit., p.175.

deportations and fining the Mappila inhabitants of rebel's village, Mappila wrath gushed out year after year with more ferocity. Majority of these outbreaks, especially the formidable ones, sprang out of agrarian disputes. More over, more and more Mappila inhabitants were turning anti-British because of the method of communal repression and inconsiderate punitive measure to which British took recourse to as part of quelling the rebelling.

### **Nationalist Politics in Malabar**

It was into such a tensed situation that nationalist politics entered the region. Malabar, of course, was too later to expose to the nationalist politics. The early effects at public organization and agitation were through class and caste bodies.<sup>28</sup> It shows that the educated middle classes was pre-occupied with casts and class question. It was only with 1916 that political movements began to grow. The first district conference of INC was held at Palghat in 1916. From that year district conferences were convened annually. At this stage, landowners and professionals dominated congress. Of the 443 members of the reception committee and delegates to the first District Congress Conference, 108 new landlords, 111 lawyers, 52 merchants 25 stand civil and employees of the private section 34 teachers and 10 doctors.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Panikkar, K.N., Note 2, p.117-18.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.119.

Even though congress was making headway through Malabar with the spread of Home Rule League led by Annie Basant, the political agenda of congress in Malabar hardly sympathized with the sad plight of rural tenants because of the upper class domination within the congress. The plan of Manjeri Rammayyar to open up village committees was hence objected by certain congress leaders. But when certain congress leaders took up the issue of tenant question the picture was changed. The congress leaders M.P. Narayana Menon and his friend Kattilasserri Mohammed Musliyar organized Mappila peasants and labourers and lower castes on questions of tenancy under the congress banner. With the growth of confidence among Mappilas and lower castes that congress would take up their issues they could not resist themselves joining congress. The activities of the Union for the Redress of Grievances of Tenants at Kottakkal and their success under the leadership of M.P. Narayana Menon and Kattilassri Muhammed Maulavi in an excellent example in this regard.<sup>30</sup> Beside these leaders were responsible for the formation of a number of Kudiyan Sanghams in various parts of Ernad and Walluvanad taluks. These attempts to unite peasants and labourers to exert pressure on the government to make themselves rescued from the hapless exploitation of landlord official collaboration paved the way for the expansion of congress activities in to the rural peasants of South Malabar. The natural

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.121; M.P.S. Menon, *Malabar Samaram*, (mal) Kozhikode, 1994, p.38.

culmination was the formation of district-wide tenants association in 1920, ie. Malabar *Kudiyam Sangham*.

### **Khilafat and Non-cooperation**

It was into such a scenario that Khilafath Non-cooperation Movement made its entry into this region. The Khilafath issue became popular in Malabar with the District Congress conference held at Manjeri in April 1920. We have not much evidence to show that people of Malabar had got sensitized to this issue before this memorable political event.

The main issues before the Manjeri conference were the Punjab atrocities, the Khilafat questions and constitutional reforms. The meeting was held at a time when there was a lot of serious differences among the leaders of congress on various issues including Khilafat and constitutional reform. Summarily Annie Beasant and most of the Madras leader stood for acceptance of Montagu-Chemsford against a host of other leaders including Gandhiji who declared it unsatisfactory. Beasant also had the idea that congress should not launch non-cooperation moment, if British government fail to solve the issue of Ottoman Khilafat in Turkey in favour of Muslim sentiments. The opinions of A. Beasant and party was utterly defeated as leaders like Mdhavan Nayar, K.P. Kesava Menon and M.P. Narayana Menon could get backing of whole Mappila peasants. Thus it was with the Manjeri conference that the Mappilas of Malabar specifically south Malabar were

evoked to the question of Khilafat for the first time. A congress leader observes: "If the conference had been held anywhere else, the Khilafat resolution would never have been passed".<sup>31</sup> A resolution demanding legislation defining the relationship between landlord and tenant and safeguarding the interest of tenants was moved and adopted. This has a special significance in the sense that since 1916 itself attempts were made to pass resolutions on tenants question. But they were invariably defeated until this time. The massive participation of Mappilas who were recruited to congress through tenancy movements proved all attempts made by the landed class for a compromise futile this time. The defeated landlords convened a meeting of *Jenmi sabha* and expressed their objection to Manjeri conference and they send the resolution to the Governor.<sup>32</sup>

This doesn't mean that Khilafat - Non Cooperation movement had started with Manjeri conference. Contrary to the enthusiasm shown to Khilafat question in the conference, Khilafat movement seems to have failed to make expected progress. Except the formation of two Khilafat committees, one at Calicut and other at Kondotty, hardly any activities were held for five months after Manjeri conference. It is true that the visit of Gandhiji and Shaukathali evoked great enthusiasm among the people.<sup>33</sup> Over 25000 people

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<sup>31</sup> Nair, C. Gopalan, *Mappila Lahala*, (mal) Calicut, 1923, p.10.

<sup>32</sup> Menon, M.P.S., *Op. cit.*, pp.60-61.

<sup>33</sup> Madhavan Nair, K., *Malabar Kalapam*, (mal) Calicut, 2002, p.59.

had convened in the meeting of these leaders. Once more the majority of the participants were from South Malabar region.<sup>34</sup> Even after their visit, the political vein of congress leaders remained cold. Madhavan Nayar puts 'Not a single vakil stopped practice, not a single student left school, not a single candidate withdrew from election to the council'.<sup>35</sup> But Mappilas poured into the movement especially when religious scholars exhorted them.<sup>36</sup> In August 1920 congress membership was negligible. But by June 1921 there were about 200 congress committees with more than 20,000 members. By this date the collection of Tilak Swaraj Fund exceed Rs.20000 whereas the amount was only Rs.2, 500 ten months before. Thus, by the end of 1920 the Khilafat organization and propaganda had become fairly wide spread in Malabar. Khilafat committees with both Hindus and Muslim as members were organized, Khilafat notes and pamphlets were printed and distributed, meetings were held to explain the Khilafat issue and Mappilas who did not lend support to it were boycotted and even attacked.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> M.P.S. Menon, Op. cit., p.63.

<sup>35</sup> Madhavan Nair, Op. cit., p.60.

<sup>36</sup> See a list of religious scholars participated in the Khilafat Movement. Kattilasseri Muhammed Musliyar, T. Hassan Koya Mulla, Ali Musliyar, K.M. Moulavi, E. Moidu Mouolavi, Paroal Hussain Koya Moulavi, P.M. Pookoya Thangal, K. Koyatti Moulavi, Chekku Molla, etc. See Pottekkad, S.K. *et al. Muhammed Abdurahiman*, Calicut, 1978, p.44.

<sup>37</sup> Panikkar, K.N., Note 2, p.126.

Certain things are to be comprehended to read the political mind set of emerging political situation in South Malabar. Large Scale participation of Mappilas in the political activities when they were being enlisted in the congress by the initiative of village congress committees provided them a strong organizational network. Now Mappilas of different regions came into contact. This means that they got immense spaces to communicate on the where about of different localities. Now Mappila tenants and labourers in the region got identified themselves as one class whose interest are one and same. In the tenancy and Khilafat agitation they defined their position as against the exploitative upper class and the colonial power.

### **What is Wrong with Khilafat Movement?**

The political agenda of Khilafat- Non Cooperation movement had a serious limitation. The dual bases on which the movement was erected was anomalous. Khilafat was basically a political issue unrelated to India. The disintegration of Ottoman Turkey at the end of I world war was, of course, unfortunate and the role of Britain as a member of Allies in the political decline of Ottoman Turkey was quite conspicuous. However the like of Khilafat movement in India is absent in any other part of Muslim world. This shows that the issue was only the concern of traditional Islamic scholars of India. Their concern is articulated through the Khilafat movement. So the movement as its leaders explained it was one for a religious cause. Indian

Muslims were called on to fight out the British power which threatened their religion. A call for fight the enemy of religion logically approves the traditional religious method of fighting. The speeches exhorting the Mappilas to fight against the British were too compelling. Shaukathali's speech is an example.

"If you are strong and capable, then it is your bounden duty, so long as one Mussalman breathes, to fight the unjust king, the unjust government that proved to be an enemy to your faith and to your God. If you are weak and could not cope physically with your opponents then it is incumbent for you to go, migrate to another country and leave that unjust kingdom and that unjust tenant and king".<sup>38</sup>

E. Moidu Mawlavi, the secretary of the Ulema conference held at Ottappalam on 25 April 1921, used the same logic to attract the Muslim gentry to Khilafat. Embarking on the *fatwas* of Ulama and Ulama Associations in India, he called up on all Muslim to strive, sacrifice their all, including their lives to save Khilafat which in basis of Islamic religion.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Panikkar, K.N., Note 2, p.125.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.127.

We have to think over the question that what was the type of interest non-Muslim had in the Khilafat issue. Gandhiji may have used it a strategy to bring a prominent section of Indian population to the congress under his leadership. The fate of Khilafat movement shows that he was trying to walk on clouds. What is important is that Non-Muslim congress leadership seemed to have perceived the issue as not theirs, but purely of Muslim. For Gandhi, stoppage of Khilafat is an unjust against *their* belief. So it is the duty of all Muslims to non-cooperate with the government. Hindus should stand shoulder to shoulder with their Muslim brother and make it a success. See how a congress leader who was a prominent leader of Khilafat movement in Malabar understood Khilafat movement.

"Mahatma Gandhi advised Indians to accept non violent non-cooperation with the purpose of saving the situation from the rage of Muhammedans ending up in violence, as Muhammadans had, then, grown furious when the allied forces antagonized them on a religious issue [Khilafat]. One can only guess what type of atrocities would have been committed by fanatic Muhammedans at a time when the very foundation of their religion was rocked by Khilafat issue. And it goes without saying the case especially of those [Mappilas] who are ready to risk their life over a mere incident of

conversion. Hence not only Indians but even the British government are indebted to Mahatmaji who was wise enough to absorb the mounted high tension rage gradually defusing it by way of phasing it out through diverting it peacefully and wonderfully."<sup>40</sup>

This shows that non-Muslims not even those among the leaders could not participate the movement sincerely and wholeheartedly. The experience in South Malabar shows the lack of confidence for non-Muslims including leadership in Mappila populace and vice versa. Madhavan Nayar bewails of Hindu absence in the Khilafat movement. Mappila participants of Khilafat meetings seem to have shown little confidence in Hindus. Congress leaders like K.P. Kesava Menon and K. Madhavan Nayar who was the prominent leaders of Khilafat Non Cooperation movement also found to have behaved fearfully during the movement. This tend us to conclude that the real differences that ossified during the persistence of early uprisings and tenancy movement prior to the Khilafat movement, between land owning class and oppressed tenant-labour class had been just papered over by the badly knit imagination of Hindu brother helping Muslim brothers.

There was a serious limitation for the method of non-violent non-cooperation. Non-cooperation with the government will be politically

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<sup>40</sup> Madhavan Nair, K., Op. cit., pp.58-59.

meaningful only if the participants are previously cooperating with the government. As far as Mappilas especially those belongs to the region of South Malabar was concerned this method was a gun without ammunition. Totally uneducated and scarcely employed, Mappilas had little job to resign, few courts to boycott and no school to stop going. As the same time with the tradition of finishing the life of those who were understood to be done injustice to them, they had at their disposal hands to act and lives to sacrifice. As the method of non-cooperation and non-violence provided too contracted a space for action for Mappilas and at the same time had been electrified by the call to fight against the colonial government who had decided to finish their religion, probably Mappila could not resist fighting against those who were conceived to be their enemies.

This inclination towards violence could have been averted only through the dissemination of the democratic political culture. But the congress leaders seems to have failed to do so. This is not to overlook the success of tenancy movement in South Malabar to impart a new political culture which decried violence as a method of struggle. When a *cheruma* was beaten by the *karyasthan* ( manager) of Samuthiri estate, Mappila peasants at the advice of Kuttlasseri Muhammed Musliyar and M.P. Narayana Menon declared non co-operation with and social boycott of jenmis under the banner of the Union of the Redress of Grievances of Tenants. This agitation was

successful and the manager was removed from the post.<sup>41</sup> In places like Kodur and Kuruva too tenant successfully behave in this way.<sup>42</sup> The way the Mappila gentry who had been educated in this method of agitation failed to stick on to this during Khilafat Movement. A probable explanation is this. Khilafat Movement was directed against the British. Non-cooperation in this connection is boycott of government. Mappila possessed almost no space in the working of government. Mappila had debt in place of wealth and traditional religious knowledge in place of modern education. This came in the way of sharing something in the government or in the public sphere opened up as a result of the establishment of modern state and government. Thus, Khilafat- Non-cooperation in Malabar had failed to lead an agitation after forging solidarity between the conflicting classes of the region. The slogans like "Hindu-Mussalman ki Jai" proved futile in the situations mentioned above.<sup>43</sup>

### **State Repression**

Added to this was the government response. Government used all opportunities to repress the Khilafat Non-cooperation Movement and to intimidate its workers to mar the spread of movement especially into the rural

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<sup>41</sup> Menon, M.P.S., Op. cit., p.38.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.38.

<sup>43</sup> Also see Madhavan Nair, K., Op. cit., pp.61-62.

areas. For the District Magistrate, the appeal to religion within the movement 'might prepare the way for something far more serious than the isolated expression of fanaticism that the ordinary Ernad outbreak represents'.<sup>44</sup> In two ways government action proved contributory to eruption of violence. Firstly government issued prohibitory orders to the leaders of Khilafat movement not to convene or participate or speak in the Khilafat meetings. This told on the future of non violent – non cooperation as a method for the leadership which had just started training the Mappilas in the method of non violent – no cooperation lost touch with the Mappila gentry. We have already seen that non-cooperation was gaining ground even in the hot areas of South Malabar. Malabar leaders of congress invited Yakub Hassan with the intention and hope that Mappila Muslim could persuaded back from perpetrating violence in the name of Khilafat. Mappilas were extremely eager to see and hear him. But prohibitory order stood between the leaders and gentry. When they attempted to defy prohibitory orders to speak to people about the need of sticking on to nonviolent agitation Yakub Hassan and other congress leaders were arrested. Secondly Mr. Thomas, the District Magistrate seem to have behaved with unwarranted haste and treated Mappilas ruthlessly. These actions seem to have born out of a Mappilaphobia the mooring of which lies in the perception of British about the behaviour of Mappilas in the early uprisings of South Malabar region. As the District

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<sup>44</sup> Panikkar, Note 2, p.129.

Magistrate Thomas might have thought of nipping the militant tendency of Mappilas in the bud before it goes to worsen the situation in Malabar. With the arrest of congress Khilafat leaders, the ferocious Khilafat volunteers went off the path of non-cooperation. This uncalled for turn could have been controlled only through the effective intervention of influential congress Khilafat leaders. The mood of the government is quite clear from the way they behaved at Ottappalam when the Kerala provincial congress conference was held in April 1921. A memorable event in the history of National Movement in Kerala, Ottappalam congress attracted 4000 delegates from all over Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. Khilafat was a prominent issue discussed in the conference. An Ulama conferences was convened as part of it. Mappilas especially belong to Ernad and Walluvanad taluks participated in large number in uniform. Government deployed police in full force. Apart from the presence of top police official, Special police was also posted. What this shows is that a Mappilapobia was working. All this was done 'to be in readiness should trouble arise,' and as the leaders were 'playing with the most inflammable material – the Mappila'.<sup>45</sup> But no trouble arose till the fact day of the conference. But one of the Khilafat volunteers was taken to police station and beaten up. As the news spread people swarmed into the police station. It is stated that police did so to settle the score one policeman have with that Khilafat volunteer. But while the leaders were trying to calm down

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.133.

the people, police charged indiscriminately. Ravunni Menon (the Secretary of the Reception Committee) got serious injuries. As soon as the news reached the venue of conference, hundreds of Mappilas at the venue got furious. But the timely interference of the congress Khilafat leader saved the situation. The forbearance showed by the delegates of congress at the face of unwarranted repression in applauded in that provocation of government lost in its fight against non violence.<sup>46</sup> These events shows government attitude towards the Khilafat Non-cooperation Movement. Khilafatists were ruthlessly dealt with on grounds artificially created. It was the extremely cautious leadership that saved the situation keeping Mappilas unnerved and self-restrained.

Events with the same pattern can also be seen in the succeeding months. Ali Musliyar, the most respectable leader among Mappilas had led a demonstration of Khilafat volunteers to the graveyard of Cherur *shahids* who were shot dead by British army in 1843 for participating in an outbreak. This was a signal of Ali Musliyar, who hither to have been propagated non-violent struggle, turning toward violence. He also lead a procession to declare his intention to do this with an escort of 200 armed Khilafat volunteers. The graveyard being a government property government found this an anti-government action. But the timely interference of a congress leader defused

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<sup>46</sup>Menon, M.P.S., Op. cit., p.75.

the situation and he could convince the Musliyar and bring him back to non violent non cooperation.<sup>47</sup>

Another event with the said pattern was the Pookottur incident. Pookkotur is a village about six miles north-west of Manjeri in Ernad taluk. Inhabited predominantly by Mappilas and lion part of land being in the hand of jenmis, a substantial section of Mappilas were either tenants or subtenants or tenants at will. Naturally Tenancy and Khilafat movement got strong footing in the village. Vadakke Vittil Mohammed who was employed as rent collector of Nilambur Tirumulpad. Sixty percent of the land in the village was under Tirumulpad. But Tirumulpad turned Mohammed off the job on the ground that he worked in Kudiyan Sangham and Khilafat committee. Tirumulpad furthered his action forging a case against Muhammad on false ground that the latter had stolen the former's gun. Consequently, Mohamed's home was searched. This insult was retaliated against by a forceful entry of Muhammad into Tirumulpads premises with his friends to ask for immediate payment of the salary arrears due to him. The flow for the blow tone of Mohammed and his party and the defensive stand of Tirumulpad made situation tensed. Mohamed and friends threatened Tirumulpad with man handling. But the timely interference of two local Khilafat leaders saved the situation.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp.81-82.

In the very next day Tirumulpad registered a petition to the Circle Inspector of Police of Manjeri. He petitioned that Vadekkevittil Mohammed and Karat Moideenkutty Haji brought Mappilas into Kovilagam and threatened to kill him. On August-1 Inspector Mr. Narayana Menon reached Pukottur. He sent men to call him to *kovilagam*. Mohammed went to *kovilagam* with 200 men many of them were armed with sticks, knives and sords, and blockaded the Inspector. They determined that they would go back only after beheading Tirumulpad and inspector. The arrival of congress Khilafat leaders once more saved the situation. The team under M.P. Narayana Menon could persuade the people to go back and refrain from violence.<sup>48</sup> This pattern of events in 1921 tend us to conclude that the uneducated poor Mappila tenants and labourers identified also in terms of religion, when called on to save their religion, had set their minds to fight against their social and political oppressors with a disposition to violent fighting which alone according to them was effective to fight out the enemy. Yet the timely intervention of the Congress Khilafat leaders at situations in which this disposition was about to work proved successful.

The movement took to an uncontrollably violent turn after the Tirurangadi incidents in August 20, 1921. Incidents at Pokkottur were seen as a serious threat to the British power and authority. As he got the concurrence

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.85.

of the government, Thomas, the District Collector issued warrants to arrest the Khilafat leaders on the ground that Mappila showed disregard and disrespect for British authority. One thing to be noted here is that the target was not Congress Khilafat leadership as whole but Mappila leaders alone. The first attempt of arrest was directed towards Ali Musliyar whose centre of activity was the Mosque at Tirurangadi known as *Khizhakkepalli* .

Ali Musliyar who belongs to a family, some members of which had fought against British earlier in 1848. He had great influence among Mappilas. For the one he was great religious scholar and teacher. He was educated at Ponnani, the centre of Islamic religious learning in Kerala then. He also studied at Mecca for seven years. After that he was teaching religion in Kavarathi Island in Lakhdweevs and Podiyat and Todikappulam in Ernad Taluk before he becoming a teacher in Tirurangadi. More over now he is a teacher in a mosque where to Mappilas from different parts of nearby Taluks used to come, as Tirurangadi was a foremost pilgrim centre of Muslims in Malabar.

Ali Musliyar seems to have taken little interest in politics earlier. Coupled with his sympathy towards pitiful condition of Mappila tenants, the instigation of M.P. Narayana Menon and Kuttilaseri Mohammed Musliyar brought him to the activities of tenants movement first and then to Khilafat movement. M.P. Narayana Menon made Ali Musliyar work for Non-

cooperation Movement. It was under the Musliyar's lead that the Khilafat volunteers were organized. His speeches invoked anti-British feeling among the audience. At the instigation of M.P. he started wearing khadi and spoke on non-violence. But when police started persecuting Mappilas, Musliyar lost his confidence in Gandhi, and started organizing volunteers and trained them on military line and appointed Larakkutty and Kunhulavi as commanders of the volunteers. Ali Musliyar is said to have withdrawn back from this line as a result of a congress leaders' admonition and advice.

The move of the District Magistrate, probably was consequent to a evaluation of these developments in Tirurangadi. In the night of August 19, Mr. Thomas, the District Magistrate, Hitch Cock and Amu Sahib started with troops and armed forces from Calicut to Tirurangadi. In the morning they reached Tirurangadi and laid siege to Kizhakkepalli with the intention of arresting the Musliyar. In the evening some police men entered Khilafat office destroyed Khilafat flags, tore up records and inmates were beaten. In the meanwhile Mappila houses were searched and three men were arrested. Some policemen at the head of Amu entered mosque and searched the mosque to get no one from the mosque. Ali Musliyar was absent in the Mosque. Rumours spread all over the neighbouring areas that Ali Musliyar was arrested and *Khizakkepalli* was gunned down. People swarmed from nearby villages especially from *Chanda* of Kottakkal. It seems that people sighed in relief when people found the rumor untrue and the mosque safe. In

the meanwhile a mob of 200 started from Tanur after the rumor at the head of the Khilafat leader Kunhikadar was blocked by the armed forces and clash ensued. Mappilas objected the force and was charged with bayonets. The retaliation of the mob entailed a police firing killing 9 persons with 20 person injured. The mob retreated as a result. No sooner did those who were at *Kizhakkepalli*, which was one mile away from the clash site, know about the incidents then they began to move to the direction of the site, Ali Musliyar who had in the mean while reached the mosque objected the men moving to the site and told the crowd not to go there and he alone will go instead. As his followers stressed that they too will follow him as the force is there to arrest him. Led by Ali Musliyar the crowd moved to the Magistrate court complex where the force was camped. They entered the complex and Ali Musliyar talked to Mr. Johnson and constable Moideen Kutty. The crowd was asked to sit down and they sat on two sides of the road. No sooner did the crowd sit that the army fired at the people. Though situation was confusing the crowd leaped forward and met the forces. Twelve persons were fired to death and thirty wounded in the Mappila side. On the Government's side two Europeans and an Indian constable were killed.

Mappilas seem to have shown an extra ordinary restraint at Tirurangadi. The two firings involved were born solely out of state terrorism.

British force shot at the obediently seated men and that too was with absolutely no warning of any kind. The Tanur Mappilas had nothing but formidable sticks with them. Even though they had retaliated the atrocities at firing sites they was no violence at the sacrilege committed by police by entering mosque and arresting its leaders. Even at this moment too the leadership's intervention was successful to calm down the Mappilas.

But when blood was shed the movement took a violent turn. Between 20 and 25 August. Mappilas responded violently in almost all over Ernad and Walluwanad Taluk. In all the places the government offices were destroyed, records burnt, treasuries looted and police stations attacked with the result that "The whole interior of South Malabar except Palghat taluk is in the hands of rebels . . . . The situation from the point of view of civil administration is that local machinery of Government has broken down. Through out the affected area the Government Offices have been wrecked and looted and records destroyed. Communication have been obstructed . . . . All Government offices and courts have ceased to function and ordinary business is at a stand still."<sup>49</sup>

The first wave of violence comes to an end with the siege of *Kizhakkepalli* and surrender of Ali Musliyar by 31 August 1921. In the meanwhile martial law had been declared in Ernad, Walluvanad and Calicut taluks.

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<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Panikkar K.N., Note 2, p. 148.

The entire region brought under the control of the army. Rails were restored, train started running in the area. Rebels were not on the road nor they committed looting. People who ran away from their houses returned and postal and telegraph services began to work orderly.<sup>50</sup> But this period of peace was a deceptive one. Rebels were only just withdrawing from the roads to save themselves from the wrath of army especially after the surrender of the Musliyar. No sooner did the army moved from the area than the rebels rushed out from their hiding places and started destructive activities. By the middle of September we see South Malabar full of rebel activities. This went on up to the end of January 1922 till the last of rebel leaders were captured and punished after court martial.

For precision of exposition and want of space, a detailed description of events involved in the rebellion is avoided here. What is important for us is to express various dimensions of the rebel activities. As the rebellion is related in some way or other to religion, politics and economy, the events as a whole present the working of a multiple and complex strands and streams to produce what is called Malabar rebellion.

### **What do they say?**

This logically leads us to look into the various ways in which the totality of rebel activity was comprehended and explained. There are mainly

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<sup>50</sup> Madhavan Nair, K., Op. cit., p.174.

three tendencies of treating the rebellion. A host of participants of the movement looks at it predominantly from a nationalistic point of view.<sup>51</sup> Their explanation goes like this. The Rebellion sprang up in a situation when for the one, the government marred the activities of Khilafat-congress leaders from bringing in the basically fanatic sections of Mappilas to the culture of peaceful political participation and secondly a hasty and untactful animosity that the British administrators showed not only to the rebel Mappilas but to the whole Mappilas indiscriminately. Thus, the Mappilas who were treated in most inhuman way slipped out of control and they acted up on the logic of religiosity. This line of explanation ended up in concluding that the rebellion was religiously motivated and directed towards attacking other religions so as to get the rebels' religion dominated in the area.

An other noteworthy explanation is that the rebellion of 1921-22 was the culmination of the century-long struggle in the Malabar for deciding the external and internal frontier of Islamic society.<sup>52</sup> The Basic tendency is to explain the 19 and 20-century uprisings in Malabar as the manifestation of working of the ideology of 'jihad' at particular political and material situations. Here the weightage is for ideology of Islam as the root cause of these uprisings. The material conditions in which the uprising occurred are

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<sup>51</sup> See Madhavan Nair, K., *Malabar Kalapam*, Brahmadathan Nambudiripad, *Khilafat Smaranakal*.

<sup>52</sup> See, Dale, S.F., *Op. cit.*

explained to be timely propellers. Thus, the attempt is to explain the anti-British character of the Rebellion as an attempt to decide the external frontier and anti-Hindu activities as far deciding internal frontiers. As a result his study become almost a study of Hindu-Muslim relations in Malabar for 15<sup>th</sup> C to 20<sup>th</sup> C.

A serious limitation of both these two tendencies in that they use the explanatory categories of 'Hindu' and 'Muslims' and 'Christian' to analysis the events involved in the rebel activities with the result that the role played by material conditions is disregarded.

A major break through in explaining the rebellion was the attempt to explain it in terms of specific material condition prevailed during the rebellion. The method here is to bring out what was the kind of changes that came in to being in the relations of production after the colonial intervention and the focus on the plight of peasantry under the new condition. For them the rebellion was the struggle of peasants to liberate themselves from the yoke of janmis and the government. For them religion and ideology does not play crucial role in the risings.<sup>53</sup> The works of this genre throw lights in the social realities of Malabar society. But they negate the role of ideology in the

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<sup>53</sup> See Wood, Conrad, 'Historical Background of the Moplah Rebellion' in *Social Scientist* III, 1 August, 1974; Tagore, Soumyendranath, *Peasant Revolts in Malabar*, 1921; Namboodiripad, E.M.S., *National Question in Kerala*, Bombay, 1952; *Kerala, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Calcutta, 1967.

rebellion because ideology for them was an out growth of material conditions prevailed in the area.

A scholarly attempt is also made to study the Malabar Rebellion as one that took its shape the milieu of the nationalist politics. The Khilafat-non cooperation movement, according to this point of view, failed to go on the proclaimed way due to the non belief of some extremist Khilafatists and as a result of 'turmoil' that came into being after the withdrawal of forces from Tirurangadi and the withdrawal of administrative army with the result that the miscreant element among Mappilas took recourse to indiscriminate actions of attack on persons and property belongs to 'Hindu' community. The ensuing sensitivity of North Indians towards the uprising is argued to have contributed to the politics of partition in India.<sup>54</sup>

A significant addition to the materialist explanation is that of K.N. Panikkar.<sup>55</sup> His brilliant analysis of social and cultural milieu of Malabar especially South Malabar proved successful in bridging the explanatory chasm that prevailed in the models of existing scholarship on Rebellion. For him the root of the rebellion lies in the peasant distress on account of their poverty, unemployment and insecurity of tenure which is a product of colonial intervention in the economic and social life of Malabar. At the same

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<sup>54</sup> See M. Gangadharan, *The Malabar Rebellion (1920-21)*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Calicut University, 1985.

<sup>55</sup> See Panikkar, Note 2.

time he does not negate the autonomy of religion as ideology in propelling the rebellion. According to him it was the religious ideology which enabled the discontent to be translated into action. Drawing from the scholarship mentioned we can draw a clear picture of the manifold dimensions of the Rebellion of 1921.

### **The Leaders and the People**

With the incidents in Tirurangadi the congress leaders found themselves out of place in Malabar for all the attempt to bring back Mappilas to the nationalist creed of nonviolence failed utterly. The half-hearted visit of K.P. Kesava Menon to Tirurangadi two times and the sincere attempts of Mohammed Abdurahiman, K. Madhava Menon, E. Moidu Maulavi and M.P. Narayana Menon – all proved futile. Mappila rebels turned out Congress leaders. Though Ali Musliyar paid heed to the advice of nationalist leaders, his lieutenants were not ready to do so.<sup>56</sup> The declaration of martial law further obstructed the leaders' movement. Congress leaders were not dare enough to violate the prohibitory orders congress leaders, thus let the event go on its own way. And they seem to have grown up a tendency to dissociate with rebels and cut their identity off the Khilafat activists.

At the same time the rebels began to be organized under a new leadership. Those who were already in picture when the Khilafat non

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<sup>56</sup> Menon, M.P.S., Op. cit., pp.113-4.

cooperation started and at the same time had not come to the forefront of the movement took up the leadership of the Mappilas. Variyankunnath Kuhuamed Haji, Chambrasser Tangal, Karat Moideen Kutty Haji are best examples. So many local leaders mainly Musliyers and Tangals also rose to the leadership in their own areas. They were not fully brought under the control of a central leadership. The most important one among these leaders was, no doubt, Variyan Kunnath Kunammed Haji who hails from Nellikkuth and was very close to the family of Ali Musliyar. He tried his best to bring the area back to order. By his initiative a meetings was held at Pandikkad and a region wise leadership was declared. He himself declared the head of Khilafat kingdom with head quarters at Nilambur. He punished the criminals and the looters. He declared a martial law of his own and regulated the movement of people through issuing passes. He liked to style himself as the Amir of Muslims and Raja of Hindus in the Khilafat kingdom.<sup>57</sup>

But never was it possible to control and regulate the activities of rebels at a time when the regular communication between region was almost impossible due to the presence of army. More over the rebellion was not a planned one organized to hold under some leaders. It was the spontaneous uprising of people at a time when government began to repress the activities of Khilafat non-cooperation moment. With the waning of the leadership, new

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<sup>57</sup> Madhavan Nair, *Op. cit.*, p.184, 234-35; Menon, *M.P.S.*, *Op. cit.*, pp.127-30.

one rose from local milieu to lead the mob on their own way. As the essence of non-cooperation had not been percolated in to and received in the rural areas, the mob under local leadership behaved with utmost enmity towards those who were understood to have been their foes.

Under such a situation of turmoil, a variety of suppressed emotions had inevitably surfaced. Consequently a blend of class antagonism, group rivalries, personal animosities, individual cupidity, suppressed sexual desires, imaginary religious ambition and above all the anti-British feelings gave its expression in the avenues of Khilafat politics.<sup>58</sup> The rebel action now was not led under an organized leadership but petty groups locally formed.

By studying the social composition of the rebels and the nature of rebel behaviour, it has now been cogently argued that the two basic targets of the rebels were the British and the jenmis, which led us to think that the discontent of the rebels sprang from anti-British and anti-Jenmis sentiments. On the basis of court records and jail records, in addition to government records-, the social composition of rebels has been brought out. The lion share of rebels hails from the social stratum of cultivators and labourers. It does not mean that propertied class was absent among them. But their presence was minimal. It is also pretty clear that Mappilas manned the major part of the rebels. This has led the British to label it as Mappila Rebellion.

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<sup>58</sup> Panikkar, K.N., Note 2, p.165.

But when we look in to Mappila participation in relation to the Mappila population of the region only 1/3 of the population participated and the rest kept aloof. The participation of Hindus, though limited in range and action, is also born out by the official documents.

The rebel behaviour shows the articulation anti-British sentiments both among the leaders and local groups. Almost everywhere rebellion started attacking the spaces of British administrative presence and European personals. Government Building such as registration office, *kacheris*, and police station because they all stood out as symbols of British rule. It was also from these spaces that land transfers even registered, decreed evictions and executed then respectively. Rebels wrath towards Europeans in conspicuous from the killings of S.P. Eton and attempt over the lives of C.E.M. Brown and E.H. Colebrooks. In addition to the fact that they were Europeans they represented the exploitative machinery grew around plantation industries. Had not the Europeans been cautioned by the district magistrate, the casualty to Europeans would have been rather more.<sup>59</sup>

Rebels' action directed intensively towards jenmis. The main agenda in this line was collection of materials needed for the rebels. First they requested, if the jenmi not willing forcefully took all those things they wanted from their residence, an act stand equal to looting. This trend was wide

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<sup>59</sup> Madhavan Nair, Op. cit., p.99.

spread all through the rebel areas. Another form of rebel's articulation of anti-Jenmi sentiment is house-breaking and killings. This type of behaviour seems to have born out of tenants' wrath to their jenmi. The good examples are the incidents of Nilambur in which Tirumulpads *kovilagam* was attacked and of Nannambra villages at Tanur in which rebels indiscriminately killed eight persons and abducted the son and daughter of the jenmi. In both cases the tenants of the landlord directly led the movement of rebels. It is also interesting to note that whenever the tenants attacked the jenmis household, a main target within the household was the record rooms. The destruction of record rooms shows the rebels' ire towards the rent collection machinery of the landlord.

Some of the actions of the rebel give the impression that they were acting with a motivation of destroying Hindus of Malabar. This is because a number of Hindus were killed especially in the time of the turmoil. We have already seen that Jenmis and their relatives were killed by the tenants. Jenmis killed were upper class Hindus of Malabar. Several of lower castes too were killed and attacked. This was, in fact, a punishment due to the help rendered by them to the army. Hindus were beheaded with the order of Khilafat rulers after the latter declared martial law of their own. Variankunnath proclaimed himself the Khilafat ruler at Nilambur with additional orders preventing the movement of Hindus and effecting a martial law of his own. These who tried

to disregard his power and showed leanings towards British were caught up and killed.<sup>60</sup>

A serious aberration of the rebels was their attempt at compulsory conversions of men to Islam. From August 23 onwards the rebels had started converting non-Muslim to Islam. But Conversion was not under the Khilafat leadership. The only one Khilafatist who participated in forcible conversions were Karat Moideen Kutty. The rest of those practiced forcible conversion were local leaders like, Konmara Tangal, Abu Haji, Abubacker, etc. They were not Khilafat leaders. The two factors worked behind this was (1) the concern for enhancement of rebel strength and (2) some understood the rebellion in terms of religion. Forcible conversion in the first phase was a strategy for the increase in the number of rebels. Conversion in Pookoottur in the first wave of rebellion was of this kind. Conversions took place at the second wave is the result of the work of some leaders including Tangals, Musliyers and locally powerful Mappilas who understood the rebellion solely in terms of religion. They seem to have found the establishment of Khilafat kingdom with dominance for their religion. Some rebel bands had with them the men and material required for conversions during their movement. Karat Moideen Kutty the only Khilafat leader who acted with a religious inclination had converted 500 men. Konnara Tangal was the brother of a Thangal who

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., Op. cit., 234-35.

earlier had worked for calming down Mappilas and rescued men from the hands of rebels. He started the forcible conversions because he had the pique of some non-Muslims attacked the mosque under their control and burned religious books in the shadow of police forces.<sup>61</sup> A close reading of the political situation under which the rebellion sprang up, the social composition of the participants in the rebellion and the nature of rebel activity won't allow us to dismiss the rebellion as a spate of wild and ferocious actions of some number of vicious, criminal, fanatic and ignorant Mappilas.

But the violence has its roots in social and cultural tensions that came into the fore under the colonial government. The rebels, who predominantly came from the lower strata of society, acted violently towards those belongs to propertied upper classes. They also punished those who helped the government irrespective of religious and other considerations. The predominance of Mappilas among the rebel tend us to go to another problem. Why the non-Mappila's response was lukewarm and they refrained from participating the rebellion in large number. The possible answers lies in the religion. Islam with its egalitarian principles and utmost concern for justice created a space outside the caste system. So that the members of the faith could know each other and work together. Coupled with the pitiful conditions of Mappilas, the communication facilities innate in their religion promoted

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<sup>61</sup> Panikkar, K.N., Note 2, pp.180-81.

the formation of a rebel identity. This kind of commingling was not possible for those who belong the so-called Hindus because of caste system. The government interference in social and economic process had not brought the people out from the tenacious clutches of caste system. Thus religions ideology has a pivotal role in the rise and escalation of the rebellion. The cultural 'backwardness' was to a great extent responsible for the people for rising in such a violent upheaval. The participants lacked training in the political method which is the part and parcel of the democratic political culture disseminated through different agencies. What is important for us, after all, is that the Rebellion of 1921 was as much a symptom of social and cultural changes occurred under colonialism as an event that paved the way for significant social, cultural and political developments.

**SOCIAL LIFE IN SOUTH MALABAR (1921-1947)  
RELIEF, REFORM AND NATIONALISM**

**Thesis  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
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**MUHAMMEDALI T.**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

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## CHAPTER II

### ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

The colonial land revenue policy had the most subversive effect in the traditional economy of Malabar since land constituted the main source of livelihood of the people. The company had brought about basic changes in the nature of land rights in order to exact as much revenue as possible with minimum effort. Traditionally *Jenmam* and *Kanam* rights were the two major interests in the land. These interests, it is argued, have been evolved as a result of acquisition of control over land by the Nambudiri Brahmins, when they took advantage of their own position in *sabhas*, which administered temples between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously with this, certain norms based on the principles of equal sharing of net produce between the Jenmi, Kanamdar and cultivator were also taken shape. This form of collective interests in the land was maintained through customary social practices called *Jenmam-kanam Maryada*. Caste system was essential to this as labour could only be mobilized through a social disciplining.

#### **Land, Riots and Legislations**

The introduction of exclusive proprietorship in land by colonial government effected deep changes in the traditional economic and social

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<sup>1</sup>Veluthat, Kesavan, *Brahman Settlements in Kerala*, Calicut, 1978, pp.86-93.  
Narayanan, M.G.S., *Perumals of Kerala*, Calicut, 1996, pp.188-196.

setting. Janmis were identified as the individual owners of the land. Kanam was defined as interest leased out to Kanakkar by Jenmi for rent and was terminable at the end of every twelve years. Government recognized Jenmis as ryot in whom "the exclusive right to hereditary possession and usufruct of the soil was vested" and the one "who possessed a property in the soil more absolute than even that of landlord in Europe". This struck at the root of traditional way of distributionism. New Jenmis became individuals who 'possessed' the land and the kanakkar those who got terminable right to enjoy land through 'leases' for rent. The customary norms of the traditional collective interest in the land called *Jenmam-Kanam-Maryada*, thus, gave way to colonial legality, the content and values of which is absolutely determined by individualism. Evictions, which was insignificant in pre-colonial times, now, became a dominant phenomena.

The entry of the government as an additional interest in the land who took off at least one third of the net produce, in fact, worsened the situation further. Traditionally the net produce was equally showed between Jenmis, Kanakkar and cultivator. In the new system one third of the net produce was to remain with cultivator and six-tenth of the rest was to go to government and four-tenth to the Jenmi.<sup>2</sup> Thus two-third of the total produce was taken away from the 'cultivator' what is to see here is that 'cultivator' in Malabar is

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<sup>2</sup> Innes, C.A., *Malabar Gazatters*, Vol. I & II, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.330.

consisted of not only kanomdar who received leases from jenmi but also verumpattakkar to whose lands were further leased out generally for one year, agricultural labourers and agrestic slaves. This means that one-third of the net produce was to be distributed among all component of 'cultivators' who constituted the lion part of the population. As such, it requires little imagination to see the increasing deterioration of those directly involved in the cultivator of land.

The attempts of the colonial government to find out the causes of the Mappila out breaks had brought out the depth of this deterioration the lower order of cultivators in South Malabar. No commission constituted to enquire into the Mappilas out breaks could leave the bad plight of Mappila peasantry untouched. Even T.L. Strange who attributed these outbreaks to the fanaticism of Mappilas found the exploitation of cultivators and labourers as an evil which 'to some extent prevails'.<sup>3</sup> William Logan located the roots of the outbreaks in the exploitative world of agricultural production. More over he openly criticized the colonial land revenue policy as it was based on an enormous perception of traditional tenurial system in Malabar. He also called for legislative intervention of the government to provide tenurial permanency

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter I, p.19.

for actual cultivators in the soil.<sup>4</sup> Logan's Report was, thus, first initiated a discussion on introducing Tenancy Acts in Malabar.

Logan's findings and views ran counter to the interests of the jenmis. Government refrained from considering a movement that would spoil the fortunes of a class loyal and amenable to the British. In view of intricacy of the subject and interests involved, government referred Logan's Report to a special commission (1884) with Sir T. Madhava Rao as president. This commission too found the grave discontent prevailing among agricultural classes regarding the growing insecurity of their tenures' and submitted a draft Malabar Tenancy Bill along with the report.<sup>5</sup> The commission contented that the Jenmis claim to a right of eviction is unsupported by ancient usage and the draft Bill proposed an occupancy right to every tenant holding direct from a Jenmi. This endeavour too failed due to the intervention of high court which upheld the British administrative and judicial interpretation that the jenmi as full owner of the soil.<sup>6</sup>

In 1885 Government appointed another commission with C.G. Master as president to look into the tenancy question. With his report, Master

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<sup>4</sup> See Minutes of the Secretary in the Revenue Department (Secretary of State) dated 10.03.1881 in PPRM, pp.189-93.

<sup>5</sup> Radhakrishnan, P., *Peasant Struggles, Land Reforms and Social Change*, New Delhi, 1989, p.69.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.69.

submitted two draft Bills; one stipulating that no tenant shall be ordinarily evicted except at the end of the agricultural year and after six months notice; the other to legislate in order to secure to tenants the full value of their improvements at the time of eviction. Of these two the government accepted the latter and enacted it as Malabar compensation for Tenants Improvement Act 1 of 1887.<sup>7</sup> The Act indeed provided for compensation of improvements made by the tenants at the time of eviction from the land. But with many loope holes in the Act, especially the lack of clarity in defining compensation and the inadequacy of compensation awarded, and the misapprehension about the intention of the Act caused by mutually inconsistent court ruling, it failed to check arbitrary evictions in general.<sup>8</sup> As far as South Malabar was concerned the Act could not make much difference compensation for improvement meaningful only for tenants possessing garden land. South Malabar being an area dominated by wetland cultivation had nothing to do with this Act. This situation went unchanged even after the amendment of the Act in 1900.<sup>9</sup> In the meanwhile the attempt of Mr. Dance, the district collector of Malabar, to bring in 'the Malabar Melcharth Bill' with a view to restricting under certain conditions the power of granting melcharth had proved futile due to government's refusal to act up on it.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.70.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp.70-71.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.71.

An official record tells us the situation in 1915. In a report submitted in this year, Innes pointed out that 1900 Act have failed to achieve the principal object for which it was passed, viz., prevention of capricious and arbitrary eviction, that tenants were still entirely at the mercy of Jenmis, that they were not better under intermediaries or kanakkar either, and that actual cultivator of the soil had to be protected both against the Jenmi and Kanakkar. He found ample ground for legislation in the prevalence of rack-renting, arbitrary and capricious eviction, inadequate compensation for improvement, insecurity of tenure, exorbitant renewal fees and social tyrrany of Jenmis.<sup>10</sup> Government did not act on these lines probably because they feared the alienation of a loyal class from the government.

It was in this background that the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 occurred. We have seen the fate of the nationalistic political agenda of non-cooperation and the ideology of non-violence in the Southern Part of Malabar during the khilafat non cooperation movement. To explain the violent rising of Mappilas in South Malabar, religiosity is only part of a whole. A major factor that brought Mappilas in to the vortex of Nationalist politics was the intensive mobilization of them around the question of tenancy issues. But with success of the government in quelling the rebellion government seems to have withdrawn from tenancy legislation. It took a period of about a decade

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<sup>10</sup> G.O. No.3021 dtd. 26<sup>th</sup> September 1917 (Revenue Department), Confidential in PPRM, pp.264-272.

to get another Tenancy Bill enacted with the passage of the Malabar tenancy Bill of 1929.

In the meanwhile the Act of 1919 had provided extended spaces for legislative participation for Indians. The question of tenancy in Malabar captured a dominant place in the political agenda. We have seen elsewhere that the kanam tenants had wrested the political leadership from Jenmis especially in South Malabar with the tenancy leaders capturing the congress leadership. With the support of this leadership who led intensive political agitation for tenurial fixity of tenants, M. Krishnan Nair, himself a jenmi, championed the cause of tenants as he brought in the Malabar Tenancy Bill in Madras Legislative Council in 1924. Though watered down through many legislative formalities the Bill was enacted in 1930 as the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930.

The Act provided fixity of tenure as fair fixation of rent for kanakkar and verumpattakar. But, on account of many loopholes, the provisions of the Act were mostly illusory to all but kanakkar and a few rich verumpattakkar.<sup>11</sup> The heavy expenditure required for setting cases through courts, the delay in the settlement of disputes, the bias of the courts in favour of landlords all came in the way of availing the benefits conferred by the Act. The case with which landlords were able to resume lands for their own cultivation, or for

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<sup>11</sup> Nambudiripad, E.M.S., *A Short History of Peasant Movement in Kerala*, Bombay, 1943, p.14.

cultivation by members of their family, impinged effectively on the security of tenure offered to all classes of tenants, especially with respect to the cultivating verumpattom class. Thus the Act of 1930 seemed to have had the effect mainly safeguarding the interests of the upper layers of the tenancy – the kanomdars and customary verumpattom class – many of whom continued to be intermediaries rather than actual cultivators.<sup>12</sup>

Malabar Tenancy Act went through two amendments, one in 1951 and the second in 1954. Following many agitations and unrests, and based on the recommendations of Tenancy Committees of 1940, the Act of 1930 was amended in 1951. By this the renewal, and then by *melcharths*, were abolished in all cases of renewable tenures and as such they got fixity of tenure. As regards verumattamdars rents were further reduced and the liability to pay advance rent removed. However landlords could on certain specified grounds one for eviction from tenants enjoying fixity. More over verumpattomdar was subject to eviction at the end of agricultural year, if landlord or any member of the landlord family desire it for self-cultivation.<sup>13</sup>

These limitations were made up to some extent in the amendment of 1954. It conferred protection on all cultivating verumpattomdar occupying a holding for a period of six year or more from eviction for self cultivation by a

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<sup>12</sup> T.C. Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences*, Bombay, 1970, pp.137-138.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.141-142.

landlord. However eviction was permitted in the case of those who occupy below six years for self cultivation.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the attempts for land tenancy legislation after rebellion of 1921 had brought about telling changes in the possession of land. The prominent among them was the rise of kanakkar as a landholding class. The passage of the Malabar Tenancy Act had upgraded the social position of the kanamdars – a class which mainly constituted by Nayar caste – who had already rose to the upper rungs of society through their entry to English education and governmental services. Verumpattakkar as a class could not benefit from the Acts and amendments. Verumpattakkar occupying holdings more than six years were given fixity. But as the lion part of verumpatton tenure was meant of one agricultural year this provision benefited only by a microscopic minority of Verumpattom class. Still the question of agricultural labourers and agrestic slaves left untouched both by the government and political bodies.

### **Conditions of Production**

A clear picture of changes in the conditions of production can be formed out of a comparative analysis of information and data available in the census records pertaining to Malabar, the statistical surveys of Malabar and the settlement and re-settlements Registers of Malabar. Valuable insight can

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.142.

also be drawn from the secondary works. Statistical records show a steady growth of population in South Malabar during the period under study. A picture of growth of population can be derived from the census and the official records. Table 2.1. shows us the variation in the growth of population in the taluks of South Malabar in succeeding decades after 1911. The trend in the growth of population can also be understood from the Statistical Atlas of Malabar. Table 2.1A shows us the trend in the population of South Malabar (Taluk wise) during the period under study.

**Table 2.1**

**POPULATION VARIATION IN SOUTH MALABAR 1911 – 1951\***

Taluk	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951
Kozhikode & Lackadives	281632	300211	358555	419017	530364
Ernad	392607	401101	455980	515851	614283
Walluwanad	373934	394517	435837	487418	573457
Palghat	414009	427015	463883	495634	585651
Ponnani	529383	533252	626470	686929	793805
Total	1991565	2056096 (3.24)	2340725 (13.84)	2604849 (11.28)	3097560 (18.91)

\*Source: Census Hand Book, 1951, Malabar.

Table 2.1 A

**STATEMENT SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND  
TREND IN GROWTH OF POPULATION IN SOUTH MALABAR  
(TALUK WISE) in 1941\***

Taluks (1)	Population per square mile	Population per 1000 Acres of		Loss/Gain in the preceding periods			
		Arable land	Cultivated land	1901- 11	1911- 21	1921- 31	1931- 41
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Calicut	1071	2268	3558	6.0	7.3	19.6	17.0
Ernad	527	1035	2462	9.9	2.2	13.7	13.1
Walluwanad	558	1298	2396	6.5	5.5	10.5	11.8
Palghat	771	2137	2428	6.1	3.1	8.6	6.8
Ponnani	1421	2659	3148	10.7	0.7	17.5	9.7
Average of whole South Malabar				7.84	3.76	13.98	11.68
Average of whole Malabar District	671	1433	2569	7.8	2.8	14.0	11.2

- Statistical Atlas of Malabar

From Table 2.1A it is clear that though with a slow pace between 1911 and 1921, the population of South Malabar was growing tremendously after 1921. The rate of growth in 1921 was 3.24 percent. But it was 13.84 in 1931, 11.28 in 1941 and 18.91 in 1951. The percentage of growth in 1951 in relation to 1911 is 55.53. This shows that after the Rebellion, violence and suppression the situation in South Malabar had become a place where peaceful earning of livelihood was pretty possible.

In the table columns 5,6,7 and 9 shows the trend in the growth of population. After a general slow down in the growth rate in the period 1911-21 we see almost a steady pace of growth in population after 1921.

**Table 2.2**

**AVERAGE AREA OF CULTIVATION (IN HUNDREDS OF ACRES) IN SOUTH MALABAR\***

Taluks	1913	1936	1940
Calicut	1071	1134 (5.8)	1298 (14.46)
Ernad	2226	1930 (-132)	2368 (22.69)
Walluwanad	2314	2447 (5.7)	2448 (.04)
Palghat	2673	2850 (6.6)	2900 (1.75)
Ponnani	2236	2624 (17.35)	2523 (-3.84)
Total South Malabar	10520	10985 (4.42)	11553 (5.1)

\*The figures are derived from the Statistical Atlas of Malabar of 1913, 1936 and 1940-41.

The cultivated area seems to have extended slowly and steadily. Table 2.2 will show this state of growth. Though some decrease are seem in certain taluk at certain period, when we consider the fine decades after 1913 the area cultivated had been increased, but in a slow place. This growth is in no way proportionate to the rate of growth of population. The average of rate of growths of population in taluks in South Malabar in 1911-21 is 3.78 and in

1921-31 13.98. The growth- rate of the cultivated land in the area corresponding to this period, ie., between 1913-36 is only 4.42. The Average rate of population growth in taluks of South Malabar between 1931-41 is 11.68 where as the growth rate of cultivated land between 1936-41 is 5.1. This shows that the increase in the cultivated area was not sufficient to absorb the rising population.

The increase in the cultivated area too was not in the wet land cultivation but in the dry land cultivation. Where as the wet land area cultivation increased for 591000 Acres in 1913 to 599000 Acres in 1940, the dry land cultivation rose from 461000 Acres in 1913 to 556300 Acres in 1940 in South Malabar. It is no exaggeration to say that wetland cultivation registered no rise at all in South Malabar except in Palghat taluk. Table 2.3 shows the variation in the growth of wet and dry land cultivations in South Malabar.

Table 2.3

## AVERAGE AREA OF DRY/WET CULTIVATION, IN HUNDREDS OF ACRES IN SOUTH MALABAR\*

Year	CALICUT		ERNAD		WALLUVANAD		PALGHAT		PONNANI		SOUTH MALABAR	
	Dry	Wet	Dry	Wet	Dry	Wet	Dry	Wet	Dry	Wet	Dry	Wet
1913	685	386	1251	975	965	1349	704	1969	1005	1231	4610	5910
1936	781	353	970	960	1103	1344	784	2066	1285	1339	4923	6062
1940	917	381	1430	938	1104	1344	824	2076	1288	1251	5563	5990

Source: Statistical Atlas of Malabar, 1913, 1936, 1940-41.

This is indicative of a movement of people from wetland cultivation to dry land cultivation. This probably has opened new opportunities for agricultural labourers and more profit for Jenmis and kanakkar. The provision of fixity of tenure to kanakkar too might have worked behind this increase. The decline in the price of rice also contributed to the decline in the wetland cultivation.<sup>15</sup>

As general increase in the cultivated area does not lead to a considerable decline in the concentration of people in the cultivated area. A comparison of Tables 2.4 and 2.5 will show the variation in concentration.

**Table 2.4**

**DENSITY OF POPULATION IN SOUTH MALABAR 1911\***

Taluk	Per square Mile	Per 1000 acres of		Total of average area of Dry and Wet land cultivation in 1913 (00) ACS
		Arable	Cultivated	
Calicut	715	2634	3367	1071
Ernad	406	1014	2494	2226
Walluvanad	424	1153	2577	2314
Palghat	644	1963	2439	2673
Ponnani	1243	2551	2811	2236
Average of South Malabar	686	1863	2737	10520

\*Source: Statistical Atlas of Malabar, 1913.

<sup>15</sup> See R Dis 10012/33 RAK.

Table 2.5

**DENSITY OF POPULATION IN SOUTH MALABAR 1941\***

Taluks	Per square Mile	Per 1000 Acres of		Per-centage of growth to that of 1913	Total of average area of wet/dry cultivation in 1941 (00) ACS	Per-centage of growth to that of 1913
		Arable land	Cultivated land			
Calicut	1071	2268	3558	5.67	1298	21.19
Ernad	527	1035	2462	-1.28	2368	6.37
Walluvanad	558	1298	2376	-7	2448	5.79
Palghat	771	2137	2468	1.18	2900	8.49
Ponnani	1421	2659	3148	11.98	2539	13.55
Average of South Malabar	869	1379	2806	2.52	11553	9.81

\*Source: Statistical Atlas of Malabar, 1940-41.

A comparison of Table 2.4 and 2.5 shows that the lower the rate of growth in the cultivated area the less is the concentration of population. The lowest increase in the cultivated area between 1913 and 1940 is in Walluwanad with 5.79 percent. Number of persons per 1000 acres of cultivated had decreased from 2577 in 1911 to 2396 in 1941 with a rate of -7.0. Ernad taluk too shows the same trend. The concentration is increased at high rates both in Calicut and Ponnani which also show a high percentage of growth in the cultivated area. The rates of growth in the cultivated area between 1913 and 1941 in Calicut and Ponnani are 21.19 and 13.55 respectively. Both tops in the concentration of population in the cultivated

area in 1940; Calicut with 3558 per 1000 acres and Ponnani 3148 with an increase of 5.6% and 11.98% respectively between 1911 and 1941. When we consider the fact that the growth in the cultivated area is almost equal to the growth in dry land cultivation, we can reasonably assume that the gravity of life in South Malabar was changing from wetland to dry land area. Moreover high rate of growth of population per square mile on the one hand and a general decrease in the concentration of population in the cultivated area lead us to the fact that the lion share of increased amount of population was seeking other opportunities of livelihood than that of cultivation. Despite the difficulty of locating them with the help of census and other records, it is sure that this population was not so numerous to change the base of agricultural economy of South Malabar with a considerable share of population participating in non-agricultural productions or other tertiary sector.

### **Non-agricultural Production**

An examination of livelihood pattern in South Malabar in 1951<sup>16</sup> will amply shows this situation. In a total population of 3252257 people, 1642992 persons earn their livelihood directly from the land. They constitute (a) cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents (b) cultivators of land wholly or mainly un owned and their dependents (c) cultivating labourers and their dependents (d) Non-cultivating owners of land,

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<sup>16</sup> See Census Hand Book, Malabar, 1951.

agricultural rent receivers and dependents. The number of those who earn their livelihood from other than land are strictly 895110. The number of those who earn their livelihood from miscellaneous and other services came to 714151. To say it is another way 50.51 percent of the total population in South Malabar earn their livelihood directly from land 27.5 percent population earn their livelihood from sources other than land. Still the problem is with earnings from miscellaneous and other items. Since the spaces for non-cultivational jobs are very limited it is probable that the lion share of those whose livelihood is stated to be from miscellaneous and other item lived on earning from land. A proportionate division of those who earned their livelihood through miscellaneous jobs between agricultural sections and non agricultural sections allow us to conclude that 65% earned their livelihood through jobs related to agricultural production is the land and only 35% lived unrelated to land and agriculture in South Malabar. This can also be positively correlated with the concentration of population in the cultivated area of land during decades after 1911. This lead us to conclude that a growth of non-cultivational economic realm cannot be seen to absorb the steadily rising population. In other words the main source of subsistence for the people still was agriculture.

Much more clear picture can be drawn, if we examine the conditions of Industrial production. In 1951 there was no large scale Industries in Taluks of Kottayam, Ernad, Ponnani and Cochin. Table 2.6 shows the distribution of large scale Industries in the taluks of South Malabar.

**Statement showing the distribution of large scale Industries in South Malabar (Taluk wise) 1951\***

No.	Items of production	Kozhikode		Walluvanad		Palghat	
		No. of Industries	No. of Persons employed	No. of Industries	No. of Persons employed	No. of Industries	No. of Persons employed
1.	Animal oils and fat	1	45				
2.	Soap works	3	238				
3.	Coffee curing works	2	363				
4.	Cashew nut Industry	1	926				
5.	Spinning & Weaving factories	17	1913				
6.	Knitting Mills	2	280				
7.	Coir factories	7	900			5	2293
8.	Umbrella manufacture	2	204				
9.	Furniture manufacture	5	349				
10.	Saw mills	25	1165				
11.	Match factories	11	622	4	203	7	373
12.	Printing press	12	392				
13.	Bricks & Tiles	11	4032	3	207		
14.	General Engineering	6	402	2	300		
15.	Motor works	7	705				
16.	Metal products			4	355		
17.	Glass manufacturer					1	217
	Total	112	12536	13	1065	13	2883**

\*Census Hand Book, Malabar, 1951.

\*\* There was no large scale industries in Ernad and Ponnani Taluk

The table shows that the large scale industries mainly concentrated in Kozhikode taluk. Other taluks possessed a negligible portion of large scale industries. In Kozhikode taluk 112 Industries employed 12536 persons where as in Walluvanad 13 industries employed 1065 persons. Palghat taluk too possessed 13 industries with an employment capacity for 2883 persons. There was a complete absence of large scale industries in Ernad and Ponnani taluks.

In the absence of large scale industries, small scale industries, could have given extended opportunities for the people. However, the state of small scale industries was not so hopeful in South Malabar. Table 2.6 shows the state of cottages and small scale industries in South Malabar.

**Table 2.6**  
**STATEMENT OF COTTAGES AND SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES AND APPROXIMATE NUMBERS EMPLOYED IN SOUTH MALABAR (TALUKWISE) 1951\***

No.	Items Produced	Kozhikode		Ernad		Walluwanad		Palghat		Ponnani & Fort Cochin	
		No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed	No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed	No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed	No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed	No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed
1.	Cotton spinning, sizing and weaving	348	821	463	1756	596	1346	2191	7172	222	735
2.	Rope making	446	1392	7	27	--	--	81	228	411	1874
3.	Mat weaving	--	--	3	13	18	22	135	321	113	282
4.	Manufacture of Dairy Products	11	22	--	--	--	--	2	4	--	--
5.	Fish preservation	3	6	11	66	--	--	--	--	59	238
6.	Vegitable oil pressing	198	480	82	202	16	37	74	205	168	590
7.	Manufacture of Beedis	134	374	238	755	110	365	140	500	274	767
8.	Umbrella making	--	--	00	00	34	179	245	1284	--	--
9.	Cobblerly and Footwear	20	45	11	27	2	7	17	82	8	22
10.	other leather works	--	--	---	--	--	-	--	--	--	--

Contd.....

No.	Items Produced	Kozhikode		Ernad		Walluwanad		Palghat		Ponnani & Fort Cochin	
		No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed	No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed	No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed	No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed	No. of Industries	No. of Person Employed
11.	Copper, brass, bell metal etc.	22	67	24	69	20	69	110	336	75	301
12.	Boat making	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
13.	Coach building transport equipments, etc.	5	14	1	2	--	--	2	8	--	--
14.	Soap manufacture	8	36	--	--	1	2	7	31	3	17
15.	Pottery	38	107	169	580	67	273	357	1330	71	267
16.	Basket making	13	53	59	183	118	428	434	1650	148	618
17.	Furniture making	33	120	--	--	--	--	3	9	--	--
18.	Medical & Pharmaceutical manufacturers	19	40	12	37	--	--	--	--	1	4
19.	Manufacture of Perfumes	2	6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
20.	Gur manufacture	--	--	--	--	--	--	2252	10017	--	--
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1300</b>	<b>3583</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>3717</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>2728</b>	<b>6050</b>	<b>23177</b>	<b>1553</b>	<b>5710</b>
	<b>Percentage of Total Population</b>		<b>0.67</b>		<b>0.6</b>		<b>0.47</b>		<b>3.95</b>		<b>0.71</b>

\*Census Hand Book Malabar, 1951.

Table shows that there was no considerable amount of small scale and cottage industries to absorb a commendable share of population. In all taluks except Palghat this sector employed only below 1% of its population. Palghat taluk provides employment for 3.95 of its total population in this sector. Out of 3097560 persons in South Malabar in 1951 only 38915 persons were employed in the cottage and small scale industries sector.

The statements shown in Table 2.5 and 2.6 is more reliable to draw a picture of non- agricultural production existed in the South Malabar. These are more concrete in classification and reliability than the statement of livelihood pattern shown in this census records. The particulars of this table will help us to conclude that only a marginal segment of peoples participated and employed in non-agricultural production in South Malabar. That too was also proportionate in the sense that large scale industries were largely concentrated in Kozhikode taluk and more than 55% of the total cottage industries units were concentrated in Palghat possessing 59.5% of the total persons employed in the small scale industrial sector. This shows that the taluks of Ernad, Walluvanad and Ponnani could not provide opportunities of production and employment in the same sector. Thus the poor state of non-agricultural production once more will lead us to conclude that the main source of economic life was land and main economic activity cultivation. Land being the main source of income of the people, the possession of and the

rights in the land, of course will have a telling role in determining the structure of social life.

### Land Holdings

A comparison of particulars available in the settlement and resettlement registers will show us the pattern of land holdings in South Malabar during the period under study. Table 2.7 shows the pattern of land holding in some of the Desams in different taluks of South Malabar.

**Table 2.7**

**DISTRIBUTION OF LAND HOLDINGS AND REVENUE IN SOME OF THE DESAMS IN SOUTH MALABAR 1900/01**

Cheramba Desam (Karuvarakundu)

Pattadars Paying	Number			Extent		Assessment	
	Single	Joint	Total	Acres	Cents	Rs.	A
Re 1 and less	2	..	2	2	34	1	5
Rs.10 -1	7	2	9	26	24	45	6
Rs.30 - 10	5	1	6	60	18	88	6
Rs.50 - 30	2	..	2	38	61	97	14
Rs.100 - 50	6	--	6	204	29	456	--
Rs.250 - 100	6	--	6	379	4	806	8
Rs.500 - 250	3	--	3	640	91	1062	9
Rs.1000 - 500	1	--	1	547	17	930	10
Above Rs.1000	--	--	---	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1898</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>3488</b>	<b>10</b>

**Parappanangadi Desam**

Pattadars Paying	Number			Extent		Assessment	
	Single	Joint	Total	Acres	Cents	Rs.	A
Re 1 and less	58	6	64	13	8	15	6
Rs.10 -1	108	13	121	142	99	565	5
Rs.30 - 10	43	10	53	226	78	927	12
Rs.50 - 30	10	1	11	94	12	412	4
Rs.100 - 50	7	2	9	163	95	669	3
Rs.250 - 100	5	--	5	183	28	778	15
Rs.500 - 250	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Rs.1000 - 500	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Above Rs.1000	--	--	---	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>824</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3368</b>	<b>13</b>

**Keraladhiswarapuram**

Pattadars Paying	Number			Extent		Assessment	
	Single	Joint	Total	Acres	Cents	Rs.	A
Re 1 and less	64	8	72	37	40	31	7
Rs.10 -1	122	16	138	228	37	618	9
Rs.30 - 10	29	6	35	192	7	562	8
Rs.50 - 30	10	--	10	138	79	396	8
Rs.100 - 50	3	--	3	58	35	190	5
Rs.250 - 100	6	1	7	416	10	1011	5
Rs.500 - 250	2	--	2	240	36	556	5
Rs.1000 - 500	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Above Rs.1000	--	--	---	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>1311</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>3366</b>	<b>15</b>

A highly conspicuous fact that these tables show is that the concentration of land in the hands of a few. In Cheramba (Karuvarakundu) Desam in eastern part of Ernad taluk pattadars paying Rs.50 and below constitute half of the total pattadars and they possess only 6.7 percent of the total land in the desam. The other half, ie., those who pay more than Rs.50 up to Rs.1000 holds 93% of the total extent. In Parappangadi Desam in the western part of Ernad taluks 90.5% of total pattadars posses 46.5% of total extend of land and paying below Rs.30 with the effect that 9.5% of total pattadars paying a revenue of above Rs.30 upto Rs.250 possess 53.5% of the total extend. In Keraladhiswarapuram in Ponnani taluk 91.4% of total pattadars pay below Rs.30 as revenue and hold only 35% of total extend. 65% of the total extent remained in the lands 9% of the total pattadars who paid revenue above Rs.30 to Rs.250. In Kongad desam of Palghat district 72.4% of total pattadars possess only 9.62% of the total extend of land. In Pattambi Pallippuram of Walluvanad 83.6% of total pattadars held only 20.17% of the total extent of land with the result that 16.4% of pattadars held 79.83% of the total extend of land. What all these shows is that even among the pattadars those who paid Rs.30 and below constituted the lion part of the total pattadars and a handful of landlords held the lion share of land in every village. This is only part of the thing. The data considered here in one which is related exclusively to pattadars. When we bring in the inhabitanace of the villages as a whole, the picture is so terrible settlement registers give us

detailed tables of population of respective villages. Based on them we can formulate an idea on how much percent of population in a village acquired right of possession of land. Table 2.8 is a statement of no land holders in villages of different taluks in South Malabar.

**Table 2.8**

**STATEMENT OF NUMBER OF LANDHOLDERS IN SOME VILLAGES IN SOUTH MALABAR 1901\***

Villages	No. of house Holdings	Population			Total Pattadars	Percentage of Pattadars	
		Male	Females	Total		to house hold	to population
Cheramba (Karuvarakundu)	717	2117	1906	4023	35	4.88%	0.86%
Parappanangadi	855	2770	2690	5460	263	30.76%	4.81%
Keraladhiswarapuram	394	1169	1233	2402	267	67.76%	11.11
Pookkottur	221	610	622	1232	83	37.55	6.73
Average	546.75	1666.6	1612.75	3279.25	162	35.23	5.87

\* Figures derived from Settlement Registers of the respective villages.

The table exposes that only 5.87% of the total population were land-holding pattadars. A more clear picture can be had from the fact that only 35% of the households in South Malabar had the right to have some links with land. This shows that a great majority of people in the villages of South Malabar depended on a very small minority of landlords.

Notwithstanding the fact that we are able to understand the relation between landlords on the one hand and the rest on the other hand in a village, the relations between those who lived as kanakkar, verumpattakkar and agrestic slaves is not clear. Though, as we have seen, jenmis were recognized as the exclusive proprietors of land, the actual class of population who seems to have dominated the economic and social scenario was that of kanamdars. As a non-cultivating rent-receiving rent paying, intermediaries between actual cultivators and landlords they could exact as much amount as possible from the cultivators and to pay as less amount as possible to the jenmis. K.N. Panikkar has brought this fact out on the basis of an analysis of rent sharing between Jenmi and Kanakkar, and yield sharing between janmi, kanakkar and cultivator.<sup>17</sup> For these intermediaries kanakkar land was an investment, from which they were keen to derive the maximum benefit. The practice of *Sambandham* in which the younger members of Nambudiri families sought sexual partners from Nayar *Tarawads* and the earlier entry of Nayars in to colonial education and thereby to colonial services had further strengthened the position of Nayar caste which was the main constituent of kanakkar class in Malabar especially in South Malabar.

Verumpattakkar who cultivated the land acquired through yearly lease, the landless agricultural labourers and agrestic slaves, were in many ways

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<sup>17</sup> Panikkar, K.N., *Against Lord and State*, Delhi, 1989, pp.30-31.

subjected to the capricious exactions, both lawful and customary. As per the settlement two-third of the total produce was to be set apart for Janmis share and states revenue. Only one-third was supposed to remain with the cultivators. Cultivators being inclusive of kanakkars, verumpattakkar, agricultural labourers and agrestic slaves, and kanakkar exacting a considerable share of the cultivators share, verumpattakars, landless labourers and slave bore the weight of the terrible exactions.

A comparison of facts given in the 1901 settlement registers with that of the facts provided in resettlement registers will provide us the kind of changes occurred if at all, in the type of holdings, distribution of lands and the pattern of land revenue collection. Table 2.9 help us to perceive the lands in various fields of agricultural production and distribution.

Table 2.9

**DISTRIBUTION OF LAND HOLDINGS AND REVENUE IN SOME  
OF THE AMSAMS IN SOUTH MALABAR 1935**

**Karuvarakundu**

Pattadars Paying	Number			Extent		Assessment	
	Single	Joint	Total	Acres	Cents	Rs.	A
Re 1 and less	4	5	9	5	79	5	13
Rs.10 -1	12	9	21	69	74	113	10
Rs.30 - 10	13	5	18	182	37	318	7
Rs.50 - 30	4	2	6	139	6	221	7
Rs.100 - 50	5	4	9	345	95	689	3
Rs.250 - 100	3	1	4	341	41	695	10
Rs.500 - 250	2	1	3	562	18	1084	13
Rs.1000 - 500	2	--	2	856	30	1327	10
Above Rs.1000	2	--	2	3357	10	2995	8
<b>Total</b>			<b>74</b>	<b>5860</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>7447</b>	<b>81</b>

**Parappanangadi**

Pattadars Paying	Number			Extent		Assessment	
	Single	Joint	Total	Acres	Cents	Rs.	A
Re 1 and below	61	34	95	15	42	30	--
Rs.10 -1	120	64	184	173	69	852	2
Rs.30 - 10	51	19	70	227	62	1157	12
Rs.50 - 30	13	4	17	124	2	477	1
Rs.100 - 50	7	1	8	127	69	593	5
Rs.250 - 100	3	1	4	133	78	664	6
Rs.500 - 250	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Rs.1000 - 500	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Above Rs.1000	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3947</b>	<b>10</b>

## Keraladhiswarapuram

Pattadars Paying	Number			Extent		Assessment	
	Single	Joint	Total	Acres	Cents	Rs.	A
Re 1 and less	91	9	100	38	58	40	14
Rs.10 -1	200	33	233	351	7	1007	11
Rs.30 - 10	39	13	52	218	39	802	14
Rs.50 - 30	14	--	14	155	3	530	7
Rs.100 - 50	7	1	8	159	33	528	1
Rs.250 - 100	4	--	4	217	46	636	13
Rs.500 - 250	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Rs.1000 - 500	1	--	1	238	30	648	1
Above Rs.1000	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>1378</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4194</b>	<b>13</b>

An important problem that come in the way of straight comparison of data of settlement (1901) and the resettlement (1935) is that the settlement unit of *desams* in (1901) was replaced by *amsoms* in 1935. *Amsam* in general was a combination of at least two earlier *desams*. So a direct comparison of data is not possible. But, at the same time we can compare this on the basis of the major trends that can be derived from the data of both.

An examination of particulars in the resettlement registers of 1935 will show that no radical changes had occurred during the 25 years after the 1905. However, three trends are visible from the registers. Firstly there was slight increase in the number of proprietors in the land. A rise in the percentage of pattadars to both the number of holding and population in villages is visible in

registers. The percentage of pattadars in relation to household rose from 37.55 in 1905 44.13 in 1937. The percentage of pattadars in relation to population rose from 6.73 to 8.98. This is clearly visible when we compare Table 2.8 to the table 2.10.

**Table 2.10**  
**STATEMENT OF NUMBER OF LANDHOLDERS IN SOME**  
**VILLAGES IN SOUTH MALABAR 1935**

Village	No. of House-holding	Population			Total Pattadars	Percentage of Pattadars	
		Male	Female	Total		to house-holds	to population
Karuvarakundu	1617	3823	3860	7683	74	4.57	0.96
Parappanagadi	976	3061	3021	6082	378	38.72	6.21
Keraladhiswapuram	524	1439	1495	2934	412	78.62	14.04
Pookoottur	682	1554	1769	3350	30.1	44.13	8.98
Average	949.75	2469	2536	5012	223.5	41.5	7.54

Secondly an increase in the joint proprietorship is visible in all the villages. For example, the percentage of joint holdings to the total number of holdings has rose from 8.57 in 1905 to 36.48 in 1937. In Parappanagadi this was from 12.16 to 32.53, in Keraladhisapuram, from 11.61 to 13.59 and in Pukottur from 6.02 to 24.25. Then increase seem to have been followed another pattern ie. the less the percentage of *pattadars* to house holdings and population, the more is the increase in number of joint holdings. The third thing visible is that there was an increase in the garden land cultivation

whereas a stagnancy of decrease in wet land cultivation and dry land cultivation. It has already been shown that the Nairs had rose into prominence in the colonial Malabar due to their advantageous position as rent receiving and rent paying kanakkar who could exploit the colonial system to their favour. They could earn more than that of jenmis. They were the first class of people who were the earliest entrants in to the colonial English education. This paved the way for their entry into government services in large scale even by the end of nineteenth century.

The developments after 1920 seem to have improved the position of this class further. For one their hold in the land became stronger with the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930. With the Act kanakkar rescued themselves from eviction from lands by jenmis as the act provided for fixity of tenure. The increase in the number of holdings jointly registered by jenmis and kanakkar together shows this fact very clearly. Such a situation must have provided this class much more opportunities to strengthen their economic position. The attitude of the kanakkar after the Act towards Verumpattakar was equated to that of the Jenmis to the tenants when the former were granted full ownership rights by British authorities. Thus, it is concluded, the passing of Act while combining the rights of traditional jenmis to create a new class of jenmis.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Radhakrishnan, P., Op. cit., p.88.

## Literacy

Along with these developments the acquisition of English language had provided them early entry into modern life and greater mobility. In 1920s when brahmins had just entered the scenario of modern education, Nairs occupied a prominent share of spaces of modern education. The consequence was large scale absorption of these English educated men into the government services. Increasing mobility both horizontal and vertical, of this class in the administrative rungs of colonial government seems to have been used for the enhancement of this class. For example, the passage of the Malabar Tenancy Act was as much the fruit of parliamentary pressure as that of administrative interference. In another words the influence of the Nair Kanakkar class has grown to such a position that they could effectively interfere in and expedite the administrative and other measures of the government.<sup>19</sup>

This does not mean that other sections of the society kept aloof from availing the venues of education and government services. Brahmin especially after 1930 made a leap in earning modern education and appointment in government services. The attempts to reform themselves at the face of their increasing backwardness in the new world which had nothing

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<sup>19</sup> To have a picture of whole legislative, administrative and other kinds of involvement in the process see Home Judicial F328/Judicial/1926 NAI; Home Judicial 329/26/1926 NAI; Report of Select Committee on Malabar Tenancy Bill with minutes of dissent and Bill as amended in 328/26 Judicial Home NAI; Letter from the Secretary, Malabar Tenants Association, Pattambi, to the President, AICC papers (suppl.)F. No.45, NMML.

to do with their 'ritual purity' and traditional know how effected speedy changes in the Brahmin mind set with the result that they could enter the new world rather easily when they acquired English education. This was not a himalayan task for them because they possessed both material and cultural capital.

The rest of the Malabar society seems to have lagged behind. Though earlier attempt were made by Ezhavas to make use of colonial modern spaces through English education. They could not rise into prominence as a class probably due more to the lack of cultural capital than to the lack of material wealth. Mappilas not seems to have shed their orthodoxy and entered modern education, acquired positions in government services and shared the spaces of modern life until 1950s. This is not to overlook some efforts made by the reformers.<sup>20</sup> But the fact is that Mappilas in South Malabar remained untouched with what are generally called modernity. This is because of both the economic hardities and religious and cultural disposition. The class of aggreastic slaves lived in extreme poverty and constant subjugation, both material and ideological, so that they were denied even dreams of comings out of the clutches of subordination. The backwardness of lower castes and Muslim can be clearly understood if we go through the census records. A major problem that come in the way of an sharper analysis of census data is

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter IV.

that census categories varies term by term and even within one census document categories in provincial statements varies from presidential statement. In spite of this we can draw, though with some inaccuracies, the picture of community wise literacy in South Malabar with data pertaining to it and applying general trend in the District of Malabar as a whole. Table 2.11 shows community wise literacy as in 1931 census.

**Table 2.11**  
**STATEMENT OF TALUKS IN SOUTH MALABAR BY RELIGION AND LITERACY 1931\***

	Brahmins				Other Hindus				Depressed classes				Muslims			
	Population		Literate		Population		Literate		Population		Literate		Population		Literate	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Calicut	3213	2654	2235	1010	99319	100111	37128	11182	13559	15211	397	70	53445	52673	8961	695
Ernad	1475	1161	981	402	64087	65826	17129	5609	25860	27888	142	49	131581	137345	15434	1422
Walluwanad	3897	3763	2447	935	104537	114416	27984	11390	27378	30571	138	8	73437	76944	7731	771
Ponnani	3310	3257	2469	1065	118581	132931	33789	12918	32478	33883	674	103	133876	140955	16360	1899
Palghat	12178	13441	7997	3071	152734	170041	33477	11073	28176	29181	362	72	27198	26852	4181	270
Total	24073	24276	16129	6483	539258	583025	149507	52172	127451	136734	1713	307	419537	434769	52667	5057
		48349		22612		1122283		201679		264185		2015		854306		57724

\*Derived from Provincial Tables II, Census of India, 1931, Vol. XIV, Part II.

Table 2.11 is a statement of population by religion and literacy. This table indeed does not allow us to draw a correct picture of community wise literacy in South Malabar. But as we have categories Brahmins, other Hindus, depressed classes and Muslims, it is possible only to draw an approximate picture. Brahmin and depressed classed one being stated in different columns, the category other Hindus no doubt comprised of Nayars and Tiyya Ezhavas. But it is not possible to get a picture of literacy of Nayars, Tiyyas and others separately. However, this table shows the pathetic state of depressed classes who mainly constitute agrestic slaves and tribals. Only 0.76% of the total depressed class people possess literacy. Among Muslim only 6.75% of total population possess literacy. In the case of other Hindus, the percentage is 17.97% and Brahmin 46.7%. Though differentiation within 'other Hindus' is impossible, the general trend seems to be that the more is economic power the more is literacy.

A deeper understanding of community wise literacy is possible when we take out the jati wise literacy from presidency level statements in the census. The literary position of jatis who exclusively live in Malabar is portrayed in the statement. Below (Table 2.12) is the statement of jati wise literacy rate of jatis almost exclusively living in Malabar in 1931.

**Table 2.12**  
**STATEMENT OF RATE OF LITERACY (COMMUNITY WISE)**  
**IN MALABAR, 1931 (PER 10000)\***

Caste (jati)	Mother tongue			English		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Brahmin	570	758	345	1016	1727	162
Malayali						
Nayar	377	552	214	476	867	106
Paraya	22	42	2	8	16	1
Cheruman	8	13	3	--	--	--

Source: Table XIV, Census of India 1931, Vol. XIV Part II.

Derived from a General Statement of Madras Presidency.

This statement is derived from a general statement of literacy by community in Madras presidency. Ezhavas as a category is not seen in the table. Eventhough the rate of literacy (per 10000) is very high among Brahmin, this is because of the small populations of Brahmin in Malabar society. Nayars possess the second place in the rate of population. But here the fact is that the Nayar population was so many times more that of Brahmin. Nayar could make a telling presence in Malabar especially in the modern spaces of education, government services and judiciary. The literacy rate among parayas and cherumas shows only microscopic minority possessed literacy in mother tongue and a few many parayas and no one among cherumas.

Table 2.13

## STATEMENT OF LIVELIHOOD CLASSES BY EDUCATIONAL STANDARD IN SOUTH MALABAR 1951\*

Taluk		Cultivator of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents		Cultivator of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents		Cultivating labourers and their dependents		Non cultivating rent receivers		Productions other than cultivation		Commerce		Transport		Miscellaneous	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Kozhi-kode	(i)	15499	15942	42548	43885	16514	16716	2755	3063	49383	51108	34920	33827	13837	11203	82694	82460
	(ii)	9447	5767	22118	10548	4926	1655	1158	974	14288	7091	9580	3948	3297	1252	21700	10484
Ernad	(i)	20840	21343	66505	66014	113970	108215	8809	10297	76475	81209	23677	23367	7817	7431	38127	38482
	(ii)	9361	5477	24420	11614	18244	6261	2678	2066	13704	2156	9881	3777	2263	515	15607	10182
Walluv-a-nad	(i)	20257	21781	77384	79151	40478	46644	8868	11601	28868	28346	12352	12257	3573	2551	82648	95698
	(ii)	11276	9725	26943	16269	8292	4769	5835	7043	10095	3993	3538	2793	769	561	17952	14160
North Ponnani	(i)	39826	44663	57598	62981	85931	101023	3982	4963	64964	74320	36493	36654	11277	10058	75952	83128
	(ii)	7066	4762	12018	7319	4610	2317	1335	1417	6794	2936	5332	2301	1096	447	13326	7619
South Ponnani	(i)	3651	4647	13347	8643	16167	8850	937	870	13999	8319	9231	5482	1952	965	11422	8137
	(ii)																
Palghat	(i)	11930	12662	70758	71815	77130	89997	12337	16317	48242	46179	27428	27194	4545	4573	63237	71759
	(ii)	7272	3782	14658	6411	7026	3645	8068	9723	13471	3260	7327	2382	1094	511	17523	11518
Total	(i)	108352	116391	314793	323846	334023	362595	36751	46241	267914	281162	134890	133299	41049	36816	342658	371497
	(ii)	58073	34160	113504	60804	59265	27497	20011	22093	72351	27755	44889	20683	10471	4251	97530	62100

\*Derived from statistics of livelihood and educational standard in Census Hand Book, Malabar, 1951.

Column (i) stands for the total number of population earned livelihood.

Column (ii) stands for the total number of educated ones among the number shown in column (i).

Census of 1951 give us much more deep understanding of the literacy position of the people. Actually table 2.13 gives us the literacy position of the people of South Malabar livelihood wise. As livelihood classes portrayed in the table will help us to identify the land owning, land un owning cultivators, agricultural labours and rent-receivers correspondingly wise Kanakkar verumpattakkar, agricultural labourers and jenmis. So this table will let us explain the pattern of literacy in South Malabar looking in to the categories given in the table, it is quite clear that non cultivating rent receivers had 50 percent of their population literate, followed by cultivators wholly or mainly owned class with 41% of their class literate. This is to say that the land owning group stands top in literacy. Cultivator un owing land had 27% of their class literate and non cultivating labourers with only 12 percent. The second thing which can be deduced from the table is that those who engaged in non-agricultural production too was backward in literacy and educations. This is to read in relation to the absence of industrial growth and tertiary sector in South Malabar. This will lead us to see that the areas of non agricultural production was lagging with almost no educational and technological input which, otherwise would have had radical changes in the sector of non agricultural production.

**SOCIAL LIFE IN SOUTH MALABAR (1921-1947)  
RELIEF, REFORM AND NATIONALISM**

**Thesis  
submitted to the University of Calicut  
for the award of the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in History**

**MUHAMMEDALI T.**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

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### CHAPTER III

## THE POLITICS OF RELIEF

Despite various kinds of characterization of the Malabar Rebellion scholars are unanimous on its anti-British character. It has been described as the most significant revolt occurred in British India by two participant historians<sup>1</sup>. This was not only true in terms of the volume and strength of the rebellion but also in terms of the casualties it entailed. The rebellion had been reined in by the first month of 1922. The official reports states that two thousand three hundred and thirty seven rebels has been killed and one thousand six hundred and fifty two persons were seriously wounded and about fourty five thousand four hundred and four persons surrendered to the British government<sup>2</sup>. An unofficial calculation is as follows. Fifty special armed police, eight military officers including a colonel and two hundred soldiers were killed from the government part. Fifty four policemen were seriously injured. There is no accurate account of Mappila death. Twelve thousand people are estimated to have been killed. Fifty thousand were

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<sup>1</sup> They were K. Madhavan Nair and M. Brahmananthan Nambutiripad. See Nair K. Madhavan, *Malabar Kalapam* (Mal.), Calicut 2002; Nambutiri Moozhikkunnath Brahmadathan, *Khilafat Smaranakal* (Mal.), Calicut, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Menon, P.K.K., *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1996, p.102.

arrested. Fourteen thousand were either executed or exiled after court martial<sup>3</sup>. This shows the volume of human casualties during the rebellion.

### **A Calling situation**

The end of rebellion was in no sense a blissful consolation for the people of South Malabar. Two scenarios that became conspicuous in South Malabar vouch for it. The first is that of refugees who had escaped from the rebel areas fearing the Mappila action. They were living mainly in and around Calicut with having no shelter, scarce food and scanty dress. They included all kinds of people ranging from high caste Nambutiris to lower caste groups. Some of Mappilas too reached Relief camps in Calicut. They also comprise a large number of women and children. These men who had left their hearth and homes out of fear of rebels are calculated to have come to a population of about 25000 people.<sup>4</sup> Many of their houses were burned, wealth looted and women dishonoured and molested. Many of the children and women became destitute as their protectors were killed by the rebels. More over their minds were hurt as their religious belief was dishonoured by rebels, through destruction and desecration of temples and forced conversions.

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<sup>3</sup> Moulavi, K. Koyatti, *1921 le Mappila Lahala*, Tirurangadi, 1953, p.114.

<sup>4</sup> K. Madhavan Nair *Janma Satabti Smarinka* (Mal.), Calicut, 1982, p.37.

The other one was that of Mappilas in the rebel area. It is well known that not all Mappilas participated in the rebellion. A considerable number of Mappilas kept away from rebellion for which some of them were punished by rebels. But when once the British government decided to quell the rebellion with iron hand, it unleashed indiscriminate action towards the people of the rebel area irrespective of latter's attitude towards rebellion. A participant historian has picturesquely portrayed pitiable situation of those Mappilas who stood against the violent rebellion.<sup>5</sup> They were the target of three pronged attack; for rebel Mappilla they were traitors, for many non-Muslims, they being 'Mappilas', were perpetrators of violence against them, and of course for the British army they were part and parcel of a community who proved themselves to be a headache for their power and as such to be eliminated. British army not discriminated even between Mappilas and non Mappilas.<sup>6</sup> All this was at a time when martial rule had closed the area from the outer world and even people were not allowed to move from one *amsom* to other. The magnitude of sufferings of the people in the area could only be reasonably imagined because a clear picture of inner areas is unavailable from the sources.

These two pitiful scenarios will steal the mind of anyone who have a tinge of humanism in him. The situation called for men and money in large

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<sup>5</sup> Nair K. Madhavan, Note1, pp.251-61.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp.256-57.

amount to help these men who were struggling for life at the face of severe famines, deadly diseases and wild suppression. Government alone was able to provide for the needs of the gentry of Malabar. But it had no time to keep committed to the relief of those who are in the rebel area because their concern was more for making themselves safe and secure from the wrath of Mappila rebel than providing relief and assistance to the people to bring them back to the normal life. The responsibility of the government, thus, was left to non-governmental charity. It was in this situation that various agencies appeared in the Malabar scene as agencies of relief and reconstruction. The activities of these bodies and agencies can only be comprehended with an awareness of some of the developments that occurred in the last phase of rebellion.

A major development was that Malabar which hitherto have been eluded from pan Indian developments in social, religious and political field now well adapted in to Pan-Indian trends with the rebellion. More than that, it became a matter of constant talk in the social and political discourse. It was only with the beginning of the Khilafat non-cooperation movement, that congress got enthusiastic welcome in Malabar. When congress activities became wide spread and national leaders of the stature of Gandhi and Moulana Showkath Ali visited Calicut with people receiving them with great enthusiasm Malabar had become part and parcel of Pan Indian Nationalist politics.

The Pan-Indian Nationalist politics under Gandhi had many serious limitations. The most significant one is Gandhi's understanding of Indian people. Gandhi understood Indian people in terms of their religion, ie Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs etc. He started Non-cooperation movement to strengthen the Khilafat movement. He is understood to have launched the movement to bring the 'Muslims' in to the vortex of the national movement through fomenting Hindu – Muslim unity. This method of mobilizing people politically in the name of two religions with a quite open religious language was really strengthening another process – a process which ended up in the reduction of Indian body politic in to two blocks, i.e., 'Hindus' and 'Muslims'. All the events and trends here after how so ever it was too specific to a locality began to be explained in terms of these two pan-Indian blocks.

Gandhi either neglected or overlooked the specific realities of Malabar. In fact some congress leaders of Malabar who had close relations with Mappilas had submitted before Gandhi that Mappilas who had not been trained effectively in *ahimsa* and non violence would not be dragged in to Khilafat movement.<sup>7</sup> This argument was voted out by majority and Gandhi felt that Mappilas would follow the words of Moulana Mohammed Ali, Shoukath Ali and other Khilafat leaders. But Mappila always followed the *Ulema* of South Malabar alone; not of north India, nor even those from

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<sup>7</sup> Menon, M.P.S., *Malabar Samaram* (Mal.), Calicut, 1994, p.65.

Cochin. Thus, Gandhi's politics failed to foresee that National Muslim leadership had little clouts among Mappilas of Malabar especially of South Malabar whose social, political and of course religious perceptions had been formulated in the specific context of South Malabar.

Whatever was the intention of Gandhi in launching the Khilafat-non cooperation movement, the ostensible objective of the movement was to pressurise the colonial government to give back the lost prestige of Ottoman Khilafat. Firstly this was not at all an issue that comes to the concern of an Indian. To say it in another way this was an issue which had nothing to do with non-Muslims of India. Even among the Muslims it was the Khilafath propaganda that generated a concern for the same among the common Muslims. The loss of power of Ottoman Caliph was mainly the concern of those who were subscribed to Pan-Islamism which acquired a limited space in modern Islamic world. Any way, what we have to be in our mind is that non-Muslim participants of Khilafat movement seems not to have believed in regaining the lost status of Khilafat as 'their' motto. They saw their participation as only providing a helping hand when their Muslims brothers felt afflicted.<sup>8</sup> At the same time even Gandhi exhorted Muslims to follow a method other than non violence. "If non-cooperation proves ineffective for Khilafat movement, Muslim should fight against the government as they are

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<sup>8</sup> Nair, K. Madhavan, Note 1, p.40.

obliged to do as per Quranic teachings to save Islam".<sup>9</sup> Speeches of national leaders at Calicut has send the message, "Islam in danger". More over, many of the Muslim could not understand the logic of non-Muslim fighting for a purely Muslim issue. "Khilafat is a Muslim's religious issue, to enjoin Hindus in it is ridiculous; Hindus dispositions like 'ahimsa' and non-violence could not be conjoined to the Muslim programme of action".<sup>10</sup> The lukewarm interest showed by non-Muslim congressmen has already been indicated elsewhere. This shows that khilafatist Muslims had thought themselves to be leading the movement for regaining Khilafat and save Islam with the help of non-Muslim congress men. Was this not the consequence of floating an issue exclusively belong to one religious interest to excite a mass consisted of different religious interests?

We have seen that due to situations specific to Mappila, they preferred violent methods to non-violence. They fought against the British and their supporters as well. In a situation where a tradition of class antagonism prevails with class status is coterminous with religious and caste status, conflicts between the classes in all probability, may have been articulated with a language that is specific to the religion of each class. What happens with the Khilafat Movement is that Mappilas were brought to fight for a strictly religious goal, ie., to "save Islam." This gave an additional fillip to the

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<sup>9</sup> From the speech of Gandhi in Calicut, quoted in Menon M.P.S., Op. cit., p.64.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.64. (Translation my own).

already strong religious tendencies in the agitational language. Now the action of Mappilas fair or foul could easily be explained in terms of his religion and community. It was especially so for pan-Indian nationalist, as they understood things in terms of religion and community. This had produced a telling impact on the relief efforts that entailed the rebellion.

### **Who relieved whom?**

Natural or created, a catastrophe entails ventures for relief, rehabilitation and re-construction. Malabar rebellion proved to be shockingly catastrophic for the people of at least South Malabar. The situation was calling for sympathy consideration and munificence of those who are ready to set apart a portion of what they had to rescue the people of South Malabar from falling in to unredeemable depth of difficulties and desperation. This found expression in the works of a number of persons and organizations for relieving Malabar during and after the rebellion. They fall mainly into four categories. Relief measures initiated by local magnates in and around the rebel area constitute the first.

### **Venture of Local Magnates**

When the Khilafat non cooperation movement turned violent a number of Nambutiris and upper class families had sought asylum both inside and out side the rebel area. With the intensification of the violence and the spread of desperate attack on non-Muslim at some places in the last stage,

majority of those who belongs to the families of the rebel target as and those who found a chance to be suspected by the rebels as the latter's enemy, escaped from their home. A considerable number of them especially belonged to the upper rungs of the society including Nambutiris were protected by the local Rajas and Magnates. This was natural for another reason. The provision of protection to Nambutiris traditionally was both a privilege and responsibility of Malabar Rajas.

Thus, Samutiri *kovilagam* has expended sixteen thousand rupees and protected a large number of Nambutiris. Kottakkal *kovilagam* spend more than twenty one thousand rupees, Mankada Krishna Varma Raja spent twenty thousand rupees for distress relief. Kavalappara Nair provided for food shelter and other things required by more than one thousand five hundred persons. Kulathur Sulapani Varrier provided food for victims that came around one thousand at his residence.<sup>11</sup> At Kottakkal the famous Ayurvedic Physician P.S. Varier also protected a number of people in the premise of Kottakkal Aryavaidya Sala during the rebellion.

A major feature of these camps were the absence of Mappilas in all these camps except the camp of Kottakkal. This clearly shows that the upper class (non-Mappila) men had subscribed to the official view that Mappilas were culprits as they were perpetrators of violence up on 'Hindus'. The only

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<sup>11</sup> M.M., September 20, 1922, p.1.

one among these camps which provided shelter and food for Mappilas was the camp at Arya Vaidya Sala Kottakkal.

Mr. P.S. Varrier was a renowned Ayurvedic Physician who established the famous Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala at Kottakkal. Having well versed in both traditional ayurvedic medicine and modern allopathic medicines he established a charitable hospital at Kottakkal. His entrepreneurial success, inclination toward artistic pursuits and his belief in humanism provided him with time, opportunity and disposition to get in touch with the realities of human life. As a result he had become a most influential figure in his place.

It was quite natural, so, that the people respective of caste and community sought a helping hand from Varrier at so grave a situation of ferocious rioting. When violence broke out he could avert the Mappila attack on *Kizhakke Kovilagam* of Zamorin at Kottakkal.<sup>12</sup> He is said to have successfully admonished back Mappilas at many a time when mappilas of Kottakkal was about to go violent.<sup>13</sup>

With the perpetuation of violence, people from the rebel-hit area of Kottakkal thronged to Arya Vaidya Sala of P.S. Varier in search of asylum. He protected these Hindus including Harijans selflessly providing for their

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<sup>12</sup> Nair, Keezhedath Vasudevan, *Jeevitha Katha – Vaidya Ratnam. P .S. Varrier* (Mal.), Kottakkal, 1989, p.132.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.132-33.

urgent necessities for a long time. This responsibility went off his shoulder only after the Servants of Indian Society had started up organized relief activities in the rebel area.<sup>14</sup> A distinct feature of Varrier's camp was that it also protected Mappila women and children who had been destituted as a result of their men being arrested or fled. This was a feat that Varier alone could achieve at this time of the rebellion in South Malabar. So many had taken aback to see Mappila women and children in the Kottakkal camp. But his response tainted with humanistic compassion for the destitute seems to have altered the make up of others. A Biographer of P.S. Varier narrates two events.

The first one is Mr. Varrier's conversation with Mr. Devdhar of Secretary of India Society when the latter visited the former during the rebellion. When Mr. Varier try to convince Devdhar the need of giving relief to Mappila women the latter exclaimed "To give Mappila women and children assistance and relief? What does it mean?[isn't] It means to help the rebels". Warrior replied as follows: "Rebellion is not the creation of women and children; but their men. By very this time they are living a pitiest life. It is a moral duty of any one to protect them in the name of humanity".<sup>15</sup> In the second event Mr. Knap, who was the head of the commission making enquiry on the rebellion, asked almost the same question which was answered in the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.135.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.134.

same way as we saw in the case of Devdhar.<sup>16</sup> Devdhar concern for Mappila relief, thus, seems to have originated here.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Varrier sent appeals to the authorities repeatedly to protect the life of Mappila families at least by providing rice for food with the result that government responded to his appeal positively and get relief for them.<sup>18</sup> With many government offices working in the premise, vaidyasala was an asylum for all kinds of distressed and government officer as well.

All this shows that in all except one Mappilas were excluded from the purview of the attempts of providing relief in general. This is also indicative of the fact that Mappilas in general had found themselves in indescribable difficulties. A participant historian, for example, has given the picture of Mappilas who stood against or kept neutral to the rebel disposition. On the one they became the target of the rebels as they stood against the rebellion and on the other always suspected and at times attacked by non-Muslims. Moreover, they were persecuted by the government as they were understood to be the well-wishers of the rebel because they were Mappilas.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.135.

<sup>17</sup> Devdhar latter turned to the question of Mappila relief see Devdhar, G.K., *Malabar Rebellion, Moplah Relief – An Appeal to Muhammedan Community*, in Sub File 12, BSMP, NMML.

<sup>18</sup> Nair Keezhedath Vasudevan, Op. cit., p.135.

<sup>19</sup> Nair, K. Madhavan, Note 1, pp.256-57.

## Political Organisations

The second one is the attempts of the National Political organizations. This is consisted of the whole work of relief done under the auspices of Indian National Congress and All India Khilafat Committee. The entire work of relief of these bodies in Malabar is to be read in the larger background of how their leaders perceived the turn of events in South Malabar by the mid of 1921. Congress under the leadership of Gandhi had understood India in terms of Hindus and Muslims. When All India Khilafat committee declared a movement to secure the lost prestige of khilafat, Gandhiji could make the Khilafat leaders accept his method of non-cooperation.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, he could make the congress accept to participate in non-cooperation movement to provide active backing to Muslims at a time when they 'were shockingly afflicted'.<sup>21</sup> When the khilafatists in Malabar went away from the well cherished method of non-violence, Gandhi himself perceived Mappilas a special kind of Muslims whose going astray was explained as a sin of the Muslims of the country as a whole. Gandhi was not much bothered about the problem that why among the Muslims of whole India Mappilas alone took to arms during the movement. Nor he withdrew the movement on account of it becoming violent in Malabar. If he had had thought in terms of any

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<sup>20</sup> Minault, Gail, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, Delhi, 1982, pp.98-101.

<sup>21</sup> Nair K. Madhavan, *Op. cit.*, p.40.

specificity at all, he had reduced the Mappila specificity to the question of blood alone let us see from notes of Gandhi in 1921.

"The Moplah are Muslim they have Arab blood in their veins. It is said that their forefathers came from Arabia many years ago and settled in Malabar. They are of a fiery temperament, and are said to be easily excitable. They are arranged and resort to violence in a matter of seconds. They have been responsible for many murders. Many years ago a special Act was also passed to subdue them. There are said to be a Million of them. The committee, though illiterate, is courageous. They have simply no fear of death. They always set out for fighting with a pledge not to return defeated. That is why it is generally said that Moplah think nothing of assaulting or killing any one."<sup>22</sup>

This kind of an apprehension about Mappilas, might have been the key for Gandhi to digest the Mappila rebellion. With all these characteristic features Mappilas were 'Muslims'. The general perception at the end of the rebellion was that the Moplah Muslim did inexcusable wrongs to Hindus of Malabar and that Muslims in general either approve it or shy away from decrying the Moplah action. Nationalist press and leaders too subscribed to

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<sup>22</sup> Gandhi. M.K, CWMG, Vol. XXI, pp.47-48.

this view<sup>23</sup>, though with some exceptions.<sup>24</sup> The clarity of Nationalists logic of communal dualism is so conspicuous in a statement of Gandhi appealing for money to help the starving Mappilas of South Malabar he says:

"My appeal necessarily be to Hindus. I do not know how far it will be successful in the present tension between two communities. But I must not think of the result. I should be guilty of cowardice if I did not publish Mr. Yakub Hassans letter which commands my sympathy. I know that the Hindu feels sore over what the Moplahs in 1921 did to their Hindu neighbours in Malabar. I know that thousands of Hindus think that the Moplah atrocities were not as strongly condemned by the general body of Mussalmans as they might have been. I know that many will (as I do) take exceptions to Yakub Hassans' sweeping assertion that 'he (Moplah) had done what anyone, Hindu, Muslim or Christian, under the same circumstances and in the same emergency would have done in self-defense or self-interest'. No circumstances and no provocation however grave could possibly justify forcible conversions. I should hope that Mr. Yakub Hassan has not meant to include these among the pardonable acts of Mappilas".<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See the general tone of *The Hindu* and *Mathrubhumi* et, al. and that the works of K. Madhavan Nair, K.P. Kesava Menon, etc.

<sup>24</sup> See for eg. Nambudiripad, Mozhikkuth Brahmadata, Op. cit., and Pillai, A.K., *Congressum Keralavum* (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 1982.

<sup>25</sup> *Young India*, 1.5.1924, CWMG, XXIII, p.514.

This statement is a part of Ghandhis appeal to the public. This is made in the wake of a letter<sup>26</sup> of Yakub Hassan requesting Gandhi who was 'the head of the Indian nation, and both Hindus and Mussalmans jointly'. "to find ways and means to carry life-giving succour to the suffering women and children". Gandhi was not appealing to the people of India, but to Hindus, Hindus alone. All non-Hindus of India were outside the scope of his appeal. Whatever was the response and result, Mappilas as a community was perceived and portrayed as perpetrators of so many excesses to their fellow community and the responsibility for that was put on the shoulder of the entire Muslim of India. This is a good example to show how Mappila action in Malabar was understood by the general public of North India including the nationalist leaders.

In addition to this the situation in Malabar too may well be considered. We have seen that Malabar which was staying away from the nationalist politics until 1920 got an abrupt entry in to the nationalist politics by the Khilafat movement. We have also seen that with tenants entering the congress in large scale, the landlords elements filed away from congress. The failure of the landed elements to keep themselves dominated in the Manjeri conference had termed them away from congress and under the auspices of Jenmi Sabha and other bodies. They criticized congress for moving forward

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<sup>26</sup> The full text of the letter is reproduced in *ibid.* pp.512-513.

with non-cooperation movement. With the movement turning violent, the wrath of Mappilas found its receiving ends predominantly on Janmis and landowners. With these developments the landed class within the congress, whose relatives and families were looted and attacked and at times they themselves feared rebels too disbelieved congress and held that congress fuelled rebellion among the 'fanatic' Mappilas of Malabar. Which come close to the view of janmi section of the congress who had kept themselves away from the congress after the Manjeri conference.

Now, they find themselves secure to argue that the sole cause of all these hardships of 'Hindus' is the wrong policies of the congress leaders. On the other Mappilas too cursed congress for making their life a hell. They thought that it was congress that called on them to fight against the British government. When the forces and police started dealing with the fighters, the congress leaders kept off the field and lived safe in their dens. Above all government always saw congress as responsible for the rebellion and feared that congress always possessed the propensity to mobilise men against the government. This lack of confidence of government in congress always came in the way of congress earning the confidence of the people of the region. The strength and weakness of the relief worked conducted under the auspices of the congress leaders should be seen in this context.

### **The Congress Endeavour**

It was congress that had been sensitized to the problem of relief initiatives in South Malabar. With the out break of violence thousands of men fled from the rebel area. They sought asylum mainly in and around Calicut city. Refugees were mainly consisted of those who could escape from the rebel area with the outbreak of violence. As Mappilas were shut up in their *amsams* as a result of the Martial law their movement was blocked. So the refugees were those who had been afflicted at the hands of rebel and many were those escaped from the rebel area out of fear of future attack up on their life and property. After his failure in bringing the Mappilas back to non violence, Madhavan Nair, the most influential congress – khilafat leader, had managed to reach Calicut by the first week of September 1921. It was at his initiation a relief committees was organized to provide possible help who had been reaching in and around Calicut.<sup>27</sup> Other members of the Congress Relief Committee were Ambalakkat Karunakara Menon, K.P. Kesava Menon, P. Achuthan, K.V. Gopala Menon etc. Relief camps were opened at Azchavattom, Vazhappilly and Francis Road in Calicut. Requests were floated through the press for helping the sufferers which was duly positively responded. Gandhi too extended this help in the venture. The working of the committee in Calicut has been portrayed as follows.

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<sup>27</sup> *Madhavan Nair Janma Satabdi Smaranika*, Op. cit., pp.37-38.

"People from all camps will reach the congress office daily before eight-o'clock in the morning. Each family had its own specific cards. It will contain the number of family members, amount of rice allotted and the like. The cards were all prepared under the supervision of Madhavan Nair himself. No one got any chance for any complaint. Madhava Menon's house at Chalappuram itself was the congress and relief committee office. The primise was always crowded until afternoon. A number of volunteer were ready there to look in to the needs of their and to do the required."<sup>28</sup>

But the relief committee could not provide for the relief of those who were held up in the rebel area the main body of whom were Mappilas. Martial law did not permitted the congress leaders to go into the rebel areas on the one and the Mappilas could not come out of the area, as they were all branded as rebels on the other. This comes in the way of constant communication with and supplies to the rebel area. In addition to it, Mappilas were generally being treated as culprits who committed senseless and in human brutalities to fellow being and as such sympathy for Mappilas shrunked.

It is said that congress had spent Rs.50000 exclusively for Mappilas with the help of some Mappila leaders.<sup>29</sup> But we don't have any idea about

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.39.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.39.

how and when this amount was spent. The only thing which we can say is that K. Madhavan Nair had visited the rebel area with Srinivasa Sastri in the month of April and May of 1922.<sup>30</sup> Mohammad Abdurahman's request to the collector for making arrangement for providing at least food for the starving people of the rebel area, the continuous rejection of the request, the consequent publication of the actual situation in the rebel area, which culminated in the jailing of Abdurahiman<sup>31</sup>- all these facts led us to infer the depth of sadness that prevailed among Mappilas in the rebel area in Malabar, the provision of providing relief for whom was neglected until the release of Mohammed Abdurahman in the year 1923. The open criticism of congress negligence towards Mappilas by Congress-Khilafat leaders later in their works<sup>32</sup> further add weight to the inference that Mappila relief congress was not successful at least until the end of 1923.

Thus, congress could provide meaningful relief only to refugees who flocked to Calicut as the heat of rebellion increased. On account of governments prohibition the one and the general ire and hatred which had mounted in nationalist and colonial circles on the other coupled probably with an unconscious attempt to make good of the congress complicity in 'anti-

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<sup>30</sup> Nair, K. Madhavan, Note 1, p.225.

<sup>31</sup> Pottekkad, S.K. *et al.*, *Muhammed Abdurahiman* (Mal.), Calicut, 1978, pp.117-19, 130-32.

<sup>32</sup> See Nambudiripad, Mozhikkunnath Brahmadata, *Op. cit.*, Pillai, A.K., *Op. cit.*

Hindu' activities of 'fanatic' Mappilas, congress could not extend meaningful relief to Mappilas who were held up in the rebel region due to the government restrictions on their movement. The efforts for providing relief for sufferers of the rebellion can only be comprehended in the context of these developments that had been in progress in the country. The government did pretty little to provide relief to and rehabilitate the sufferers of rebellion. Other than the congress committee, the main agencies who took part in relief activities in the post-revolt Malabar were Khilafat Committee, Jamiyat-i-Daawat-i-Tablig-i-Islam, Servants of India Society, Aryasamaj, Y.M.C.A and others.

#### **Muhammed Abdurahiman**

A situation in which Mappilas were found as arch enemies of the British by colonial circles on the one and as a community committed the grave offence of perpetrating non violence and forcibly converting Hindus in the nationalist circle on the other left the Mappilas marooned away from the public sympathy. The result was that Mappila Khilafat leaders alone could rise the issue of Mappila relief to the public arena. Among the Khilafat leaders Muhammad Abdurahiman alone could bring the issue forth to the government as well as to the public. He had sent a letter to the District collector calling the government attention to the need for relief work among the Mappila women and children in the rebel area. Even after he sent many

reminders, the collector paid little heed to the letters. Mohamed Abdurahman sent the letter to news papers which was published in the 'Bombay Chronicle' and 'The Hindu'.<sup>33</sup> This aroused the sympathy of the public especially the Muslim public. Though Abdurahman was arrested on October 21, 1922 for his action, his action bore the desired effect. Muslim of north India got sensitised to the issue. A mammoth meeting was convened at Chawpatti in Bombay to discuss the issue and mobilize fund for Mappila relief.<sup>34</sup> Two sons of the president of congress Khilafat Committee of Punjab reached Calicut to organize relief work for Mappilas. They were Muhyudhin Ahmed Qasuri and Muhammedali Qasuri.<sup>35</sup> They visited the rebel areas to have direct experience of the situation. Consequently they started six relief centers in rebel area and Calicut. They distributed rice for 25000 people for a period of six months. They gave dresses to one thousand seven hundred women and children. 285 house were rebuilt and above all those things they also adopted and protected boys around seventy in number providing for all their expenses.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Keraleeyan, V.S., *Keralathinte Veeraputran*, (Mal.), Alwaye, 1998, p.113.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.113, Rasheed, M., *Muhammed Abdurahman*, p.25.

<sup>35</sup> Kareem, C.K., (Ed.), *Kerala Muslim Directory*, Vol.2, p.126; Koya, Parappil, Muhammed, *Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Charitram*, p.189.

<sup>36</sup> Koya, Parappil Muhammed, Ibid., pp.189-90.

Qasuri brothers reached Calicut as the workers of Jamiat-e-Dawat-e-Tablig-e-Islam, the head quarters of which was in Poona.<sup>37</sup> Though their work was too minimal to relieve the Mappilas from the hardships of life, JDT Islam could provide long lasting service for Mappilas. At its initiative the first orphanage of Kerala were established in 1922.<sup>38</sup> JDT could consistently give relief to Mappilas in 1924 in the wake of the flood. It had started camps at the interior of South Malabar region the activities of which seem to have lasted until 1927.<sup>39</sup>

### **Mappila Amelioration Committee**

Another attempt of Mappila relief was that of Mappila Amelioration Committee. This was a committee formed by pro-British non khilafalist Muslim notables of Madras presidency with the support of Mr. Pompy of Y.M.C.A. The committee was formed in the light of Mrs. Pompy's statement in "Madras Mail", that about seventy five thousand Muslim were held up in the rebel area with no food, dress or shelter and their lives would be in danger if it fails to help them in time.

Mr. Jamal Muhamed Sahib, a notable merchant was the president of the committee Sir Mohamed Usman Sahib, the Madras Governor and home

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.189.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.190.

<sup>39</sup> Kareem, C.K. (ed.), Op. cit., p.127.

member, B. Pokker Sahib, T.M. Moidu Sahib were other office bearers. Ettuveetil Komukkutty of Tirurangadi, S.M. Attakkoya Thangal, Pallikeetin Mohamed Qasi, Ali Baramy, K. Koyassankoya Haji, Jacob (YMCA Secretary), P.S. Mammad Koya Haji, Koyapathodi Muhamed Kutti Haji, C.A. Kunhimoossa and Amu Sahib constituted the active members of the committee.<sup>40</sup>

A branch committee was set up at Calicut. Money flew from all parts of India. Committee got two lakhs rupees collected from outside Malabar.<sup>41</sup> With the help of the secretary of YMCA they got permission to go to the rebel area to see the situations directly. They listed those who are rightful candidate for help and assistance from the committee.<sup>42</sup> Even with the confidence of the government, the committee could not provide for relief and rehabilitation of Mappilas consistently probably because government was contemptuous to and fearful of Mappilas who might not have been able to give a whole hearted assistance to Mappilas, - the fanatic problematic.

What all these show is that the public had been divided on communal lines in the question of giving for the relief and rehabilitation of the people of

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<sup>40</sup> Koya, Parappil Muhammed, *Op. cit.*, p.167.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.167.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.167.

revolt hit South Malabar. There is no difference in this regard between the Nationalists, khilafatists and pro-colonialists.

### **An Ounce from the State and its Agents**

The third category that has done some amount of relief work is that of colonial agents. It comprised of the work of government on the one and of some persons sensitized themselves towards to pitiful plight of the South Malabar. But then no much evidence to show that government had done a commendable work in this field. The only thing the government did was that it distributed loans for the cultivators at lower rents under the provisions of Agricultural Loans Act. It is calculated that an amount to the tune of five lakhs was distributed for thirteen thousand five hundred persons under this scheme.<sup>43</sup> We have also seen that government had responded to the issue of relief at the request of prominent persons.<sup>44</sup> But the activities of the government largely confined to providing official assistance to the work of non-governmental agencies in the field. An important example for individual initiative to provide relief for the people of Malabar is that of Lady Willington, the wife of Madras governor. She is reported to have organized an exhibition the income of which was to go for the protection of those poor

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<sup>43</sup> M.M. Sept. 20, 1923, p.6.

<sup>44</sup> see.

who are afflicted by Moplah riots.<sup>45</sup> She had also set up a lottery in connection with it the winner of which was won by the samutiri raja of Calicut. The prize was an elephant which was donated by the Raja of Kollangode to Lady Willington.<sup>46</sup> But here too evidence are lacking to see how much was the amount collected and distributed and to whom through whom and by what modalities. Thus, the work of those belongs to the colonial circle including the government was too meager to met the situation meaningfully. Their work confined rather to providing some effortless assistance to many non-governmental organizations involved in the relief work.

### **Voluntary Organisations**

The fourth category was the work done by voluntary non-governmental organizations. The relief and reconstruction works conducted in Malabar by the non-governmental organizations is very significant because it was their work which could give a helping hand for the Malabar population at a worst time. They could collect and distributed quite a larger amount of money to the needy ones who could pick up in life benefiting from their assistance.

The major role played in Malabar Relief was by such agencies. 'Moplah riot' had become a major issue of talk and discussion all through

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<sup>45</sup> M.M., March 20, 1922, p.5.

<sup>46</sup> M.M., March 28, 1922, p.4.

India as part of general discussion of the vicissitudes of Khilafat Non-Cooperation movement.<sup>47</sup> This had sensitized so many agencies having missionary character to the issue of the sufferings of the people of Malabar. Thus had reached Servants of Indian Society, Arya Samaj of Lahore, Poona Seva Sadan Society, Y.M.C.A. etc. in Malabar with the purpose of providing relief to the sufferers of rebellion. The members of these agencies did all possible things to console the sufferers.

### **Malabar Central Relief Committee**

At the first stage these agencies were working separately on their own with different agenda of themselves. But later to secure unity of purpose and harmony of work to avoid multiplications of agencies and work efficiently these agencies decided to merge their identities themselves by forming a new agency called Malabar Central Relief Committee.<sup>48</sup> These things are to be in our mind before we go in to the details of their activities. Firstly MCRC alone had the confidence of Government. Documents related to the committee shows that this committee was working in consultation with government officers including District Magistrate. Secondly, no functional relation seems to have kept between the Congress Relief activities and that of MCRC. Neither we see references of congress leaders relation to any of

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<sup>47</sup> Gangadharan, M., *The Malabar Rebellion 1921-22*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Calicut University, pp.527-528.

<sup>48</sup> Devdhar, G.K., SMRNH, BSMP, Sub. File (12), NMML.

MCRC members. Thirdly the committee had acquired the confidence of those congress leaders who resigned from the congress activities when congress took up the questions of land tenancy and Khilafat. This is clear from the fact that the relief activities of Mr. Devdhar are heartily appreciated in the conference of sufferers from the Mappila Rebellion convened at Calicut on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1922 where as Congress Relief got no space at all in the proceedings.<sup>49</sup> The conference also lacks congress participation. At the same time leaders like Manjeri Rama Ayyar, Nilambur Tirumulpad and a number of Jenmis and Rajas were the prominent participants.<sup>50</sup>

The formation of MCRC marked the beginning of organized systematic Relief work in South Malabar. Among the many agencies merged in to the committee, Servants of Indian Society played a dominant role in the running of the committee. The strenuous attempts of Mr. G.K. Dhevadar of Maharashtra proved highly successful in reaching the end. After visiting the rebel-hit area and its precincts he understood the volume of work to be done. He prepared a scheme for providing relief for 50,000 men, women and children of all castes and conditions in life for a period of six month with an expected expenditure of rupee ten lakhs.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See for example The Proceedings of the meeting of Sufferers from the Moplah Rebellion in BSMP Sub. file(12), NMML.(appendix )

<sup>50</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Devdhar, G.K., SMRNH, in BSMP, NMML.

MCRC had set up seven camps in Calicut alone to shelter the people thronged in great numbers from the rebel-hit areas. At one time the total number of refugees in Calicut camp alone went up to six thousand and five hundred. In these camps, people were served with two cooked meals, supplied with clothing, oil, soap medicine and other comforts.<sup>52</sup> A definite and organized shape was given to the relief operation in the interior disturbed area. A number of branch committees were set up with specific rules for measures of relief and for the scale of help or grants-in-aid basis. A huge number of 20,000 men, women, and children were given all possible help and assistance with the help of local sub-committees. At a time the total number supported through branch committee system is said to have reached to about twenty six thousand. These men lived at fifteen centres set up by the branch committees.<sup>53</sup> As the committee was an amalgam of various agencies appeals of these agencies could produce a hopeful effect in collecting money and materials for the purpose of relief. Mr. G.K. Devdhar deserves special mention here. His eminent attempts could procure the major part of what was collected. Money flowed from Madras, Bangalore, Bombay, Allahabad, Delhi, Lahore, in addition to Calicut and Palghat in rebel area from India. Basrah, Mesopotamia and Singapore also sent money to MCRC. In spite of this much wider participation in assisting the committee Bombay sent almost

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

half of the total amount to the fund.<sup>54</sup> A Malabar Relief Fund was set up in Bombay with the specific object of collection of money and materials required for the relief of Malabar.<sup>55</sup> Malabar Relief is thus very much obliged to the munificence of Bombay.

The camps were never a centre where food and shelter alone were provided for the victims of the rebellion. The working of the camp was so systematic and efficient that camps provided for the employment, education, entertainment and health of the victims. Arrangements were made to give instructions of different kind in camp. Camps were schools for boys and girls. Women were provided with sewing classes. All these were under the supervision of women visitors locally recruited. People were also provided with jobs within and without the camps. People were allowed to keep all wages they earned with themselves. Entertainments and lectures on sanitation and agriculture were arranged by government experts.

Elaborate arrangements were made for looking after the health of the camps. Let us here from the horse month.

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<sup>54</sup> In the total amount of two lakhs collected nearly one lakh was from Bombay alone. United province sent Rs.10,000, Delhi and Lahore Rs.3000 together. See G.K. Devdhar, SMRNH,BSMP,NMML.

<sup>55</sup> Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy was the President of Malabar Relief Fund, Bombay in January 1922. See Devdhar G.K., SMRNH.

"There are special wards opened for the sick; a women's hospital started by the committee is in charge of Mrs. Austin, the wife of the Sub collector. She is assisted by a lady sub Assistant Surgeon and a fully qualified nurse sent by Poona Sevasadan society. Mrs. Janakibai Bhat, its lady superintendent, spent there one month in organizing, with the help of Miss. Natarajan B.A., .... There is a medical committee; camps are looked after both in Calicut and Moffusil by local medical practitioners under the supervision of Rao Bahdur. Dr. C.B. Rama Rao, B.D., MD, MLL, a Madras retired civil surgeon. . ."<sup>56</sup>

Thus, despite the fact that Malabar Central Relief Committee could not provide to an estimated 50000 men with a sum of Rs.10,00000, it could extend invaluable help to thousands those who had fled from the region of South Malabar as a result of rebel atrocities to keep themselves secure from the bleak future they saw at the time of rebellion. More than that with the help of friends and assistants who assisted him in his venture of giving relief to Malbar, Devdhar's efforts for rehabilitation of the victims and reconstruction of Malabar especially South Malabar vouch for the self less interest of Devdhar in improving the situations in Malabar.

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<sup>56</sup> Devdhar, G.K., SMRNH.

## The DMRT

Mr. Devdhar decided to continue his work in Malabar after the winding up of the relief work. The central relief committee had a balance of Rs. 35,602 after it had completed this task of sending the refugees back to their home. With this amount as asset, Devdhar decided to set up 'Malabar Reconstruction fund' to spend the amount in Malabar.<sup>57</sup> The fund was intended to spend for the reconstruction of riot-ridden Malabar and with this end in view Devdhar established Devdhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust.<sup>58</sup>

During the time of his visits of Malabar onwards Devdhar had understood the need for economic and moral reconstruction of the people of Malabar. He had put forward a specific plan for the economic reconstruction.<sup>59</sup> His view on the question of moral reconstruction is laid down in a document. "The problem before the people of Malabar now in the peaceful rehabilitation of the refugees after peace and order was restored. The two great communities in Malabar – the Hindus and Moplahs, have to learn to live together as brothers and good citizens and lend a peaceful and united life in perfect harmony and self respect. The government and the leaders of the two communities will have to put their heads together to device economic and

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<sup>57</sup> M.M. Sept. 20, 1923, p.1.

<sup>58</sup> Vijayan T.M., "DMRT and Its Functions in Malabar" in Dr. V. Kunhali (Ed.), *Kerala Society Historical Perception*, 2002, Calicut, p.137.

<sup>59</sup> Devdhar, G.K., SMRNH.

educational measures, so that each community learn to respect the rights and religion of the other as all good citizen do".<sup>60</sup>

DMRT ventured into a wide variety of fields as part of its agenda of reconstruction in Malabar. The most successful field was that of providing education to the downtrodden people of South Malabar. We have already seen that Devdhar had found great value in creating a situation in rebel-struck areas in which Muslim and Hindus would live as friends. He seemed to have shared the British view that one of the major causes for the rebellion was the ignorance of the people of the area. He was also sensitive to the sad plight of the downtrodden castes of the area. The establishment of so many educational institutions specially meant for lower class students in the different parts of South Malabar was really an attempt to attain the dual aim of amelioration of the down trodden castes and educating Mappilas.

### **Educating the Lower Castes**

DMRT promoted three streams of educational institutions. It established regular schools for providing elementary education to the lower class students. Schools of this category was first establish at Tanur and Quailandy. By 1930-31 DMRT had an higher elementary school at Tanur and

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

the Gokhale Elementary School at Gopalapuram at Quilandy.<sup>61</sup> After a period of seven years, it established one elementary school at Nediyruppu near Kondotty, a Moplah Elementary School at Panakkad near Malappuram and three day schools at Wandur, Paravanna and Tritala.<sup>62</sup> The Trust also started a school in Wynad at Perod and another one in Cannanore at Chalad.<sup>63</sup> The second stream was that of night schools. Night schools are generally concentrated in and around Tanur. In 1930 Tanur centre maintained five Night schools.<sup>64</sup> By 1938 we see night schools at Melmuri, Wandur and Tritala under DMRT. The third stream was Adult Education centres. The prominent centres of adult education were Feroke, Tirurangadi, Tirur and Mangatiri. Each centres worked itself with one teacher and a peon. Newspapers, Magazines and other reading materials were officially made available at these centres.<sup>65</sup> Such a systematic involvement of DMRT in the field of education of Malabar especially South Malabar seems to have provided so much ameliorative potential, how so ever limited it was, for the down trodden castes in South Malabar.

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<sup>61</sup> See Income and Expenditure Statement of DMRT for the year 1930-31 in File No. DDis.3116/31 RAK.

<sup>62</sup> See File R Dis 87/38 RAK.

<sup>63</sup> Vijayan, T.M., in Kunhali, V. (ed.), *Op. cit.*, pp.137-138.

<sup>64</sup> They were 1. Kattilangadi Night School, 2. Panchama Night School, 3. Meenadathur Night School, 4. Thanalur Night School and 5. Puthentheru Night School. See File No. DDis 3116/31 RAK.

<sup>65</sup> See the document in note 61.

In addition to the educational institution the trust made their presence felt the fields of co-operative movement and production. It maintained agricultural and producing farms at many places like Tanur, Gopalapuram, Panamanna etc. The trust had under its supervision a Weavers Cooperative Society and department at Tanur and a Labour Co-operative Society at Feroke.<sup>66</sup> A notable contribution of DMRT was the establishment of Grey Boarding Home for Harijans established at Gopalapuram. Boarding home gave food accommodation and other facilities required by Harijan students of Higher Elementary schools at Gopalapuram. The Trust had also stepped in to the field of child care.<sup>67</sup>

### **Mappila Aid Committee**

The workers of servants of India Society in Calicut spared no time to organize relief activities when they felt the need for the same. They contributed significantly in the activities of Mappila Aid Committee. Mappila Aid Committee was formed when a large number of Mappila convicts were released in 1931-32. The committee was a semi-government one the president of which was the District Collector himself. Mr. K.K. Pokkar and Suryanarayana Rao were the honorary Joint Secretary. Archival documents shows that the latter, who was the senior servant of SIS in Calicut, conducted

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<sup>66</sup> See File No. R.Dis 87/38 RAK.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

the enquiries employing volunteers of SIS chalked out the programmes of relief, mobilized the fund and distributed relief items in consultation with other members of the committee.<sup>68</sup> To facilitate the activities subcommittees were formed in different parts of the districts. Their main functions were to collect funds and to investigate in to cases of distress and distribute relief. By August 1932 the committee had collected Rs.4280 and expended Rs.4120 on relief as grants to 258 persons.<sup>69</sup> The nature and form of provision varied in accordance with the need of persons. Amounts were distributed for buying cattle, for buying seeds and agricultural equipments to start cultivation, for rebuilding houses, starting petty trades and for medical treatment. The committee also arranged for the treatment of lepers and other deceased ones among the released.<sup>70</sup> Though with a reserved interest of the collector who was 'not frankly very sanguine about getting some more money for Moplah Relief Fund', the committee worked upto 31.3.1933.<sup>71</sup>

### **Malabar Distress Relief Fund**

At the initiative of Servants of India Society a Malabar Distress Relief Fund was also set up. We have no clear picture of the target of the Fund. We

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<sup>68</sup> See File No. D.Dis 12153/31 RAK.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> See Minutes of Executive Moplah Aid Committee held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 1932 in DDis 12153/31 RAK.

<sup>71</sup> Letter from District Collector to Surya Narayana Rao of SIS dt. 23.8.32 in DDis 12253/31 RAK.

see a copy of proceedings of the committee in which it decides to make preliminary enquiries of the feasibility of extending relief to the fishermen belongs to Vadanappalli and Thalikulam in Ponnani Taluk.<sup>72</sup> From a letter of Suryanarayana Rao to Mrs. Russel, the Collector, we can infer that they were arranging for the cyclone relief in May 1932.<sup>73</sup> The Malabar Distress Relief Fund Committee too was provided by the District Collector. The Suryanarayana Rao left Calicut in 1933 Mr. V.R. Nayanar was placed in all the former's offices and capacities. Hereafter Nayanar represented Servants of Indian Society in both Mappila Aid Committee and Malabar Distress Relief Fund Committee. Nayanar too worked with utmost interest and fervour to provide all possible relief to the needy people. Apart from leading DMRT, he could restart the work of the Mappila and Committee. In 1933 itself the committee could collect a sum of Rs.6330 and distributed Rs.5918 as grants to release convicts.<sup>74</sup> The committee was closed by January 1935 and the committee decided to hand over the assets including the balance to the Discharge Prisoners Aid Committee of Madras.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Malabar Distress Relief Committee held on 9 March 1932 in Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Surya Narayana Rao of SIS to Mr. Russel in Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Statement of Income and Expenditure of DMRT for the year 1933 in Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Proceedings of the Meeting of the Mappila Aid Committee held on 8 January 1935 in Ibid.

### **The Meanings and Politics of Relief**

Having gone through the ways of providing relief in the post-revolt Malabar, let us now turn towards the social and political implications of the actions of these relief agencies. A reasonable understanding of this could be possible only through attempting answers to certain questions. Firstly what were the intentions and interests of the relief agencies worked in the post revolt scenario of Malabar? Secondly what was the impact of the relief work in Malabar? This could be seen from two points of views. One from the point of view of these agencies, ie., what they could attain in relation to their intentions and interests? The other is from the point of view of the people of South Malabar ie. what the people of Malabar especially South Malabar could gain from the services of the relief agencies?

Viewing from the angle of such questions, we have two types of Relief agencies. One is of those whose attempts at relief were born out of their concern for the people of Malabar as they were organically related to the rebellion either igniting political action among the Mappilas or protecting those at the receiving ends of the rebels' wrath. The other one is of voluntary service organizations working with specific aims whose concern for Malabar was aroused not merely out of their sympathy towards their afflicted fellow beings but also out their interests in attaining their organizational aims. The efforts of congressmen, Khilafat committees, local magnates colonial

government and agents comes within the former category and that of Y.M.C.A. Arya Samaj and Servants of India Society etc. come within the latter category.

In the former category the efforts of all agencies, though government did very meagre, was spontaneous actions of those who could mobilise resource for or expand money for the relief of their fellow beings. When they were thrown open to unbearable hardships during and after the rebellion. As such their relief work did not out lived the immediate end of providing a helping hand for those fellow beings who had thrown out of their hearth and home. No notion of providing for rehabilitation and reconstructions was mooted in their circles.

But the efforts of the latter category was an out come of purposeful discussions and deliberations held mainly from outside the Malabar and on the basis of planned and systematic deployment of resources and services. Their agenda was not confined to provision of relief for the victim of the rebellion. They had a systematic working plan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction. The prolonged presence of many agencies belongs to this category after the question of relief was over vouch for it. This naturally led us to think about the implications of the activities of these agencies in the post-revolt Malabar especially in South Malabar.

We have outlined these strands of social and political compulsions which worked especially behind the relief giving activities of local magnates, congress leaders and Khilafat leaders elsewhere in this chapter. Let us now try to uncover the compulsions of the prominent components of Malabar Central Relief Committee viz. YMCA, Arya Samaj and Servants of India Society.

### **The Y M C A**

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)<sup>76</sup> had its humble beginning in London in 1844. Led by George William an employee in a drapery house founded a club having 12 young men with a declared objective of the "improvement of the spiritual condition of young men in drapery and other trades." This was followed by many other in different places in London and outside. The formation of Young Men's Association in the different parts of the world ultimately resulted in the organization having a systematic form world wide with the first world conference was convened in Paris in 1855. But this meeting was only a conventions in which only seven nations of the world represented. But with this the organization began to have branch committees in all continents. Though city and rural associations differed in their activities because of their specific requirements of their members, but in all of them greatest emphasis on Bible study and other religious features.

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<sup>76</sup> For details see Eddy, G.S., A Century with Youth, London, 1944 and Fisher, G.M., Public Affairs and YMCA, Newyork, 1969.

Gradually the activities of YMCA had extended to wide varieties of spaces such as sports and physical education camping, counseling, formal and informal education, public affairs and citizenship activities. They also conducted community services when time and society required for.

The Relief work of YMCA in the post-revolt scenario is to be linked up with this general aims and objectives of the YMCA. Their presence in Calicut by the end of the rebellion was not inspired by any religious consideration in the sense that they reduced to here to relieve any one on account of the fact that the victims belonged to their religion and faith. What we can infer is that it was the institutional disposition of YMCA to serve the deserving ones among the public, that instigated them to take part in Malabar relief. It had established relief camps at Calicut to console the refugees at their hand. The details of the work of YMCA in Calicut and South Malabar are still to be brought out. But a participant of the Malabar relief gives us a picture that YMCA had active participation in the relief work and had taken up charge of some relief camp exclusively. After the dispersion of their camp they undertook the responsibility of the camp.<sup>77</sup> At the same time it was YMCA who brought the Mappila plights in to public light which is said to have resulted in the formation of Mappila Amelioration Committee with Mr.

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<sup>77</sup> Telegram from Mr. Surya Narayana Rao dated January 12, 1922 to Dr. G.K. Devdhar, in SMRNH, NMML.

Pompy of YMCA himself a member of the committee.<sup>78</sup> It was also an active component of the MCRC. Thus the known facts show that YMCA worked for the relief of the victims of the rebellion as part of the Association's project of spiritual attainment through service to humanity. At the same time the constitutional essence of it may not have allowed it in not giving preference to their co-religionists. A final statement is not possible with the limited sources about their activities in post-revolution Malabar.

### **The Arya Samaj**

The history of Arya Samaj is documented rather well. We have to brief its history focusing relevant things for our purpose and as such a detailed exposition is out of place. Founded in 1875, Arya Samaj was an organization meant for propagating the ideas of Swami Dayanada Saraswati on religion and society in India. The main centre of its activity was Punjab. But later it extended its activities to other areas of India. Notwithstanding the difference over the question of context of reform movements in India, the difference through mainly around cultural and economic explanation – there is no difference over the fact that it was when colonial modernity with all its contents and forms entered India that initiatives of social and religious reforms began to be launched. Though sprouted out almost simultaneously, two basically different tendencies had been conspicuous among them.

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<sup>78</sup> Koya, Parappil Muhammed, *Op. cit.*, p.167.

The first tendency was to reorganize religion and society freely and openly drawing in ideas and institutions from the West to infuse them into the body of traditional religion and society harmoniously.<sup>79</sup> The second tendency was to reformulate the religion and society by giving off those elements from the traditional religion and society which are not in consonance with the modern concept of religion and society. Both tendencies were responding to a new context but in different ways. Arya Samaj was the best example for the second tendency.

For Dayananda Saraswati<sup>80</sup> Hindu religion had, by his time been contaminated by incorporation of puranic beliefs and practices to it by ignorant Brahmins. The essence of Hinduism is the Vedas. There is no space for idolatry and other orthodox practices in Vedas. Vedas, according to him, promoted monotheism. Vedas recognizes caste system; but only as a social division on the basis of vocation, not on the basis of birth. He stood vehemently for a religion and society which is strictly in the line of what is expounded in Vedas. He goes to the extent that he declared Vedas as the fountain head of all knowledge. So his panacea for the social and religious handicap of Hindus was "Back to Vedas." Weeding out all unnecessary elements (to the modern standard) from the traditional religious practices

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<sup>79</sup> See, Chandra, Bipan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Delhi, 1986. Also see Jones, Kenneth, W., *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*, Cambridge, 1989.

<sup>80</sup> Jordens, J.T.F., *Dayanand Saraswati – His Life and Ideas*, Delhi, 1978, pp.62-65.

means the selection of those elements which would not go contradictory to the modern conception of religion. Thus Arya Samaj could stand for the shedding what was orthodoxy and ignorance to the modern student by sticking on to a pristine pure vedic Hindu religion.

Among the ventures of modern reformers, Dayananda Saraswati was most successful one in north India, thanks to Arya Samaj's influence over the North Indian people. The Hindu religion conceived and practiced by Arya Samajist acquired many of the overtones of semetic organized religions. Three things are conspicuous in this regard. Firstly Vedas attained the position of extreme sacredness as it began to be explained as a holy infallible revealed book equal to Quran and Bible. Secondly Arya Samaj introduced an institution of weakly congregation of Arya Samajists. This was the adoption of the existing semetic institutional forms. Thirdly Arya Samaj made a gradual entry in to the missionary work which stood for acquiring converts in to their religious fold. This is openly articulated in launching 'Sudhi movement' by Arya Samaj. The aim of this movement was to try by all means to bring back those who had entirely given off their traditional belief to embrace other religion.

We have already seen that Malabar had become part and parcel of pan-Indian political movement by the Khilafat Non-Cooperation movement. With the violent turn of the movement stories spread far and wide in India about the atrocities of 'fanatic' moplabs on the 'hindu' population of Malabar. The

entire north India seems to have been taken aback at the sight of Hindu sufferings. We have seen how Mahtma Gandhi who himself aroused Mappilas into action perceived the happenings involved in the rebellion. News papers and pamphlets were circulated with gruesome details of Hindu sufferings in north India.<sup>81</sup> The rift between Muslims and Hindus began to grow worse as arguments and counter arguments were traded between over the Moplah revolt. Tarachand puts "The exaggerated tales (about the rebellion) which reached the north inflamed feelings. The cry of Hinduism in dangers was raised and movements of *sudhi* (reconversions) planned. A vicious circle of accusations and counter accusations was set up which created the heat in which the tender plant of Hindu-Muslim unity began to wither."<sup>82</sup> An organization which had openly declared *siudhi* movement as its aim could not help going insensitive to the issue. Documentary evidences too show that the primary interest of Arya Samaj in Malabar was to reconvert the forcibly converted Hindus by Mappilas during the course of rebellion. Pandit Rishiram has outlined the achievements of Arya Samaj in Malabar in a letter sent to a news paper. In addition to the provision of food and other materials to the victims, they done, it is argued, were trying to reconverted the forcibly

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<sup>81</sup> Some pamphlets with gruesome details of 'Hindu' suffering from exmpliance: 1. Dstan-i-Zulm (Tale of Atrocities) Amritsar, 1922; 2. Kashf-i-Haqiqat-i-Malabar (Badaya, 1923; 3. Malabar ki Khuni Dastan (The Bloody Story of Malabar), Shahrampus, 1922. See Gangadharan, Op. cit., p.582.

<sup>82</sup> Tarachand, *History of Freedom Movement of India*, Vol. 3, 1972, p.497.

converted ones.<sup>83</sup> He explains the strenuous job they did in this regard. "Pandit Kushal chand, the editor of 'Arya Gazette' and Mr. Venkitachellayyar have done many a thing to take back the forcibly converted people after going through the most dangerous places [in the rebel area]. Except those who had returned by April last under our protection, there was more than seven hundred and fifty forcibly converted persons."<sup>84</sup> As per another report published in september 1922 says that out of two thousand five hundred men reconverted, 1766 men were regained by Arya Samaj.<sup>85</sup> Though such reports may have an element of exaggeration what we have to see here is that the relief endeavour of Arya Samaj in Malabar was born out of *sudhi* sensibilities of the Arya Samajists. The provision of relief can thus be explained as attempts to create situations conducive for the basic mission of purifying those who had gone impure.

The ideas and practices of the religion of Arya Samajist got scarce acceptance in Malabar. The followers and ideologies of traditional religion in Malabar were cold to the idea of re-conversion. Both the traditional religious leadership under Nambutiris and people in general kept the activities of the Arya Samaj and others at bay. The difficulties felt by Arya samaj is openly articulated in a letter by Pandit Rishiram himself. "From its acquaintance

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<sup>83</sup> Letter from Rishiram to Malayala Manorama, See M.M. 30 May 1922, p.3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> M.M., 20 Sept. 1922, p.1.

with the Hindu community of Malabar for the last many months, what Arya Samaj understood is that Kerala Hindu Society is being weakening out of some severe ailments. If a strong public opinion is not formulated in the case of those forcibly converted who have come back to Hindu religion, they won't be getting entry into own community. If Hindu community in Kerala had to progress, it is to be culturally receptive. With this motive in view samajam in publishing many articles in its organs and many pamphlets in Malayalam as well as English . . ."<sup>86</sup>

This statement clearly shows that though Arya Samaj had acquired the reconversions of many of forcibly converted ones they were not well accepted in the social circle the where about of which still was governed by the traditional notions of society and religion. In another way we can say that the casteist disposition of the Malabar society was well kept even at the face of all difficulties and persuasions. More over same agencies who had started up to the reconversion of the forcibly converted in Malabar also found that there was no basic enmity between Mappilas and Non-Mappilas against what they had by then perceived before they got at Malabar. For example in an un official report on forcible conversion in Malabar at the instruction of our Jagad Guru Sankaracharya of Karwees branch of Sivagiri Math, B.S. Moonje sees that the relation between Hindu and the Moplas in Malabar was as good

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<sup>86</sup> Letter from Rishiram .... MM 30 May, 1922, p.3.

as ever.<sup>87</sup> This cold response of Malabar towards the pull of the hands of unified 'Hindu' religion ultimately resulted in waning of the influence of Arya Samaj. Arya Samaj could not carve out a commendable space of influence among the Malabar populace. This is so well portrayed in the failure of Arya Samaj to withstand the orthodox defense on Arya Samajist at Kalpathy in Palghat when the Arya Samajist ventured to enter the agrahara road on the presumption that when one depressed class man is converted to Arya Samaj, his caste identity will have just like when people convert to Christianity and Islam.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Servants of India Society**

We have already seen the range of work conducted by Malabar Central Relief Committee, Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust, Mappila Aid Committee etc. The works of these committees were dominantly directed and conducted by servants of India Society. A better understanding of the interest and intentions of Servants of India Society in Malabar requires a clearer picture of the beginning basic aims and objective and functioning of the society.

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<sup>87</sup> Moonje, B.S. Report on Forcible Conversions of Hindus in Malabar in Sub File No.12, BSMP, NMML, p.7.

<sup>88</sup> See correspondence between the District Officials and the Madras Govt. on Kalpathy Issue in R.Dis 9525/25 RAK.

The Servants of India Society was the brain child of Gopala Krishna Gokhale. The foundation of this brother hood is said to be the outcome of Gokhale's conviction that the country needed a selfless and intelligent land of workers to dedicate their lives to the service of the country.<sup>89</sup> The foundation stone of Servants of India Society was laid down formally on June 12, 1905 in Poona by Shivani Hari Sathe who was an old time colleague of Gokhale in the Sarvajanic Sabha.

The institutional structures and the nature of activities of the society gives us a feeling that it apparently worked cumulating the missionary ways. A hierarchical order of membership ranging from the first member to the common workers put all the members under the full subordination of the first members. In 1905 the first member was Gokhale. The other members to whom Gokhale administered the vow were Natesh Appaji Dravid, Anant Vinayak Patwardhan and G.K. Deodhar.<sup>90</sup> The seven vows which a member had to take were: that the country would be always first in his thoughts and that he would give to her service the best that was in his, that in serving the country he would seek no personal advantage to himself, that he would regard all Indians as brothers and would work for the advancement of all without distinction of caste or creed, that he would be content with such provision for himself and his family, if he had any, as the society would be able to make

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<sup>89</sup> Deogirikar, *Gopalakrishna Gokhale*, p.103.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

and that he would devote no part of his energies to earning money for himself, that he would lead a pure personal life, that he would engage in no personal quarrel with any one, and lastly that he would always keep in view the aims of the society and watch over its interests with the utmost zeal, doing all he could to further its work and that he would never do anything inconsistent with the objects of the society.<sup>91</sup>

The workers of servants of India were men prepared, in the language of the society's rules, "to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit and to promote, by all constitutional means the national interests of the Indian people."<sup>92</sup> The declared object of the society was to train the servants as national missionaries, ready to visit any part of India at the order of the first member and council, in the hope of creating a deep and passionate love of the country, organizing political teachings, promoting good will among the different races, assisting education, especially of woman, and rising the people who live below even the lowest caste.<sup>93</sup>

Thus the society accepted a posture of a missionary society. The mission was to nurture a passionate love for the country among the countrymen, ie., to nationalize Indians. It got a service army whose entire

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.104.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Nevinson, Henry, W., *The New Spirit in India*, Delhi, 1975, p.38.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.38.

time, energy and earning were totally dedicated to the nation and country men under the full subordination of the first member and council. Thus it is better to call this as a nationalist missionary society.

At the same time it is interesting to note that such a society whose energy was mainly directed in creation of deep sense of nationalism, though concerned with politics, never found an enemy in the colonial government. It is a paradox that the same society which exhausted to fight against foreigners, though only through constitutional means, saw the colonial rule as a providential gift.

"Its members frankly accept the British connections, as ordaine, in the instructable dispensation of providence, for India's good self government on the lines of English colonies is their goal. This goal they recognize, cannot be attained without years of earnest and patient work and sacrifice worthy of the cause".<sup>94</sup>

Servants of India Society was, thus meant for political missionary services unlike the Arya Samajam which rather a pure religious missionary institution. More over, Servants of India Society was apologetic towards colonial modernity in its views on politics and culture where as Arya Samaj was rather assertive towards it.

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<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Ibid., p.41.

But the Society's politics of moderate nationalism was problematic because of its relation with religion and spiritualism. The constitution of the society says, "Public life must be spiritualized. Love of the country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the mother land, a dauntless heart which refuses to be turned back from its objects by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence which nothing can shake equipped with these, the worker must start on his mission and reverently seek the joy which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country."<sup>95</sup>

The concept of spiritualized nationalism does not allow a division between religion and politics. Is this nationalism a synchronism of religion and politics? Or is it a nationalism the form and content of which is decided by the religion? or is this nationalism itself was a religion. It is very difficult to answer these questions as it is a quite different an area for us. However, a biographer of Gokhale says, "He did not like his society to be called secular. He likened it to the religious orders of medieval Christianity. Gokhale's religion was primarily ethical and personal, not doctrinaire and institutionalised".<sup>96</sup> Religion and politics blinks elusively in the complex fabric of nationalism as it is expounded by the Servants of India Society. It

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<sup>95</sup> Deogirikar, Op. cit., p.104.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p.107.

can be explained in line with what Benedict Anderson's view that nationalism itself had acquired the positive role of religion as the spiritual domain of the people went void with the growing influence of modern secular ideas. SIS may be considered as an attempt to create a religion of nationalism.<sup>97</sup> A discussion over the delicacies and complexities of the phenomenon of nationalism won't do much help for us at this point. Let us now turn to Servants of India Society's venture in Malabar.

A search for SIS's intentions and interest in Malabar could not be studied in isolation with its basic aims and objectives of SIS. An organization of a service army which sought to create good will among different races, and to improve the conditions of women and depressed classes, no doubt had immense opportunities to work in the wake of rebellion in Malabar. It planned for providing relief to all kind of sufferers on a non-sectarian basis collecting an estimated amount for the same. The achievement that we have already detailed elsewhere shows the success of the efforts of SIS in the relief and rehabilitation of people of Malabar.

On the basis of the type of works SIS did in Malabar, their whole activities can be divided in to two parts. The first one was relief activities of temporary type which they did by the end of the rebellion in Calicut and moffusils. It was meant for providing a sigh of relief for the victims of

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<sup>97</sup> For details on the questions of nationalism becoming a religion in the modern world, see Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, London, 1983.

rebellion for their distress. The second part was the ventures for reconstruction and rehabilitation. This was the activities of permanent type which could provide for economic and cultural amelioration of the people of Malabar.

A close examination of their activities would lead us to another facet of SIS's interest in Malabar. In Malabar SIS worked in collaboration with the government. This was quite natural for those who see the colonial rule as a providential gift. Any way it was quite helpful for it to conduct its work effectively. Naturally, they subscribed the colonial views on the rebellion. The entire responsibility of the rebellion was put on the congress in general and the Mappilas in particular. Following this line they understood in the first stage of their work that Mappilas does not deserve any consideration.<sup>98</sup> Though this approach was made to change later their contribution to that part of distressed population was minimal. They began to take interest in the relief of Mappila women and children, whose men were either killed or jailed, only after governmental urge to do so.<sup>99</sup> This is to be read in relation to the failure of Devdhar to get commendable amount of money for Malabar Relief Fund from Muhammadans of India.<sup>100</sup> This failure is indicative of either

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<sup>98</sup> Passim.

<sup>99</sup> See Devdhar, G.K., *Malabar Rebellion, Moplah Relief – An Appeal to the Mohammedan Community (1922)* in Sub. File No.12 BSMP, NMML.

<sup>100</sup> Devdhar has pointed out to the negligible contribution of Muhammedan to the Fund. See SMNRH, BSMP, NMML.

disinterestedness of Indian Muslim or their lack of confidence in SIS activities in Malabar. The only commendable work is the relieving of about two hundred Moplaha at a camp in Quilandy.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the SIS relief, though identified the hardships of Mappilas and had done something to relieve them what they did was too meagre as far as the Mappila women's and children's plight at that time was concerned.

An examination of the work of SIS in the second part with documentary details shows us that the inability of SIS, as a relief agency, to respond to the worst conditions of Mappilas was due to some problems innate to its ideological moorings. It is quite clear that beneath the boundless praise of nationalism and patriotism SIS cherished for an imagined homogenous pan Indian Hindu religion to be the religion of the nation. Thus SIS's mission in Malabar never contradicted with that of Arya Samaj. The mission was to influence Malabar through charities and pull the caste ridden society of Malabar whose religious practices and beliefs were differed in many ways from that of the rest of India. Their attempts got reliable backing from Bombay, United Province Punjab etc. because all kind of nationalist by thus had exaggerated the demonic character of Mappilas and the 'Hindu' sufferings. One thing which to be born in mind here is that almost all of them

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

claimed this 'Hindu cowardice' to be an important cause for the Rebellion, see what even Mahatma Gandhi says:

"... , but I know that Hindu should cease to be cowardly. The Moplah should cease to be cruel, In other words, each party should become truly religious. According to shastras Hinduism is certainly not the creed of coward. Equally certainly, Islam is not the creed of cruel."<sup>102</sup> Here Gandhi is trying to tread through the middle path between the 'cruelty' of Mappilas and the 'Cowardice' of Hindus. His middle path got a few applause from Malabar because the Mappila base of congress had shattered down as the Mappilas in general felt themselves cheated by the congress leadership on the one the landlords and their sympathizers pooh-poohed at the congress which regarded that Khilafat and non cooperation alone is responsible for the rebellion.

With one and same mission Arya Samaj and Sevants of India Society could go hand in hand. They began a very good beginning. They could capitalize on the bereavement of the landed interests in Malabar. Apart from becoming an active components of the CMRC they could carve out a space in reconstrutional forays which themselves were their initiative in collaboration with the jenmi class with a view to exhort and educate the people of Malabar the need of uniting under the banner of a homogenous Hindu religion. let us look, for example the establishment of The Malabar Reconstruction

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<sup>102</sup> Letter from Mahatma Gandhi to Gopala Menon in CWMG, Vol. XXIII, pp.81-82.

Committee. From a report in a Malayalam Newspaper on Jan 14, we see the establishment of the committee with the specific date of establishment. G.K. Devdhar and Pandit Rishi Ram possessed the posts of Vice President and secretary respectively.<sup>103</sup> The proceeding of the conference of sufferers from the Moplah Rebellion held at Calicut in February 1922 gives us a good example the committee's concern.<sup>104</sup> Convened under the auspices of the Malabar Reconstruction Committee, the meeting was largely an affair of the prominent Rajas and landlords of South Malabar.<sup>105</sup> A clear cut view on action plan for reconstruction was not seems to have formulated in the meeting. At the same time many a resolutions deploring the rebel actions, thanking the Relief agencies, extending many kind of appeals towards government and presenting various views for future action to strengthening the 'Hindu' community. We see Rishi Ram, the Arya Samajist, not only participating the meeting but also seconding two resolutions one by the senior Raja of Nilambur for taking proper steps to readmit the persons converted to Muhammedans and the other one move by another Arya Samajist, Swami Siva Prasad putting forward the desirability of different castes behaving

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<sup>103</sup> For the list of the members of the committee, see M.M. 14 Jan. 1922, p.4.

<sup>104</sup> For details see Appendix.

<sup>105</sup> See the list of participants in *ibid.*

towards each other in a fraternal spirit in order to consolidate 'Hindu Society'.<sup>106</sup>

This was a meeting of 10,000 Hindus of all castes and class comprised of victims of the Moplah rebellion and their sympathizers.<sup>107</sup> This was the first meeting in the history of Malabar in which this much number of a people crossing the boundaries of castes participated. This of course was a great success in the way towards generating a bend of mind in Malabar to get linked up with the high plane of a pan Indian homogeneous religion. But the meeting seems to have failed to achieve any headway towards a meaningful end except that the resolution for readmitting the converted ones back to Hindu religion found practical planes when a *Vaidika Sabha* was convened to finalize the rituals of expiation.<sup>108</sup> But the work of the committee seems not to have brought the downtrodden classes in to its ambit. To say, it is another way the people belong to the downtrodden castes who comprised the lion part of the population of South Malabar were excluded rather completely from the committees concern. The basic issue here was that people of Malabar had not grown to do away with the traditionally moulded practices and beliefs including the caste system.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Mr. Devdhar understood through his experience about the root cause of the ineffectiveness of the method of Malabar Reconstruction Committee as well as the Arya Samaj. A reply letter from Devdhar to B.S. Moonje and Gangadhar Rao is highly revealing.<sup>109</sup> Devdhar found Malabar so insular and the people so addicted to their traditional customary priest craft that practically speaking, their religion in a separate entity made up wholly of their own priests, whose word is the ordinance. They do neither recognize, nor are aware of any other religious hindu authority and as such are not affected by their opinions on rulings.<sup>110</sup> He sees this mentality of the possessors of the religious sacred literature of Malabar a potential impediment in the way of Arya Samaj. As regards to Rishi Rama's work whose special aim was the reconversion of the forcibly converted. Devdhar conclude ". . . , though he may have achieved something in other directions, I suppose will have to bear out from his own experience that all his optimistic enthusiasm in this direction was far from being well reared".<sup>111</sup> Devdhar also understood the social meaning of the conversions. He understood that It was rather the social disabilities than the force of a sword that works behind the conversions. This was well understood when he found that the converted ones from the down trodden classes liked to follow their new faith. Devdhar attributes it to the

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<sup>109</sup> Sub File 12, BSMP, NMML.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

social tyranny of the Hindu religion as practiced in Malabar then and conversion, thus, for him was "essentially a social problem."<sup>112</sup> Devdhar concludes the letter summerising his views on how to tackle this situation. Points 1 and 2 pertains to the ways of dealing with upper and middle class. In point 3 and 4 he put, that the *panchamas* and other lower class people must be the main considerations and there are many who feel that best way of helping them for a time at any rate is to provide them all facilities and help with out making it a matter of missionary endeavour to force them back to Hinduism.<sup>113</sup>

This explains why Devdhar launched a new body for reconstruction in the form of DMRT. Devdhar might have understood that Malabar reconstruction committee, due to the dominance of upper class in it, is not suitable to materialize an agenda pertaining to the lower castes. Any document either in the form of constitution of DMRT or in the form of its declaration of objectives is still to be recovered. As such the only way to asses and examine the activities of DMRT is to correlate its activities with documents already found out. Given that the document laid down with its objectives are available, practices are more reliable than documents for historical evidences. We have already seen that the area of concern for DMRT was the downtrodden classes in the rebel area. There is nothing to

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

show that its immediate aim was to <sup>✓</sup>soothe the converted ones belongs to the downtrodden community. But nothing would reserve us to conclude that DMRT's aim was to tame the downtrodden caste of Malabar to the possible extent in the ideological varandha of the pan Indian Hinduism in the making. They tried to extend its affairs even to the heights of Wynad. The trust started a school at period for providing education for the children of Adivasis there.<sup>114</sup> They had set up another school at Chalad in Cannanore District.<sup>115</sup> We lack evidence to see what were taught in the schools set up by DMRT. But we see that the prominent journals subscribe by reading rooms attached to the night schools (1930) were 'Hindu Aikyam' (Hindu Unity) 'Manorama Deepam', 'Servants of India', 'Lakshmiibhai' etc.<sup>116</sup> What DMRT intended to impart to and disseminate among the readers is explicit from the list. Absence rather than the presence too conveys meaning. Mathrubhumi, which had by then attained popularity was absent in the list. This means that they preferred their readers keep away from even the limited social radicalism of the congress politics. This would allow us to think that the content and mode of educations in the school would not have been otherwise. This also explains why Mappila gentry in general preferred to dissociate with DMRT in general. Mappila leaders seem to have feared the expansion of DMRTs activities to

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<sup>114</sup> Vijayan, T.M., in Kunhali, V. (ed.), Op. cit., p.138.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p.138.

<sup>116</sup> M.M., 30 Sept. 1930, p.3.

their own spaces. The establishment of the Tirurangadi Muslim Orphanage was an out growth of this fear. In the wake of a worst epidemic of cholera in 1943 an orphanage had been set up after the endeavours of Sir Nayar (Nayanar?) at Kakkad, a place east to Tirurangadi, for Muslim children when its workers visited K.M. Maulavi to ask for his cooperation, "understanding what was their real intention was", he said them "we will take care of our children."<sup>117</sup> This was as an assertion of a confident Mappila self as an overt dislike towards the cultural mould for which DMRT stood for.

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<sup>117</sup> *K.M. Moulavi Smaraka Grantham*, p.47.

**SOCIAL LIFE IN SOUTH MALABAR (1921-1947)  
RELIEF, REFORM AND NATIONALISM**

**Thesis  
submitted to the University of Calicut  
for the award of the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in History**

**MUHAMMEDALI T.**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**2003**

## CHAPTER IV

### COLONIALISM NATIONALISM AND REFORM

Apart from effecting structural changes in the traditional economy, colonialism also reshaped the traditional culture of Malabar, as it did everywhere in the world. Looking for dynamics of cultural changes in the structural transformation of the economic base alone has now become a historiography out proved. Moreover, it is now well founded that super structure, at times, acquire autonomy as a catalyst of change even to affect the basic structure.<sup>1</sup> So an examination of the social life in South Malabar in the wake of the rebellion should not be confined to delineating the basic structural changes alone. It should consider the project of the subordination of traditional culture to an outer one, ie., the colonial. To say it in another way, delinking the cultural developments of post-revolt Malabar from the ongoing process of a cultural transformation which had already been set in motion pretty before the rebellion, may lead us to wrong conclusions. So at the outset we shall have to see the trajectories of the cultural transformation effected in Malabar. An account of the glaring features of the traditional culture of Malabar is indispensable to move forward.

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<sup>1</sup> Althusar, L., *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus in Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, London, 1971.

The traditional culture in South Malabar was largely determined by certain customs and practices that took shape as part of the process of production and distribution prevailed in a highly hierarchical society. Predominantly an agricultural economy, the most important source of livelihood was the income from the land. The right over the land was naturally a determining factor of social position. *Jenmakkar* and *Kanakkar* possessed superior rights in the land. *Pattomdar* possessed rather inferior rights. Agricultural labours and agrestic slaves possessed right almost only to work in the fields. Along with the rise of such division of rights in the resources among various categories grow a kind of dependency relations which was articulated through the institutionalizations of personal obligations (*Kadamai*) and customary rules (*Maryadas*).<sup>2</sup>

This unequal distribution of resources and dependency relations were explained and legitimized through the dissemination of ideology of the caste (*Jati*). Here *Jenmis* who were mostly Nambutiri Brahmins put himself up at the apex of *jati* hierarchy as he possessed the sacred knowledge and there by acquired holiness. Moreover his sacred knowledge itself was the source of *jati* ideology. *Jati* ideology deployed the people of Malabar in different economic and cultural spaces based on the notion of purity and pollution and

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<sup>2</sup> Ganesh, K.N., "Ownership and Control of Land in Medieval Kerala: Jenmon-Kanam Relations during 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*", 28, 3 (1991), pp.299-321.

the rules laid down in consonance with it. It determined social distance that each jati has to keep between them with Nambutiri Brahmins as the referent group. Rather than defining the social and cultural roles to be played by each jatis, it demarcated boundaries for each jatis in respect of all actions, behaviour and movement. Each and every jati was destined to keep distance and difference with each other in actions of all walks of life including eating, housing, clothing, talking, worshipping, educating etc. Thus, every action and behaviour of men were defined in terms of jati in to which they happen be to born. Being holy men, possessing sacred knowledge coupled with superior rights in the land, Brahmins could use the hegemonic discourse to make use of the labour and resources of all other jatis in favour of themselves. An interesting feature to be born in mind here is that those who participated in trade and commerce never seem to have incorporated in to the structure of jati society. The dominance of jati consciousness among the people of Malabar, probably, may have percolated in to such trading groups too.<sup>3</sup>

To have a picture of jatis let us turn towards to the sixteenth century sources. Duarte Barbosa enumerates twenty one castes in Malabar. They, according to him, were divided in to three groups: the high castes, the lower

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<sup>3</sup> Ahmad, Imtiaz (Ed.), *Caste and Social Stratification Among Muslims in India*, New Delhi, 1978, pp.41-42.

castes and the outlandish castes.<sup>4</sup> Sheik Zainudhin also gives a good picture of the jati system. According to him, the sacred thread wearers formed the highest castes. They are of high, low and intermediate grades. The highest among the thread wearers are Nambutiris. Nayers were another caste. They were soldiers of Malabar possessing superiority in strength and number. Thiyyas formed a caste next to Nairs whose main job was coconut gathering and toddy tapping. Next come Asari, Kuravan, Tattan and Mukkuvan. There are many others below these castes. Pulayyas are one among them. They till the land, cultivate it and do such other works pertaining to it.<sup>5</sup> Names of these castes also occur in folk songs of north Malabar.<sup>6</sup> All these would not give the complete picture until we see that even within one jati there were numerous divisions who followed endogamy and exogamy as well. Even colonial ethnographers list numerous subgroups within the jatis.<sup>7</sup> It was this kind of a jati society that confronted colonialism. The working of colonial modernity in Malabar can not be comprehended with out understanding some macro processes that was going on in the colonial world.

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<sup>4</sup> The high were Bramenes, Nayeres, Baiberis, Cuiavem, Mainato and Cheletis; the low were Tuiya, Manen, Canqua, Ageres, Mogeris, Monquer, Betunes, Paneens, Revoleens, Poleas and Pareens; the outlandish were Chatis, Guze rates, Mapuleres and Pardesis. See, Barbosa, D., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Vol. 2, pp.38-78.

<sup>5</sup> Zainudheen, S., *Tuhfatul Mujahideen*, transl. by C. Hamza, Kozhikkode, 1995, p.59.

<sup>6</sup> Nambutiri and Achudanandhan, *24 Vadakkan Pattukal*, Trissur, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> See Thurston, E., *Castes and Tribes of South India*, Vols. 1, 5, 7, New Delhi, 1975.

### Colonialism and the Self

Saidian criticism of 'orientalism' has brought out the fact that apart from the academics orientalism was a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinctions made between the "Orient" and "Occident," and beyond all these it was a western corporate institution dealing with it by dominating, restructuring and having authority over the orient.<sup>8</sup> Orientalism was an important factor in the Western domination over the East ie. the Occident over the orient through the creation of a knowledge which gendered and effeminated all those what the East possesses. The project of orientalism goes hand in hand with colonialism. In colonial situations too the colonizer creates a portrait of the superior colonizer and an inferior colonized. The created image of the colonized as lazy, shabby, shy and will all bad traits is generally accepted by the colonized as they are in a colonial situation.<sup>9</sup> They could not escape from the colonial situation even as they tried to tear themselves apart with a view to enter the self of the colonizer.<sup>10</sup> Thus the closer he reaches the perimeter of the colonizer's self the stronger was the sense of his subordination. This process of subordination is rather clear when we recognize that colonialism was as much a cultural project of control as an economic project of exploitation.

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<sup>8</sup> Said E., *Orientalism*, New York, 1978, Introduction.

<sup>9</sup> Memi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Boston, 1965, pp.90-95.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.100-102.

From eighteenth century onwards, Europeans had developed a scientific temperament in all walks of their life. Unlike earlier, Europe as states now began to manifest their power through a gradual extension of "officializing" procedures that established and extended their capacity in many areas. They took control by defining and classifying space, making separation between public and private spheres; by recording transactions such as the sale of property; by counting and classifying their populations replacing religious institutions as the registers of births, marriages and deaths; and by standardizing languages and scripts.<sup>11</sup> European also ascribed great significance for empirical methods. To the educated English men of late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the world was knowable through the census, which could record the experience of a natural world. This world was generally believed to be divinely created, knowable in an empirical fashion and constitutive of sciences through which would be revealed the laws of nature that governed the world and all that was in it.<sup>12</sup>

In India, British entered a new world that they tried to comprehend using their own forms of knowing and thinking and rendering the social world of India into a series of "facts." As "administrative power stemmed from the

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<sup>11</sup> Cohn, Bernard, S., *The Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, Delhi, 1997, p.3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

efficient use of these facts,"<sup>13</sup> its collection lay at the foundation of the modern state. In coming to India the British invaded and conquered not only a territory but an epistemological fact as well. The "facts" of this space did not exactly correspond to those invaders. Nevertheless, they could explore and conquer this space through various investigative modalities<sup>14</sup> which provided for the final form of the colonial knowledge about India.

The process of the cultural transformation of Malabar too had, in all ways, been linked with these macro processes on the go. From the very moment the British took hold of Malabar, they started intentional endeavours to render the social world of Malabar in to easily manageable "facts." In 1792-93 onwards a Joint Commission was appointed to inspect the state and conditions of the province of Malabar. By 1800 Francis Buchanan makes "A journey from Madras through countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar."<sup>15</sup> In 1824 we see Lt. Ward surveying Malabar published later as "A descriptive memoir of Malabar."<sup>16</sup> A number of commissions were appointed to enquire

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<sup>13</sup> Smith, Antony, D., Quoted in Ibid., p.4.

<sup>14</sup> They are historiographic, observational, survey, enumerative, museological and the surveillance modalities. See Ibid., pp.3-15.

<sup>15</sup> Buchanan, Francis, *A Journey from Madras through Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, 2 Vols., Madras, 1988.

<sup>16</sup> Ward and Conner, *A Descriptive Memoir of Malabar* [First Published in 1906], Thiruvananthapuram, 1995.

in to problems occasionally come to confront by the colonial governments.<sup>17</sup> By 1887 William Logan had completed his masterly history of Malabar in two volumes of his "Malabar Manual."<sup>18</sup> The final consolidation of all the above endeavours can be seen in the "Malabar Gazette" of Innes in 1915.<sup>19</sup> A detailed exposition of the working of these investigative modalities has not hitherto been done. This is an area that beckons the historical scholarship. The concerns of the present study limit us going deeply into the avenues of this process. What we have to see here is that colonialism created its own geography constructed manageable categories and thereby formed boundaries and invented histories on the basis of the predilections of the empirical positivism which believed that the secrets of the working of the world is knowable through sensible experiences of man.

Such colonial attempts had produced some effects at the knowledge level first which percolated to the cognitive domain of colonial Malabar. One was a proclivity towards homogenisation. Consolidating elusive differences within the social materials of the area into an administratively manageable "facts" by various investigative modalities and the deployment of these "facts" into the administrative discourse produced its effect in the Malabar mind. For

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<sup>17</sup> A detailed picture of the whereabouts of these commissions is available in Innes C.A., *Malabar Gazette*, 2 Vols. [First published in 1908], Thiruvananthapuram, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Logan, W., *Malabar Manual*, 2 Vols.

<sup>19</sup> Innes, C.A., *Op. cit.*

example, Nairs who were not at all a homogenous category in the pre-colonial period were fastened together and zipped up in to the colonial census category ie. Nayar. Now a hither to heterogeneous jati groups got lost in the ontological violence of colonialism and in its stead an invented homogeneous category – as it was floated frequently in the colonial official discourse – got its stake in the minds of the people. Colonialism thus possessed a great potential for the reconfiguration of Indian society and self. The most important sites through which the western colonial modernity entered the Indian life were (1) The Administrative and legal sites and (2) The missionary sites (3) The market sites.<sup>20</sup> The first group of people who fell in the spell of modernity were those who happened to get spaces in these sites. The first two jatis who imbibed modern western ideas in Malabar were Nairs and Tiyyas. It has been made clear that Nairs manned the lower and middle rungs of administrative machinery of colonial Malabar by the middle of nineteenth century onwards. By then it had become common to sent children to study English by Nairs. Generations after generation they were rising in to the higher rungs of administration. English education also enabled them to capture and to an extend influence the juridical apparatus of the colonial government. But the pattern was that Nairs formed a strong group in South Malabar where as Tiyyas concentrated in the north Malabar. Tiyyas emerged

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<sup>20</sup> Bose, Sugata and Jala, Ayesha, *Modern South Asia – History, Culture and Political Economy*, Delhi, 1999, pp.77-80.

themselves as a powerful group in the first two decades of twentieth century in Malabar.<sup>21</sup> Tiyyas lived so close to the European community settled around the Tellicherry Factory and the nearby plantations that their women shared life with Europeans. This is said to have resulted in the rise of a new "white Tiyyas" in north Malabar. Both Nayars in South Malabar and Tiyyas of North Malabar got involved in the arenas opened by colonialism.

Thus, in the colonial situation of Malabar, the first groups among the colonized, who, at the face of the colonial subordination, tried to rescue themselves from colonial situation and tried to undo with their real self to merge with the subordinating self of colonizer. This required certain changes in the social and cultural practices prevailed traditionally. It was this unconscious move that pushed the roller of reform into action. But here comes another problem. In Malabar Nayars alone could make head ways in reform. Why was it that two groups who were treading through same path in a colonized situation behaved differently? The first answer is that the behaviour of the colonial subject is limited by the colonial mind-set. Colonizer's in Malabar which recognized the different existence of Nayars and Tiyyas as jatis. This naturally created boundaries between them in the colonial spaces. Actually at least in North Malabar Tiyyas got much more exposure to all the three sites of colonial modernity. But they could not make

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<sup>21</sup> Menon, M. Dilip, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in Southern India - Malabar, 1900-1948*, Cambridge, 1994, pp.22-30.

much head way as the Nayars of Malabar did in the field of education and official jobs. It has been said that the majority of the land revenue officials at the beginning of twentieth century were Nayars even though Tiyyas had equal economic and educational status.<sup>22</sup> The concept of cultural capital<sup>23</sup> is useful to explain this. On the one British colonialism in Malabar never had attempted, in anyways, either to destroy or to debilitate the traditionally privileged classes. They always tried to favour them in all the possible ways with a view to maintain a group loyal to the British power.<sup>24</sup> In addition to this Nayars traditionally were solidiers, administrators and government officers. This naturally gave Nayers an additional attraction from the colonial masters. Tiyyas, being traditionally toddy tappers, might not have been getting that receptivity of Nayers in the colonial administrative circle due to this fact. In relation to this, there is one more thing. This may be called a Tiyya's quandary born out of his double subordination. The colonized who possessed a privileged self in the traditional setting (and that the privilege being partially protected by colonialism) like Nayers could only to choose to remove the immediate barriers which are parts of his real self that directly come in to conflict with the colonial world. But, for Tiyyas, both tradition and modernity means subordination. So when even he found an opening in

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<sup>22</sup> Achuthan, K.R., *C. Krishnan*, Kottayam, 1971, p.47.

<sup>23</sup> The Cultural Capital is a concept developed by Pirrie Bourdeau. See *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter I.

the colonial world he tried to escape from his traditional self. Many of them selected a path of complete departure from the tradition through conversions.<sup>25</sup> Thus, we see that Tiyyas primarily concerned about acquiring education beyond everything else.<sup>26</sup> The beginning of twentieth century witnessed mounting proclivity towards reform among Ezhavas though it was mainly concentrated in Travancore.

All other jatis including Mappilas chose otherwise. They kept themselves aloof from the cultural sites of modernity. Though British authorities protected their economic and social privileges and kept links with them, Nambutiri Brahmins too chose to live in traditional way – a life of extreme purity, entrusting their Nair servants and assistants called *Karyasthan* and *Valiyakkarans* to deal with matters regarding income expenditure, tax paying, suits in the court etc. It was only after the revolt of 1921 that Nambutiri Brahmins showed inclination towards reforms. Mappilas who constituted the major part of South Malabar too showed a negative approach to colonialism. It is not true to say that Mappilas detached themselves from the sphere of colonial culture. Mappilas could keep close relations with the

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<sup>25</sup> The best example is Samuel Aron. Tiyyas, under the leadership of C. Krishnan, had declared their intention to embrace Budhism. See Achuthan K.R., Op. cit., pp.227-43; M.M. 23 January, 1923.

<sup>26</sup> For example see the slogan of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham. "Get free through education and get strong through organization".

British in the coastal areas. It was so common in north Malabar.<sup>27</sup> In South Malabar too the coastal area provided immense opportunities for Mappilas to get in touch with the modern ways. But they rarely cared for English language which practically kept the colonial administrative spaces off from the Mappila life. Mappilas of South Malabar were so adamant in this attitude. It is proved that the Mappilas of South Malabar had weighed the unmanageable weight of colonial intervention in the land revenue administration.<sup>28</sup> The consequent poverty lies at the root of the Mappila rejection of colonial spheres of culture. At the same time those who possessed material wealth and kept constant relation with the British too rarely cared for modern education and British jobs and an inclination towards reform. This is not to deny the fact that the first generation of Muslim who turned towards colonial ways and education hails from north Malabar especially Tellicherry. Missionary activities too are meagre especially in South Malabar. A telling presence of the Basel Evangelical Mission is absent in the core area of South Malabar. After Feroke in the southern side of Calicut we see missionary school only at Palghat. There was almost a complete absence of Missionary activities in the core of South Malabar which

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<sup>27</sup> Chovvakkaran Moosa, for example, was a close collaborator of the company at Cannanore. See Zackariya, Skariya (ed.) *Talassery Rekhakal* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> See Logan, W. Op. cit.

is characterized as the "fanatic zone".<sup>29</sup> The distance of Mappila of coastal areas from the colonial things possibly was memories of anti-European struggle they led in the preceding centuries. It is less probable that Mappilas of South Malabar were proud in the anti-European struggle of coastal Mappilas. A study of popular memory of Mappilas of the area may lead us to a conclusion. Presently Mappila conscience of South Malabar has only a little space for anti-European struggle but it still celebrates many a battles fought by prophet and his companions at Arabia in addition to certain struggles occurred in their territory like "Malappuram pada". At the same time anti-colonialism was being nurtured in the minds of Mappilas in South Malabar through the political practices in the context of the colonial impoverishment of Mappilas in South Malabar. Even in south Malabar we see pockets of colonial influence.<sup>30</sup> However, the acceptance of colonial modernity was largely an exceptional behaviour among the Mappilas in general.

The plight of the rest of the jati group continued to be same as before colonialism. The limited social agenda taming the hierarchical society with least intervention of colonialism could not liberate the downtrodden castes of

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<sup>29</sup> Jose, Tony, K., "Missionarimar – Aksharathinte Velicham" (Mal.) in *Keralam Irupatham Noottandu, Special edition Samakalika Malayalam*, 7 January 2000, pp.126-138.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Hidayathul Muslimee Sabha, Manjeri, Maunathul Islam Sabha, Ponnani and Himayathul Islam Sabha, Calicut were forums for promoting modern and religious education always followed pro-British policies. See Koya, Parappil Muhammed, *Kozhikkotte Muslimkalude Charithram*, Kozhikkode, 1994, also see Samad, M. Abdul, *Islam in Kerala*, Kollam, 1998.

Malabar. The only channel opened up by the colonial political economy possessed potentials for liberation of these castes was plantation industries. But here too the downtrodden castes could not avail the openings because they got only seasonal employment in the plantations.<sup>31</sup> Consequently tearing apart from his traditional master was suicidal for the downtrodden. Thus, many of the lower caste ones were sent to the plantations because their masters willed so. More over they were treated so badly in the plantations that they felt almost no difference between the two positions. In short, they could not escape from the shackles of slavery. Though they were exposed to Christian missionary sites in Travancore and Cochin region, Malabar, especially south Malabar offered very little openings of this kind. They lived largely in the monotonous world of work, poverty and stench whose movement was restricted to the limited spaces where they were destined to work. The lower caste in general, and their women in particular lived a life oblivious of spatial difference and time sense as they lacked special comparison and markers of time. Many of them don't know even the ages of their offspring.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Raman, K. Ravi, "Bondage in Freedom: Colonial Plantation in Southern India – C.1797-1947". Working Papers No. 327, C.D.S. pp.4-6.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Nadichi, Thiruvalli colony, Malappuram Dist.

### **The National Self**

The process of transformation of society in general and culture in particular is also closely linked with Nationalism. Nationalism is a well debated phenomenon in the realm of various disciplines in social sciences. Among the various facets of nationalism the psychological and cultural ones will be useful for understanding the vicissitudes of the cultural changes in Malabar. Albert Memi has explained the vicissitudes of colonial subject's mind. Finding the doors of colonizer's world closed to him, the colonized realizes the fact that revolt is the only way out of the colonial situation. Moreover, he sees that his condition is absolute and cries for a "solution" a break and not a compromise.<sup>33</sup> This break naturally led to the process of recovery and rediscovery of themselves. But even at the height of his revolt, the colonized still bears the traces and lessons of prolonged habitation. The colonized fights in the name of the very values of the colonizer, uses the latter's techniques of thought and methods of combat.<sup>34</sup> To say it in another way the colonized at this stage become a man torn between the two domain. Having once imitated the ways of the colonizer, an uncompromising return to his real self does not seem possible. Partha Chatterjee's studies on Bengali *Badralok*, has brought out this dichotomous consciousness. Bengali *Badralok*

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<sup>33</sup> Memi, A., Op. cit., p.127.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.129.

had recognized the superiority of Western science and civilization in the material 'outer' domain and on the other the face was saved by retreating in to an 'inner' spiritual domain where they could keep themselves off the colonial power. And it is from this inner domain that they launched the project of fashioning a "modern" national culture that is not western.<sup>35</sup>

An important factor to be understood at this point is that the "inner" domain here is not free from the shackles of the 'outer' domain because the modalities of the rediscovery of the real self was largely determined by the vestiges of cohabitation of the colonized with the colonizer. In this way the 'inner' domain too was restricted by a kind of colonial mediation. It was through such mediation that the idea of 'Hindus' as a homogenous religious community gave its way into the Indian mind.

### **Gentoo, Hindu and Muslim**

It is appropriate here to look briefly the way in which colonial endeavours constructed a unified Hindu religious community is through official intervention. In ancient times Persians called the land of 'Sindh' as 'hind'. Arab Muslim followed by Turkish Muslims too used the same sound to denote India. During ancient and medieval times "Hind" was largely used to denote the geographical unit. Romila Thapper has shown that 'Hindu' was

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<sup>35</sup> Chatterjee, Partha, see *Nationalist thought and Colonial World – a Derivative Discourse?* OUP, 1986; also see his *Nation and its Fragments*.

not used to denote a homogenous religious community before fifteenth century.<sup>36</sup> It is probable that 'Hindu' acquired religious connotation as the term was widely used for things Indian during the medieval period.

The European perception of Indian people has been highly determined by their religious proclivities as well as their contempt for Muslims – a historically developed trait in medieval European condition. Sushil Srivastava has brilliantly shown that how the Portugues 'Gentile' travelled through spatio-temporal planes of the early phase of European colonialism with difference in form and meaning to become at last 'Gentoo's', signifying a homogenous religious community in the hands of Halhead, the author of "Code of Gentoo Laws."<sup>37</sup>

Gentoo's acquired form and meaning when every imaginary and real characters of Gentoo's explained in relation to that of Moors. The religious agenda of Portuguese voyage to Malabar is so well known. The Papal Bull had validated the Portuguese attempt to bring in the slaves from the heathen land and also allowed to employ expansionist means to subdue the Moors and heathens. Portuguese may have nurtured more than other Europeans as they were coming from a land where the historical struggle of Christians

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<sup>36</sup> Thapper, Romila, "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and Modern Search for a Hindu Identity", MAS Vol. XXIII, No.2, pp.209-31.

<sup>37</sup> Srivasthava, Sushil, "Situating the Gentoo in History –European Perception of India in the Early Phase of Colonialism", in EPW Feb. 17, 2001.

(*reconquista*) had successfully concluded with the obliteration of Muslim power from Spain. It was in this air that Vasco da Gama treated the 'Moors' of Calicut with contempt.<sup>38</sup> What is important here is that Europeans readily and hastily understood Indian people in terms of religion. The haste to define people in terms of religion is reflected in the fact that at the sight of a temple Vasco da Gama concluded in no time it to be a church.<sup>39</sup> In those years Europe generally classified people in religious categories and placed them in a hierarchy of civilizations. In this sense Christians were placed superior to the moors and Jews and heathens were considered beyond the pale of civilization. This classification of the people of the world failed in India. People in India were far more civilized than the African heathens. This problem was solved when varied people of India other than Muslim were clubbed under the convenient terms 'Gentoo'.<sup>40</sup>

Gentoo seems to have always existed in colonial discourse in dichotomous relations with the Moor. Table 4-1 shows a sample of the dichotomous characters – both real and imaginary – attributed to Moors and Gentoos in the latter half of seventeenth century.

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<sup>38</sup> Danvers, F.C., *History of Portuguese*, pp.48-60.

<sup>39</sup> Srivasthava, Sushil, "Constructing the Hindu Identity – European Moral and Intellectual Adventism in 18<sup>th</sup> century India" in E.P.W. 16 May, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Table 4.1

<b>Gentoos</b>	<b>Moors</b>
<i><b>Poor:</b></i>	<i><b>Rich:</b></i>
Lived in Thatched Houses	Lived in Brick houses
Poorly dress/Scantily clothed	Properly attired
Walked and toiled in the field	Rode on horse and travel by carts
Women are free and came out freely from their homes	Never allowed to step out of their houses without escorts
Original inhabitants	Conqueror/invited

It was this perception that percolated all among the colonial administrative discourse. These perceptions got tangibility when British administrators codified the traditional laws. The lines of the letter sent from the president of fort William, Calcutta to the Court of Directors informing the former's decision to compile a code of Gentoos and Muhammadan laws are highly revealing.

"In order to render more complete the judicial regulations, to preclude arbitrary and partial judgements, and to guide the decisions of several courts, a well digested code of law compiled agreeably to the laws and tenets of Muhammadan and Gentoos and according to established customs and usages in cases of revenue would prove of the greatest public utility. The court, had therefore, resolved that such a code should be prepared and properly digested . . . accordingly appointed fit persons to execute the work by three district

commissioners . . . . We are aware that it will be a work of time and as when completed it promises to contribute essentially to the security of the property and person of the subject. We shall spare no pains to see it accomplished.

The attempt to codify laws largely drawn from religious books of the subject peoples at once fixed identities in religious and legal terms for the Indians. *Also the non-Muslim Indians were clubbed together under the single category of Gentoos and were found to be guided by a uniform code of law.*<sup>41</sup>

The codification of Gentoos Laws and Muhammadan laws thus became highly instrumental to quashing of a multitudes of identities to relocate themselves in to either of the two, ie., Hindu<sup>42</sup> or Muslim.<sup>43</sup> Along with this tangible world British strategies of legitimizing their rule had furthered the unconscious distance between 'Hindus' and Muslims. Colonial literature – whether it is administrative records, histories or legal digest – always tend to represent "Muslims" as the oppressor from whom the 'Hindu' is rescued by the British. When there occurred a dialogue between the Nawab and the Company over the question of the latter's interference in the traditional mode

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<sup>41</sup> The President and Council's letter (Revenue Department) to the Court of Directors dated Fort William, March 25, 1773, Quoted in Srivastava, Sushil, *Ibid*.

<sup>42</sup> Halhead has defined gentoos as those who knows and deals with the laws and Hindus as people come under the purview of the law, see *Ibid*.

<sup>43</sup> This perception was followed up by colonial apparatuses and many a communities who led rather vague and syncretic religious practices were made to choose either of the two religion. See Mayaram, Shail, *Resisting Regime*.

of judicial dispensation, the Company argued that since the conquest of the provinces by Muslims, life and property of "Gentoos" had been endangered, and therefore it had become necessary for the company to restore the laws and customs (of the Gentoos) which were essentially embedded in the religion. When the Nawab argued that law was dictated by customs and tradition as evolved through social acceptance and practices, the company insisted it to be determined by religions consideration of Gentoos.<sup>44</sup> The tone innate is that British were fighting off the centuries long enemies of the 'Hindus'. The fabrication of histories with a view to legitimize the presence of colonialism in the issue of Somanath has been explicated brilliantly by erudite historical scholarship.<sup>45</sup> Moreover we have seen elsewhere how the British manipulated the Tippu's episode in Malabar to shore up legitimacy for their coercion and to buy an easier subordination of upper castes in Malabar.<sup>46</sup>

### **Reading Two Novels**

Thus, colonial discourse and practices had produced new sensibilities among the colonized. Logically, nationalism too was not an exception. For the one the concept that India was largely a land consisted of people belonged to two religious communities, ie, Hindus and Muslims. This is coupled with

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<sup>44</sup> Srivastava, Sushil, Note 39.

<sup>45</sup> Thapper, Romila, *Narratives and the Making of History*, Delhi, 2000, pp.24-50.

<sup>46</sup> Passim.

the notion that these two communities had been for centuries stood in binary oppositions till the coming of the British. In addition to it the legitimizing strategies followed by the colonizer instilled that a more lenient policies of the colonial government towards the 'Hindu' subjects has liberated the 'Hindu' from the Mohammedan shackles. Nationalist culture, seems not have escaped from these notions in India. A reading of two novels written in the late Nineteenth century in Malabar gives vent to these sensibilities.

They are (1) *Indulekha* written by Chandu Menon who was an inhabitant of Parappanangadi in south Malabar, and (2) *Saraswathivijayam* written by Potheri Kunhambu who is belonged to Cannanore in North Malabar. The selection of these two are because both were written almost at the same time – *Indulekha* (1889) and *Saraswathivijayam* (1892), a time which marked the completion of almost a century of colonial rule in Malabar. More over the two novels were written by the English educated ones. Chandu Menon, born in 1847 in a Nayar family of North Malabar, educated both in English and Sanskrit, entered the Civil service as the sixth clerk in a small court in 1864 to retire as a sub-judge.<sup>47</sup>

Pootheri Kunhabu, the author of *Saraswathivijayam* was a Tiyya vakkil. He was a social reformer and writer who took great interest in social

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<sup>47</sup> Menon, Chandu, *Indulekha* (Mal.), 1998 Reprint. Trissur.

services.<sup>48</sup> Attempts already done to read these novels had made our task very easy.<sup>49</sup> Considering these novels as social and cultural statements of the milieu in which they are written, it is concluded that they are the reflections of a condition at a point of time at which the modern sensibilities began to replace the traditional sensibilities. Drawing from these works to a considerable extent an attempt is made to read these two with a comparative method to bring out the notions that came in to prevalence as a result of the colonial impact. Despite a difference between the open didacticism and reformism of Kunhambu and the realism and entertainmentism of Chandu Menon,<sup>50</sup> both novels attempts at a critical introspection of the traditional society in the light of modern ideas, both capture almost the same imagined landscape, to be specific a 'national' landscape, both highlights the liberatory potentials of English education.

A significant similarity of both these novels is that the imagination of a homogeneous 'Hindu' religious community, but with difference in details. As regards the *Indulekha*, what is dished out in 18<sup>th</sup> chapter is highly revealing of the tensions innate in the mind of the colonized. This chapter is basically "A conversation" - which takes place in Babu Keshab Chandrasen's huge moon-

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<sup>48</sup> Irambayan, George (ed.), *Nalu Novelukal* (Mal.), Trissur, 1985, pp.11-12.

<sup>49</sup> See Panikkar, K.N., *Culture, Ideology and Hegemony*, New Delhi, Menon, Dilip, M., 'Caste and Colonial Modernity: Reading Sarawathivijayam' – *Studies in History*, 13, 2, n.s. (1987) pp.291-312.

<sup>50</sup> Menon, Dilip M., *Ibid.*, p.298.

washed palatial house in Bombay – between Govinda Panikkar (Madhavan's father), Madhavan and his young relative Govindankutty Menon. These three figures from different generations start by discussing God. As opposed to the atheist Govindankutty Menon and the traditional Govindapanikkar, Madhavan talks about a God divorced from the temple and the sandal wood paste,<sup>51</sup> thereby freeing God for the emerging middle class from the traditional Brahmanical fold. At the same time Madhavan argues the great intellectual traditions of 'Brahmin's and 'Sanskrit' which could even promote atheism as it could be seen in *Samkhya* philosophy.<sup>52</sup> Reading on the success of the protagonists in convincing others of his argument (in the absence of authorial intervention) we can assume that this is reflexive of the middle class attempts to snatch away the textual possessions of the Brahmins in addition to imagining about a religion freed from the exclusive position of the latter. The 'inner' domain of nationalism was mainly constituted by this religion. Let us see how Govindankutty Menon the atheist in the conversation equates India with Hindu and Muslims – nothing more, nothing less. "How much has gone after many wonderful techniques like railway and telegraph reached India – won't *Hindu-Mussalman* [Indians?] try to learn to make and use these kinds of machines"?"<sup>53</sup> Another thing to be seen here is the absence of the

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<sup>51</sup> See Menon, Chandu, Op. cit., pp.228-236.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.239.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.250.

lower caste people in toto in the entire narration of Indulekha. Except one – the attendant of Indulekha, no one is present in the entire narration. This clearly shows that the sensibilities of modern – traditional growing middle class of the time lacked space for accommodating the presence of the downtrodden castes.

Mappilas who constituted a dominant jati of the area from which Indulekha is written also lacks spaces in the narration.<sup>54</sup> This happens in the case of Mappilas too. But in another way they are represented. When the narration reached at an episode of deceit and robbery, the protagonist fell himself amidst men who were understood to be Muslims. The "handsome young man," styled himself as sub judge by profession and Sheer Ali Khan in Name,<sup>55</sup> though only seemingly a Muslim, is symbolically a real Muslim. Among the others involved the peon who was asked to keep the belonging of Madhavan when he and Sheer Ali Khan got down from the compartment to have food from the butler, and the policeman were pathan and Turks respectively. The picture is completed with the Indulekha's dream in her palatial house. She wakes up suddenly, feverish and cried out. "Ayyo ! Ayyo ! Did this Muslim stab my husband to death? Alas My husband is dead. I

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<sup>54</sup> Chandu Menon wrote the novel when he was working in Parappanangadi in South Malabar.

<sup>55</sup> The narratives in the novel nowhere portrays him as a real Muslim. See Menon, Chandu, Op. cit., pp.205-215.

don't went to live any longer."<sup>56</sup> Here what we see is that the middle class Nayar of Malabar hoping to rise himself to the position of a national self – which is reflected in Madhavan's travel to the North and his making friendship with the most potential nationalist Middle class India, through reducing Pathan and Turks into a monolithic other that becoming to be a hurdle for his forward march. Chandu Menon, thus, in all probability was positing a fascinating and repulsive "other" which culturally should have been a Mappila from Malabar, since he and his hero Madhavan are located in the cultural geography of Malabar. Let us also remind ourselves that Mappila were least initiated in to the modern culture and had a history of unrest at least from 1836 onwards especially in South Malabar.

*Saraswathivijayam* too follows the ways of imaging a homogeneous Hinduism the source of which lies in Sanskrit scholarship. In the preface to the first edition the author explicitly celebrates the great Sanskritic tradition. the entire text of the preface is hooked up on the saying *Vidyadhanam sarva dhanal Pradhanam* (Knowledge is the most precious of any kinds of wealth).

In connection with this saying the author says: "Yet ought I not ask whether the *Hindu*, who had reached a wonderful stage of civilization even before any others in the face of earth, had the knowledge of the sense of what is said in the saying. In addition to it as the saying itself is in Sanskrit, the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.266.

original language of 'Hindus', there is no doubt about it."<sup>57</sup> What we see here is that the author imagines a romantic past to push temporal distance as farthest as possible and to recognize Sanskrit as the the source language of Hindu religion. The statements also allow us to infer the wisdom of Sanskrit scholarship. At the same time what is dished out in the novel ran contrary to this. Pootheri Kunhambu was one with strong inclination towards social reform. In the preface itself he accuses caste system, the introduction of which maligned *Hindu* religion – the net result of which was negation of knowledge for the downtrodden castes. But in the novel the protagonist Marathan, who is a *pulaya* who has no other way for getting himself reached vistas of education and upward mobility than getting converted to Christianity. The paradox apparent here is that though the author explicitly says that the introduction of caste system has contaminated Hinduism and had sufficient veneration for Sanskritic sources, the *pulaya* protagonist in the novel never gets the contaminated part removed from Hinduism but goes to the Christian fold.

In Indulekha the absence of downtrodden castes is conspicuous. But in *Saraswativijayam* the novel itself is a story of the success of a *pulaya* after he happens to be educated with the help of the Christian missionaries after he escaped from the tyranny of his master Brahmin. Even then Kunhambu's

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<sup>57</sup> Kunhambu, Potheri, *Saraswathivijayam* in Irumbayam George (ed.), Op. cit. p.52 (Italics my own).

protagonist could not engage with the tradition which detained him socially. This opens our eyes to a more significant problem. The down trodden class had no access to the traditional knowledge, a fact which the author recognizes in the preface itself.<sup>58</sup> To put it in another way, even if they had accessibility to the Sanskritic tradition, they possessed almost a nonexistence in it as human beings. Kunhambu, for example has captivated readers attraction to his knowledge in Sanskrit in the *Saraswathivijayam*. But instead of carving out spaces for themselves in the tradition, as has done in *Tiyyar* (1904), he unequivocally advocates conversions for Tiyyas as a means of emancipation.<sup>59</sup> This shows that as traditions provided little chance for their emancipation, the downtrodden always chose conversion. The attempts of conversion of C. Krishnan to Buddhism even after Narayanaguru had discovered a space in the tradition making brilliant use of the libratory potentials of Vedanta.<sup>60</sup>

As regards the presence of Mappila characters, unlike in *Indulekha*, there is conspicuous presence of Mappilas. Here too how Mappilas are represented is interesting. In the entire novel Mappilas come to the story as witnesses of Ramar Kutty Nambiar's killing of Marathan as he defied the jati rule. At two places they are referred in conversations of other characters and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.52.

<sup>59</sup> Menon, Dilip, M., Note 49, p.36.

<sup>60</sup> Passim.

only at one time we see a Mappila goes into action. In the second chapter, Kotu-Nambiar the *adikari*, explains the Nambutiri about the Mappila witness in the case. Hearing this, the furious Nambutiri responds: "Who are those rascal Mappilas? Dharma has gone wane as these bare-headed came." Kotu Nambiar intrigued with the Nambutiri to remove the signed witness paper of Kuttiassan who is the Mappila witness. It is here that the 'Mappila' comes to action. Smelling something wrong about the movements, he managed to get the papers revealed from the court by way of bribing to see what Kotu Nambiar had done to his witness. Actually it was the letters sent to Mr. Joseph, under whom Marathan had been working, by the 'Mappila' the case was further enquired and witnesses were collected. At last we see the judge Yesudas<sup>61</sup> gave the verdict that Mappilas were given punishment on account of themselves giving false witness. In the whole story Marathan become liberated through Christianity and education. Kuberan Nambutiri too in one sense liberated from the shackles of traditional Malabar religion to accept a more changed Hindu religion as a result of his life in the streets in sacred cities and his relation with the reformist organizations like Aryasamaj and Brahmasamaj. Moreover, Nambutiri was acquitted, the punishment of Ramar Kutty Nayar was reduced but 'Mappilas' on the charge of being concocted witnesses were to be brought to trial at last. Thus what does to 'Muslims'

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<sup>61</sup> Yesudas formerly Marathan has been emancipated through missionary mediation and became a judge as a result.

concealingly in *Indulekha* had done in another way to 'Mappilas' conspicuously in *Saraswathivijayam*.

One more point is to be in our mind is that *Saraswathivijayam* never bring up the issue of nationalism in the story where as in *Indulekha* nationalism is an important concern of the characters. This absence is highly revealing. Though not approving radicalism, the convincing arguments of Madhavan over the role of Congress and the other's view over it shows that the rising middle class Nairs could make use of the Brahminic tradition which is the main source of the 'inner' domain of nationalist culture. Negating entry into this tradition, though as a class they reached middle class position, the down trodden, even Ezhavas could not realize nationalism as a thing to be considered in preference to social amelioration of the downtrodden.

### **Back to the real self?**

In a sense what we have seen is how the first two groups who started moving towards the colonial modernity responded at the one and same time in two ways in a situation when the first glimpses of nationalistic tendencies began to rise its head. The point here is that nationalistic tendencies, when considered to be attempts of colonial self to catch back the traditional self, could not do away with the traits of 'colonial modern' as a result of which nationalism itself become mixed up with as it waggled in between tradition and modernity.

This was particularly so in India where colonialism was not as devastating as the French colonialism the context of which provided materials for the formulations on psychology of colonial subject by A. Memi. Probably this mild colonialism was made possible through a deliberate project of ideological conquest. Any way nationalism in India was not as fierce as in the African world. As such Indian nationalists, at least at the early stage in general believed in the liberatory potentials of colonial culture and apparatus in India.<sup>62</sup>

The trajectories of social reform should be seen in this larger background elaborated above. It is interesting to note that South Malabar formed the pivot of movements for reform in general especially among Nairs and Nambutiris. The Malabar Marriage Act of 1896 marked the beginning of the reform process in Malabar.

In the 1870s and more frequently in 1880s, signs of discontent with *Marumakkathayan* were apparently prominent in news papers.<sup>63</sup> William Logan an administrator with long experience of Malabar took up the issue in 1881-82 in his Tenancy report and made out a case for change.<sup>64</sup> On 24 March

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<sup>62</sup> See Madhavan's view on Congress. This is close to the general attitude of early nationalists in India. See *Indulekha*, Chapter 3.

<sup>63</sup> Panikkar, K.N., Note 49, p.188.

<sup>64</sup> Kodoth, Praveena. "Courting Legitimacy or delegitimizing custom? Sexuality, Sambandham and Marriage Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Malabar" in *MAS*, 35, 2 (2001), Cambridge p.351.

1890 Sir. C. Sankaran Nayar, a prominent lawyer of the Madras High Court introduced in Madras Legislative Council a bill to provide for marriage. It was in the wake of this bill that Malabar Marriage Commission was formed in 1891 by the government in Madras under directions from the Government of India to collect more information.<sup>65</sup> The Commission was to inquire into matrilineal customs among the 'Hindus' and explore the desirability of introducing changes in marriage, inheritance and family organisation through legislation. It was the work of this Commission that ultimately resulted in the passage of the Act of 1896. In this regard Malabar differs from the other parts of India. At a time when government relegated itself from the vistas of reform as part of the assertive rise of 'national community' who argued for their exclusiveness in matters of restructuring the 'inner' domain, Malabar witnessed active colonial legal intervention in collaboration with the respected colonial subjects.

Discontent with *Marumakkattayam* grew importantly out of the sexual access claimed and received by Nambutiri men to Nair women. This was within the frame work of *Sambandham*. The Nambutiris had institutionalized the system of primogeniture. As the eldest son alone was allowed to marry within the caste, younger sons were expected to establish *sambandham* with Nair and Ambalavasi women. This pattern of marital relation was mainly

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<sup>65</sup> Panikkar, K.N., Note 49, p.195.

concentrated to the south Malabar region. Sambandham was also practiced in North Malabar, but with a different meaning as Nambutiris were mainly concentrated in South Malabar.<sup>66</sup> This explains why the voices of reform mainly rose from the south Malabar region.

The process leading to the passage of the Act reveals an important development. The process involved two things: (1) the interpretation of customary practices by civil courts, (2) the reform efforts by a section of the community. We have seen instances of so many customary practices becoming 'authentic' in the colonial legal discourse. The institution of *sambnadhan* to capture an 'authentic' meaning as it was crystallized in a process of interpretation by the civil court. As such this was accepted authentic by the colonized minds too.

Thus it was those Nairs who happened to leave their Tarawads to settle in Madras by the changing decades of nineteenth century who took initiative in reforming society through legal interventions. This was a generation who had subscribed to the colonial concept of family and marriages based on the Victorian morality which considered *sambandham* as concubinage and *marumakkattayam* unsuitable to the time. See for example the expression of Sankaran Nair while introducing the Malabar Marriage Bill in the Madras

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<sup>66</sup> Of 370 principal Janmis from among Nambudiris identified by William Logan in 1881, 356 were in five sothern taluks, 11 in Wynad, and 7 each in Chirakkal and Kurumbranad. See Kodoth, Pravina, Op. cit., p.358.

Legislative Council. '[O]ur wives are concubines, our children are bastards in a court of law and the necessity therefore, for a bill to legalize marriage and provide for the issue of such marriages seems apparent.<sup>67</sup> But as regards how the issue was posed, we see two strands of arguments. The first strand stood for introducing a form of marriage which implicitly denied the legitimacy of *sambandham*. Sir. C. Sankaran Nayar is the best example. The marriage law that he suggested tied marriage to provisions that would facilitate and recognize a new form of family/household centred importantly around conjugality. The reformer of his ilk stood for radical reconstitution of the domestic world.<sup>68</sup>

The other strand stood in the way of this radicalism which is represented by Chandu Menon. Being a member of Malabar Marriage Commission, he submitted a separate memorandum expressing disagreement with the report of the Commission. The grounds of his objection shows that all his attempts to resist the move for a marriage bill on the other becoming a strong defense of the traditions. Consider, for example, his objections to the commission's opinion. He criticized it on the ground that the endorsement of marriage law on the basis that, *sambandham* (1) was not of a religious character and house was open to legislative intervention and (2) it did not constitute marriage, as it did not entail the civil rights that supposedly to

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Panikkar, K.N., Note 49, p.195.

<sup>68</sup> Kodoth, Pravina, Op. cit., p.356.

emerge from it and the lack of restraint up on divorce. Though at one point in his dissenting note he states that, irrespective of whether *sambandham* had religious sanction, as the people of Malabar were content with the present system, it would be against their sentiments to thrust up on them a law to regulate marriage, he is at pains to show that *sambandham* did partake of a religious character and is even indignant that 'the bill had leveled down the sacred institution of marriage, to a system of business relations or an ordinary contract enforceable at law'.<sup>69</sup>

The debate over the Malabar Marriage Bill is reflexive of the proclivities of the educated Nair Middle class in south Malabar. The dominant tendency was to comprehend and define things as following the line of the colonizer and seeking for changes of traditional institutions which amounts to a rupture with tradition. But Chandu Menon's disagreement with many of the definitions and endorsement of the of Bill represents the rising tendency of harking back to the tradition and to defend the colonial legal attempts to redefine and interfere with the traditional customs and practices. This tendency comes close to what is described as assertion of the autonomy of the national community to interfere within in the 'inner' domain. There is an additional factor that increases our reflexivity. The success of Chandu Menon's protagonist Madhavan in *Indulekha* in arguing out others in

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<sup>69</sup> For a discussion over Chandu Menon's argument see Kodoth, Praveena, pp.377-89.

establishing the role of congress as a facilitator which was perceived to be working in collaboration with the government to push the people of India to the higher levels of political attainments.<sup>70</sup> However, the question of effecting changes was solved more through the colonial legal intervention than the reform initiatives of the 'national community' in Malabar. A thing further relevant for us is that all other attempts of this kind after the Act of 1896 comes only in the wake of the Rebellion of 1921 in Malabar.

### **They Were Late- Why?**

The tremors of changes reached rather late among the Brahmins and Mappilas. It was only by twenties that these two sections thought of bringing about changes in their religion and society. Why were they comparatively late? This question can be posed from two positions. The first one is to look towards the issue from a colonial position, ie., to ask the question why were these two sections reluctant to receive the imposed colonial subjectivity for more than a century? The other one is to meet the issue with the question, how far was the rebellion responsible for the beginning of reform activities among these two sections. And if the answer goes negative, then what were the forces that contributed the changes among these two sections of Malabar gentry?

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<sup>70</sup> See Menon, Chandu, Op. cit., Chapter 3.

Though the British policies in India had destroyed the traditional economy and opened up a new world of trade and communication by linking it with the world capitalist system, their policy were not too devastating. In other words, British always maintained the traditional ways in a trimmed up form that suits the colonial intentions. The British policy of non-interference in the religious matters after 1858 is well known. Even before this British hardly tried to change the Malabar society through active intervention. On the contrary, it always sought to legitimize their position as the protectors of the traditional ways.

The provision of ownership of land in the hands of jenmis had not only made them feel secure but also marooned them in the high planes of their traditional position. Their traditional divine position too was fully recognized by the British authorities at least at the first phase of colonialism. Their position in traditional hierarchy was maintained by their exclusive accessibility towards the sacred knowledge and the maintainance of the ritual purity. To recognize their divine position in relation to the other jatis by the colonial authorities stands for promoting the traditional ways of Brahmins. In the new world a safe income coupled with political recognition of their position may have provided them a sense of blissfulness. In this situation, it is probable, they never felt the need of coming out of their domestic crust to compete with others in any arenas of life. Thus, in the first century of British colonialism in Malabar Nambutiri Brahmins lived in their domestic islands.

Consider the case of Nairs for comparison. Traditionally, the warrior – administrative caste, they were called up on to redefine their relations with the royalty in accordance with the emerging political situations. As the days of Naduvazhi Rajas were over, the spaces of Nair militarism got shrunked and gradually faded. Naturally they found the new opportunities opened up by the colonial regime which gave more weight to administrative solutions than to military solutions of political problems.

At the same time they found the colonial policies harmful for them as the proprietorship of the land was exclusively given to the janmies. At a time when they had acquired practically higher interests in the land,<sup>71</sup> the colonial policies were struck at the back of the Nayar Kanomdars. Under these situations Nairs were exposed to the ravages of colonialism. It was in this situation that Nairs proved themselves to be capable subjects of the colonial masters. Thus what we see is that Nairs found their caves in the rising colonial spaces especially because they were readily accepted by the colonial master as the latter recognized the capital possessed by Nairs as traditional administrators. Thus in the case of Nairs the colonized shared spaces with the colonizer whereas Nambutiris lacked this.

Familiarised with the effective methods of political interference in a colonial situation, Nairs could best use of their position. Being trained in the

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<sup>71</sup> Ganesh, K.N., "The Agrarian Society in Kerala (1500-1800)" in Cheriyan, P.J., (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999.

colonial ways of administration and acquired access to the ideas and practices of colonial legality, Nairs ruled the roost. Nair kanamdar could earn more income, than the Nambutiris could from the land revenue system as a result of the superior position of Kanakkar to verumpattakkar.<sup>72</sup> In addition to it they could buy easy victory over Nambutiris in litigation as they were well-versed in colonial law and legal procedures. Majority of the litigations on the question of tenancy and land revenue issues were between Nambutiris on the one and Nairs on the other.<sup>73</sup> Thus, Nairs were becoming more and more powerful in the emerging world of the colonial politics.

It was quiet natural that Nayar Kanamdars who acquired colonial modern education could emerge as the nationalist leadership. The congress leadership which was at the hands of the Jenmis was wrested by this rising class with the help of Mappilas by the khilafat-non-cooperation movement. The division within the congress at Manjeri conference is highly revealing this point. Khilafat moment with its violent turn proved, of course, to be a nightmare to the jenmis. The anti-congress mood prevailed in the meeting of the sufferers convened under auspices of the Malabar Reconstruction Trust<sup>74</sup> shows the general hatred of the jenmi class towards the congress leaders.

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<sup>72</sup> Panikkar, K.N., *Against Lord and State – Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar 1836-1921*, OUP, Delhi, pp.30-31.

<sup>73</sup> See *Ibid.*, p.40.

<sup>74</sup> See Appendix.

They even tend to call *Mahatma* Gandhi, a *duratma* Gandhi.<sup>75</sup> This mood is once more evident from the fact that the efforts of the congress leaders to relieve the distressed in the Rebellion found no co-operation from this section of the Malabar society.

At a time when as a whole they kept the congress at bay, knowingly or unknowingly they were initiated themselves into the nationalist culture by the outside agencies in the sites of relief and reconstruction.<sup>76</sup> Actually these agencies were very sad to see themselves unaccepted in Malabar.<sup>77</sup> But a careful and gradual work at such a piqued moment in the wake of rebellion, they could make some progress in hitting at the stringent traditionalism and to create an ambience conducive for a pan Indian Hindustic culture. Though Nambutiris could defend this pull to a certain extent, they could not help going unchanged in the emerging political and social realities in Malabar especially after the Rebellion.

Firstly, the politics of kanomdars found itself successful when the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930 was passed.<sup>78</sup> Though the nationalist politics had relegated back in Malabar especially in South Malabar after 1921, we see

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<sup>75</sup> M.M. 25 February, 1922, p.2.

<sup>76</sup> Passim.

<sup>77</sup> Passim.

<sup>78</sup> It was the politics of Kanamdars with the help of Justice Party that the passing of the Act materialized. See Radhakrishnan P.P., *Peasant Struggles, Land Reforms and Social Changes – Malabar 1836-1986*, New Delhi, 1989, pp.82-89.

a virile politics of land tency at the head of leading Nairs in south Malabar. Their constant attempt under the banner of justice party with the help of Indian National Congress proved successful in attaining the targets. With the 1930 Act the kanomdar got fixity of tenure. What was then it for the Jenmis? It was the loss of their proprietorship in the land. It is probable, then, that with the enactment of 1930 Act jenmis who were mainly Nambudiris lost the safety and security they got by the colonial land revenue arrangement.<sup>79</sup>

Almost simultaneously went the efforts to bring about changes in the *Marumakkathayam* system prevalent among the Nayars. We have already seen how the rising educated Nayar middle class exercised their power and accessibility in to the arenas of colonial legislative machinery to do away with the traditional family system (*Marumakkathayam*) and conjugal system (*Sambandham*). The Malabar marriage Act of 1896 was only a beginning. Actually what the Act provided was minimal to the requirements of the 'enlightend' class of Nairs. It only provided that when a *sambandham* was registered it would have the status of a legal marriage: the wife and children would be entitled to maintenance by the husband and father respectively and

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<sup>79</sup> The fear of Janmis is clear from the debates over the bill. See The Marumakkathayam Bill 1929 by K. Madhavan Nair in 172/29 Home Judicial NAI. Also see Moosad, C.K., *Madhavan Nayar (Jeeva Charitram)*, Calicut, 1985.

would succeed half his self acquired property, if he died intestate.<sup>80</sup> Such efforts of reforming through legislative intervention never ended with this.

The regeneration of the political activities after the Rebellion was mainly through the Swarajya Party. When congress approved the council entry programs of the party Madhavan Nair was selected to the Madras legislative council in 1926. Along with the tenancy question, he took great interest in the reform of family and marriage which ultimately resulted in the passage of Madras Marumakkathayam Act of 1933. He introduced the Marumakkathayam Bill in 1929. With the intention of making good of the limitations of the Act of 1896, ". . . the legislation is a very imperfect measure and has failed to meet the requirements of the people concerned. It does not legalize *sambandham*, but provides for optional registration of marital unions to invest them with validity."<sup>81</sup> In the first two years of the act, only fifty one marriages were registered.<sup>82</sup> By 1906 it was pronounced 'a dead letter,' with only one or two marriages being registered in the year.<sup>83</sup> A strong appeal towards the glorious tradition is as conspicuous in Madhavan Nayar as it was in Chandu Menon's opinion in 1890. His statements also reveal an agenda of community amelioration.

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<sup>80</sup> Panikkar, K.N., Note 49, p.197.

<sup>81</sup> Nair, K. Mdhavan, MMB in 172/79 Home Judicial NAI.

<sup>82</sup> M.M., 1 September 1898, p.3.

<sup>83</sup> M.M., 18 June 1906, p.4.

"In every other respect the *community* has advanced in leap and bounds. Progressive ideas have gained ground every where. The social system alone remains unchanged. The refusal of the court to regard *sambandham* as a legal marriage has stamped *one of the most enlightened classes* in this country as an inferior race and prevented it from growing to its fullest natural status."<sup>84</sup>

Apart from the legalization of *sambandham* the bill also stood for the division of *Tarawards* as this has been expanded beyond all natural limits so much so that it is often difficult to trace the exact relationship of the members comprising them.<sup>85</sup> This situation has grown so worst that there is hardly a family of substance in Malabar that is not in the courts." People also tend to commit crimes in relation with the quarrels in the *tarawad*.

However, the problem was not to solve radically. Here, once more the radicalism of sir C. Sankaran Nair is absent. "The Bill endeavour to remedy this evil [Marumakkathayam] by providing for partition in rather a *conservative fushion*." It did not give the right to individual partition, but only to *thavazhi* partition, partly as a *concession to orthodox opinion and partly by way of abundant caution*."<sup>86</sup> This respect for orthodox opinion and

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<sup>84</sup> Nair, K. Madhava, MMB in 172/29, Home Judicial, NAI.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

consequent caution came always in the way of radical change of the society. This curbed men growing into a stage of individuated self who move as freely as he liked in the passages of his life. Anyway the provisions laid down in the Act held the recognition of *sambandham* as a legal marriage. In addition, self acquired property of intestate to be shared among mother, wife and children. Moreover, Tavadhis were permitted to division and separation.

The passage of Madras Marumakkathayam Act was another set back for Nambutiris. In the traditional system of premogeniture, younger Nambutiris, unable to have a *Swajathi* wife, satiated his sexual needs through *sambandham* with Nair ladies which was traditionally taken for granted, nay, celebrated. The attraction of this lies in that the offspring of these relations were never taken to his father and as such the boy/girl was supposed to live with his/her mother in the matrilineal joint family. With the Act *sambandham* was recognized legally valid. This means that the wife and children were entitled to maintenance by the husband and father respectively. Moreover, they bequeathed the properties of the husband and father intestate with the marriage of *marumakkathayam* women with a man of high caste with whom marriage is permitted by custom becoming valid.

Nambutiris, thus, felt the weight of these changes. The stunning schock of the Malabar Rebellion, was followed by the legislative interventions of the colonial government which told on the economic and

cultural primacy that Nambutiris traditionally possessed. The rise of Nairs as a dominant class and community too had its impact in the Nambutiri life. Worthy Nairs now don't like to be a *Valiyakkaran* of Nambutiris. He likes rather to go for education, getting job in various range of colonial administration or practicing in colonial courts as Vakkils.

### **Humanising Nambutiris?**

The attempts to reform Nambutiri Brahmins, in all probability, gathered momentum in the situations elaborated above. The first attempt of organized action in this regard began with the formation of Nambutiri Yogakshema Sabha in 1907. But the aims of the Sabha were very limited. The immediate concern of the Sabha centred around finding solutions for quarrels over *Urayma* and to protest against the law prohibiting the felling of teak trees from *Kudiyan's* land. The main concern was to find out ways to rein in the ongoing decline in the influence of jenmis.<sup>87</sup> Had these concerns been the products of the emerging socio-economic situations mentioned above? Though direct evidences are lacking, the genteel poverty and declining status are so revealing. At the time of joining in Nambutiri school [at Trichur] V.T. Bhattathiripad had no a second set of dress to wear. This

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with V.T. Bhattathiripad by K. Gopalan Kutty, Kesavan Veluthat and Damodaran Nambudiri in *Bhaviroopam* (ed.), V.T. Evideyundu (Mal.), Vatakara, 1999, pp.88-97.

was so for two and a half years.<sup>88</sup> V.T. further illustrates the state of Nambutiris. "... [In the past] He was a Brahmin, a divine incarnation, a noble and venerable. Yet has he a drop of water to drink? that were the situation then. What is this kind of life for? Am I a man or brute? The after effects of this thought catalized me,<sup>89</sup> to lead the project of reforming Nambutiris.

The main method of action was to convene meeting, discuss the issues and to pass resolutions. An important issue that came up for discussion in the sabha was the acceptance of English language. The debate at many times, brought sabha to the brink of division. The continued decision over the issue took eight years to take in favour of English education. Yet Sabha remained a forum in which Jenmism and Brahmanism fought each other for dominance and at last the jenmi faction came out victorious.<sup>90</sup> What is important for us here is that Yogakshema Sabha could not put forward any agenda of reform that is meaningful to the emerging young minds among the Nambutiris.

The formation of Nambutiri Yuvajanasangham gave platform to those who are dissatisfied with the limited agenda of Yogakshema Sabha. In its first phase Yuvajana Sangham too could not do noteworthy contributions to

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<sup>88</sup> Bhattatiripad, V.T., "Oaroe Manthariyum Thrasikkunnu" in *Ibdi.*, p.28.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>90</sup> Interview, Note 87.

reform. In that sense Sangham is called as "Junior Yogakshemam".<sup>91</sup> The radicalism of Youth were strictly controlled by yogakshema. Yogakshema was a stumbling block for the radical's interference in the society. The new leadership that had grown up within the Nambutiri fold sought all chances to launch their programmes. It was in this condition they took a rather indirect and refined methods to achieve their aims.<sup>92</sup> With this turn they could by pass the conservatives.

The young reformists stood for the radical changes of the family structure. A change in the familial space will have its own repercussion in the whole Nambutiri life world. Apart from the promotion of English education, the reformists strived for many other objectives. The more important ones were to minimize the control of Karanavar over the family property and make sure that *Ananthiravans* were getting the due amount to live on.<sup>93</sup> This was a shock for traditional system of primogeniture among Nambutiris. In a family only the eldest son had the right to have wives and children. The rest were supposed to live unmarried for avoiding the division of the family and its property. *Sambandham* was a way out to solve the question of the satisfaction of the sex of the younger brothers. We have seen that *sambandham* got the

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<sup>91</sup> Nambudiripad, E.M.S., *Atmakatha*.

<sup>92</sup> Of Art (Natakam) and Literature (of various genres).

<sup>93</sup> Majority of the reformists thought that at least these two things to be done. some went beyond this and asked for partition. See Nambidiripad, E.M.S., Op. cit., pp.167-168.

position of a legal marriage and thereby offspring of such relations were made rightful to bequeath fathers/husband property. This indirectly called for providing maintenance for 'wives' and 'children' by husbands' and 'fathers'.

Actually a total reconstitution of values and institution of Nambutiris were required for attaining these ends. A host practices like *Adivedana*, *Sapanyam*, *Ghoshha*, etc. were to be removed from the scene *vis avis to* some emerging practices like, monogamy, widow remarriage, swajathi marriage for younger brothers etc. are to be promoted. Activities of the reformers targeted rather these aims and objectives.

### **Reform and Theatre**

With the coming up of radicals into the leadership of Yuvajanasangham began to act independently. The Sangham was registered separately. *Unni Nambutiri* was converted to be a weekly. Now it shed the posture of a "Juniour Yogakshema." Now yogakshema represented the moderates and 'Unni Nambutiri' of radicals.<sup>94</sup> These two group contest over a numbers of issues related to reform. Attempts to hammer out consensus and to compromise between the two failed.<sup>95</sup> The radicals went forward with their agenda and programmes. The Yogakshema conference held at Edakkuni, Trichur on December, 1929 is the marker of radical action. It was in this

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<sup>94</sup> Nambudiripad, E.M.S., Op. cit., p.198.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp.198-99.

conference that the young leaders staged a drama *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathek* (From kitchen to the stage).<sup>96</sup> The theme of drama goes like this Vilayuracchan Nambutiri, has a son, Kunha and daughter Teti. Madhavan is a young Nambutiri who lives in Vilayurachu Nambutiri's *Illam* as a student of Vedas. Madhavan and Teti loves each other.

But neither parents nor relatives know this. Nothing will happen, if they do so. They decide Teti's marriage without her knowledge. As per astrologers opinion, Karkitam Kunnathacchan Namubutiri is the most suitable one for Teti to marry. (Nambutiri is too old and has wives of Teti's Mother's age in own jathi and other jati).

Now, the court issue an injection order to not conduct the marriage against the bride's wishes. A government servant blocks the procession of the groom to Teti's house.

The drama ends when Madhavan weds Teti in the auspicious moment marked for wedding.

At a time when many of Nambutiris especially ladies do not know to read, this method was highly effective to buy the support of many irrespective

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<sup>96</sup> Originally it was not a drama. They called it *prahasana*. But that had all the features of the genre of drama. See Nambudiripad, E.M.S., Op. cit., p.

of whether they are literate or illiterate. For the youngsters under V.T.,<sup>97</sup> this was a thrilling experience because a "mere staging of a drama had done the effect of the work of a decade otherwise."<sup>98</sup>

Drama and literature became handy for the reformers in a situation when the strong wall of conservatism stood in between those who lived inside exclusively out of the public reach and the reformers. This also explains the literary pursuit of V.T. Battathirippad. Apart from his essays in 'Unni Nambutiri', Pasupatham, etc. he wrote short stories, essays, plays and autobiographies. Irrespective of the generic difference all his works were the articulation of his reformist zeal. Unlike Chandu Menon who tried to satisfy to growing taste reading novels in English among the educated ones in Malabar, V.T. used his literary works for igniting the minds of men and women with spirit to get up to a new world of humanism.

The propaganda through literary and theatrical movements found its effects. So many Brahmins including those of higher status began to help the moments. Women especially were attracted to the ideas propagated. The formation of the "marriage sub committee" of Yuvajana Sangham took up the issues of reforming the marriage system. The committee provided all backing for the marriage of younger Nambutiris from own jati and to obstruct certain

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<sup>97</sup> It was V.T. Battathirippad who conceived the idea. Though some others helped in writing it, it was largely the work of V.T. He was also a main actor.

<sup>98</sup> Nambudiripad, E.M.S., p.213.

kinds of marriages, like the second marriage of one who already have a wife, the marriage of an old aged one with young girls and the third one was *sambandham*. The first two of the three was obstructed through picketing, a method taken from the political method of national movement. The subcommittee conducted so many such picketings.<sup>99</sup> But this could only be fought out through propaganda for the picketing was to be held at the house of an 'other jati' which may bring in many an untoward consequences.<sup>100</sup> The growth of a sense of *swajati* marriage among other jatis and finally the passage of Nambutiri Bill led to a successful end of this movement. The move against *Kuduma* and *poonool* seems not have been successful.<sup>101</sup> The most important area in which the efforts of reformers were felt in the life of women. It is true that the number of women who threw out *ghosha* were few. Majority of them still lived in *pardah* in rather bad conditions. While those who broke *poonool* once went back to it later. But once come out, Nambutiri wome never took themselves back to *ghosha*. Along with this their dress and ornaments too were changed. Thus, as it is concluded, the old *Nambutiri* began to be a new *Man* and the old *Antarjanam* a new women.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp.220-221.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.222.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp.232-35.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.237.

A distinctive feature of Nambutiri reform is its unflinching belief in humanism. The speeches and writings of the champion of reform ie. V.T. Bhattathirippad is shot through with appeals towards humanism. It is meaningful here to ask a question here. Why Nambutiri Brahmin reformers in Kerala took recourse to a kind of atheism unlike the Brahmin all over India who tried to reconstruct religion and society is to a new 'national' 'Hindu' religion? Nambutiri reformers in Kerala seem not have been that proud of Vedas and traditional Sanskrit literature.

V.T. and his friends were captivated more to the things modern rather than to the tradition. He recognized the role of science in the development. Education for him does not include the vedic education; it is only modern education.<sup>103</sup> He had read Shakespeare, Victor Hugo and other Western authors. At the same time we don't see any kind of attachment to the traditional religion and literature. He thought that science and modernity would lead to the prosperity of people through democratic politics. But he believed that the democratic politics would provide a space for an individual to bloom up to the full.<sup>104</sup> At the same time at the last phase of his life he grew suspicious about the capabilities of science and modernity in the

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<sup>103</sup> Bhattathirippad, V.T., "Nambutiri Manushyanayi Maranamenkil" (Mal.) in *Bhaviroopam* (ed.), Op. cit., p.52.

<sup>104</sup> Bhattathirippad, V.T., "Ente Rastra Sankalpam" (Mal.), in *Bhaviroopam* (ed.), Op. cit., pp.21-22.

emancipation of man.<sup>105</sup> Many of his speeches and essays reflect a mood of self reflexivity and as a result we see in him a man torn between the new world and nostalgia for the old traditional village life.<sup>106</sup> But, even then, he insists that his religion is humanism.<sup>107</sup>

Rather late in sensitizing to the changing world under colonialism, Nambutiri began his effort for reform at a time when nationalism had attained its maturity as a political and cultural force. That means nationalism had made a crucial leaps exclusive of Nambutiris in Malabar. It was probably in such a situation that the reference point at a many a times are 'others' who had grown in leap and bounds in the Colonial national situations. Surveying the general situation in which he was born, V.T. refers to the rise of nationalism and anti-landlordism at that time. If Nambutiri's were out, who manned the movements? See how V.T. understood the situation. "The rising sun of Nationalism spread its glittering light even at the mountain tops of Kerala. Nair awoke, Tiyyas awoke. *Adiyars* and *kudiyans* who are isolated as disabled has lined up under the tricolor flag. In that crowd found no Nambutiri."<sup>108</sup> Here two concerns are quite conspicuous. One is that of

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<sup>105</sup> Bhattatiripad, V.T., Note 103, p.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.60-62.

<sup>107</sup> Bhattatiripad, V.T., "Manushyathwamenna Matham" and "Satyamennath Manushyanavunnu" in *Bhaviroopam* (ed.), Op. cit., pp.63-67.

<sup>108</sup> Bhattatiripad, V.T., *Kanneerum Kinavum*, Calicut University, 1997, p.10.

nationalism which had treaded its path a long distance, leaving Nambutiri far behind. Secondly all others have due spaces carved out in Nationalism or made use of the opportunities of the new world. Such a sense of marginality in relation to both colonial modernity and National community probably had a telling role in the redefinition of the Nambutiri self.

The prominent leaders of Nambutiri reform were the workers of national movement.<sup>109</sup> This shows that Nambutiris could not keep away from the nationalist activities – whether political or cultural. After 1921 we see a pause of political nationalism in Malabar. At the same time in its place *Abrahmana* movement was becoming wide spread in South India.<sup>110</sup> Its political manifestation was found in Justice party which was strong in South Malabar. It was with the help of Justice Party that the tenancy movements in South Malabar could find a successful and as reflected in the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930.<sup>111</sup> At the same time in the milieu of post revolt Malabar the nationalist culture based on a homogeneous pan Indian 'Hindu' culture (which always find a 'Muslim other' in Mappilas) had made deep forays into the religious domain of Malabar. This emerging new national

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<sup>109</sup> For example Kurrur Nilakantan Nambutiri was a prominent leader of the National Movement. V.T. Battatiripad and E.M.S. Nambootiripad too were the leaders of national movement in Malabar. See Nambutiripad, E.M.S., *Atmakatha*.

<sup>110</sup> Aloysius, *Nationalism Without a Nation*, New Delhi, 1997, pp.52-84.

<sup>111</sup> M. Krishnan Nair, Who was Played Leading Role in the Assembly in getting the Act Passed, was a leader of Justice Party.

culture was incongruent with the traditional culture presided by Nambutiris. But the nationalist agencies<sup>112</sup> had created some fissures in this obstinate tract of traditionalism especially in south Malabar.<sup>113</sup>

### **Temples: Opening the Doors or Setting to Fire?!**

The reemergence of political nationalism in South Malabar in fact could contain all the strands of nationalistic developments in South Malabar. The first thing that Madhavan Nayar did as he was elected as the president of KPCC was to re-unite the withered-away factions on the Nationalist platform. In a meeting convened in Oct 1925 he founded a platform for discussions over National issues, which is called Allied Nationalist Conferences. We see the representatives of Home Rules League, Swarajya Party, Justice Party and SIS working hand in hand with each other in this body.<sup>114</sup> Nambutiris and Mappilas generally found no place in all these parties.

In addition to it the political nationalism had declared the cultural remaking of India as part of its target as it is clear in Gandhi's Constructive Programme. As a result for about a decade after 1922 Indian National Congress lacked any direct political agenda. Under Gandhi it turned towards the construction of a nationalist culture in which an important area was jati.

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<sup>112</sup> For example see the works of Servants of India Society, Arya Samaj etc. in the post-revolt Malabar in Chapter III.

<sup>113</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>114</sup> *K. Madhavan Nair Janma Satabdhi Smaranika*, Calicut, 1982, p.42.

Jati was understood as a basically religious issue to be solved within framework of 'Hinduism'. In Malabar, the fight against jati found its expression in temple entry movement. *Vaikkam satyagraha* and *Guruvayoor satyagraha* were the two most important struggle directed towards this end.

In *Vaikkam satyagraha*, the presence of Nambutiris are rather vague but in *Guruvayoor satyagraha* we see the conspicuous presence of them. In the light of congress declaration of social justice as an important objective of national movement, congress under the leadership of T.K. Madhavan, the Ezhava Congress leader had called for a struggle for temple entry for lower castes. But Gandhi insisted to limit the demand to a mere freedom for walking the roads besides the temple. Actually this marked the beginning of setting the temples open to the public. In reality the rising public at that time was traditionally outsiders to the temples which were not only the sacred space where the Brahmins lived but also the repositories of the cultural capital of the Brahmins kept intact. *Guruvayoor satyagraham* produced a crucial result in this regard. We see much more number of Nambutiris in Guruvayoor.<sup>115</sup> At the same time large scale participation was lacking.

By the time of the Guruvayur Satyagraha Nambutiri reformers were becoming more and more radical. Simultaneously they were congress

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<sup>115</sup> Apart from Kuroor Nilakantan Nambidiripad, V.T. Bhattatiripad and Subrahmanya Tirumumbu leading different events related to the Satyagraha. See Pillai, A.K., *Congressum Keralavum (Mal.)*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1982, p.162-63.

workers. They seem to have developed immense belief in the ways of Gandhi.<sup>116</sup> But little by little they turned away from Gandhi and Congress and turned towards socialism and radical politics. Though explained as a symbolic statement later V.T.'s call for 'to set fire to temples' has all the potential to throw away the traditional Nambutiri self.<sup>117</sup> In his articles he explains the meaninglessness of idolatrous temple religion. Here V.T., inspired by modern ideas, was attracted to a kind of rationalism. But in reality he was not for the liquidation of the temples. At the same time this ambivalence can be linked up with the emerging nationalist culture. Actually nationalism in Malabar was idealising a temple religions. The programmes of temple entry movement turned the temple not only the concern of Nambutiri's and upper varnas but also of the lower downtrodden castes. The control that the colonial government acquired on temple properties with the framing of laws<sup>118</sup> on the one and the acquisition of the hither to closed sacred spaces of temples to the others by the emerging national movement on the other had brought down the wealth and status of Nambutiris. At the same time the source of power in the emerging world was not divine powers but the command over legal, legislative and administrative apparatus of colonial

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<sup>116</sup> For example see Bhattatiripad, V.T.

<sup>117</sup> Bhattatiripad, V.T., "Ene Namukku Ambalangaal Thee Koluthuka", in *Unni Nambootiri*, 28 April, 1938, reproduced in Sreekumar, A.V. (ed.) *Vee Tee; Vellithuruthazhath Raman Bhattathiripad*, Mezathur, 1997.

<sup>118</sup> Hindu Religious Endowment Act for example.

government as well as the command over the public through political participation.

The emerging nationalist politics was rather reluctant, thus, to accommodate Nambutiris. Its spaces were already captured by the English educated middle class, which was exclusive of Nambutiri's in general. At the same time the traditional textual sources of Brahmanic religion had well been in the hands of this class through the colonial mediation. They have become men of both religion and politics where as Nambutiris who were traditionally the sources of religion and power were made to look askance as their sources of power was wrested away by this class. A frenzy born out of such a situation may have been at the root of the V.T.'s call for 'setting fire to temples'. What he calls to set fire was the most aspired object of the political public acting on the call of the national leaders. We can conjoin two later developments to this. Firstly Nambutiri never possessed a post of reputation in the nationalist politics after 1940s. E.M.S. Nambudiripad became a Marxist where as V.T. resigned from the congress in 1950. Secondly the radicalism of V.T. seems to have given way to a nostalgia for the traditional life coupled with his suspicion in the emancipatory potentials of modern science and politics. Let us see V.T.'s soliloquy in which the sense of sadness and marginality hitting at the (Nair) other. "Long ago, once, [Nambutiri] jenmis had *Karyasthans*, *Kanakkudiyam*, *Pattam*, and *Chandappirivu* (dues from markets). With the coming of British courts, *Vakkils* became Masters.

*Karyastha* class grew (powerful). They grew further after partaking elections in the states to form political parties . . . ."<sup>119</sup>

### **The Mappila Self**

Among all sections of population of Malabar, Mappilas were first to negate the colonial self both in two ways, ie, at the first encounter and after the failure of his journey towards the colonizer's self. Among the sites through which colonial modernity was disseminated, the world of market and missionaries dominated in Mappila encounter with colonialism in Malabar. These two sites too were almost confined to the coastal areas of Malabar. The rest of Malabar especially South Malabar seems to have lacked such sites of interaction.<sup>120</sup>

Looking from such a position, the Mappila's of South Malabar chose to keep away from going in search of colonial self from the very outset. Though mostly determined by the material condition, their resistance was rather cultural and psychological. They never went after the dress, belief or value of the colonizer, and at the same time tried to assert out the colonizer. Their opposition towards jenmis and Europeans was a mindset that developed from

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<sup>119</sup> Bhattatiripad, V.T., "Oaroe Manthariyum Trasikkunnu" in *Bhaviroopam* (ed.), Op. cit., p.29.

<sup>120</sup> The only area where Mappila of South Malabar was exposed to colonial ideas were coastal religious like Tirur, Ponnani, etc. Missionaries were absent in the core of South Malabar region. The presence of Planters in the eastern Ernad in South Malabar seems not to have opened spots of intreaction between the colonizer and the colonized.

such a cultural plane, in addition to the hardships of their economic life. Taking up of religious language in anti-British struggle, taboo towards English and modern education, hatred towards Europeans and their helpers – all can also be understood in terms of cultural resistance.

The continuous uprisings in south Malabar against the British was also strengthened by the prevalence of a hatred among the Mappilas against all that are European. This notion was perpetrated by the local Mappila *Ulema* who interpreted Islam in such a way as to resist the oncoming of outside culture in a traditional way. This culture was further ossified, in a condition in which political practices rooted in such a culture made continuous forays, into a strong structure which never give way to the elements of colonizers culture in to that of colonized. As a result of the cultural disjunction that ensued Mappilas could not fight out colonizer in a way that was both understandable to the colonized and the colonizer as a result of which they became the 'fanatic' rebels.

Coastal Mappilas had the opportunity to get interacted to the colonial ways both as merchants and targets of Missionaries. They had understood colonial ways in education, in politics, in administration and organization. But at the same time, they abruptly felt the fact that his colonized self is subjected for ever. A possible answer for this abruptness lies in the difference between the Mappila Muslim's self and the other colonized selves in Malabar.

Though living as part and parcel of traditional jati society in Malabar, a Mappila Muslim self had its lineages in the Arab Islamic self. They were all proud in Arab Islamic tradition especially when Quran, Hadith and the works of Arab authors are taken to be the source of their religion. What is important here is that the lineages of colonial modernity are not exclusively European. It was also Islamic. Both empiricism and rationalism which are the corner stone of modern science historically owes its development with Islamic tradition. Even in theology Muslim used the scientific ways of explanation. The dialogue between Mu'atazilism and Ash'arism<sup>121</sup> is a good example for this. Thus, the meeting with the colonizer for Muslim was the meeting with a colonizer whose strength in many ways owes to the lineage of the colonized. Thus no sooner did the Muslim colonized go merged to the colonizer's self than the colonized hold bad with his colonizer. The attempts of reform among the Mappila Muslim are more comprehensible when we look into it from this position.

The organized efforts to reform Mappila Muslims began from outside the South Malabar after the Rebellion. But even before that the conditions for the reform initiative was set up in Malabar at least by certain leaders who generally hails from coastal regions. The prominent among them were Sayyid

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<sup>121</sup> Muatazilism is a rationalist philosophic tendency developed among Muslims in 9<sup>th</sup> century West Asia. Asharism is the orthodox response to Muatazilism. Both group used methods of Greek rationalism in the doctrinal disputes over the religion and beliefs.

Samnullah Makhti Tangal (1947-1921), Chalilakath Kunahammad Haji (1919), Sheik Muhammed Mahin Hamadani Tangal (d. 1922) and Muhammed Abdul Qadar Maulavi.

Born at Veliyankodu near Ponani, Makhti Tangal had his education in Chavakkad Higher Elementary School. He had also acquired traditional education in darse system. In addition to Malayalam and Arabic he was proficient in Urdu, Persian, Tamil and English.<sup>122</sup>

Resigned as Excise Inspector from the colonial service, Makhti Tangal turned towards reforming the religion of Muslim in Malabar. A careful look in to his activities and writings<sup>123</sup> will reveal that Makhti Tangal's main agenda was to fight out the Christian Missionary polemics against Islam. This is quite conspicuous from Mukti Tangals statement. "In those days, the Christian priests used to abuse Islam and prophed Muhamed in their regular public lectures. I started to think over their speech. The Hashimi and Mughal blood in me began to boil at last, I decided to throw away the petty job and to defend Islam."<sup>124</sup> All his life seems to have dedicated for fighting out Christian Missionaries. Apart from delivering a number of lectures, he wrote

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<sup>122</sup> Moulavi, C.N., Ahmad and Kareem, K.K.M.A., *Mahathaya Mappila Sahitya Paramaryam* (Mal.), p.227.

<sup>123</sup> See Ibid., Kareem, K.K.M.A. (ed.), *Makhti Thangalude Sampoorana Krithikal* (Mal.), Calicut, Kareem, K.K.M.A., *Makhti Tangalude Jeeva Charitram* (Mal.), Calicut, 1997; Samad M. Abdul, *Islam in Kerala*, Kollam, 1998, pp.42-49.

<sup>124</sup> Quoted in Samad M. Abdul, *Islam in Kerala*, Kollam, 1998, p.43.

so many books and articles attacking the Christian preachers.<sup>125</sup> Along with this, he also attacked the Sufi monism and the practice *marumakkathayam* as purely un-Islamic.<sup>126</sup> He propagated the importance of modern education including English education. He also exhorted Muslim to study Malayalam. As part of his educational reforms he stood for modernization of religious education, improvement of Arabic-Malayalam script and the modification of *dares* system.<sup>127</sup>

Being a scholar stood against the traditional values, he was not only rejected by the traditional *Ulema* but also put him to all difficulties by instigating people against him.<sup>128</sup> Though he was highly accepted by the public, the Muslim in general was not so. Let us hear from the horse mouth.<sup>129</sup> "To pay it in cash, I hadn't even one paise (with me). The other way is a personal bail. For this, I couldn't see no Muslim face among about five thousand non-Muslim gathered their [to listen his speech]. I raised my hands up. Praying the God, I convinced the judge of my innocence . . . ."

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<sup>125</sup> See Kareem, K.K.M.A., *Makhti Tangalude Sampoorna Krithikal*.

<sup>126</sup> Kareem, K.K.M.A., *Makhti Tangalude Jeeva Charithram* (Mal.), Calicut, 1997, pp.21-21.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.24-33.

<sup>128</sup> His book titled *Makhtimanaklesam* is an account of the agonious experiences in his field.

<sup>129</sup> This statement is made when the District Collector asked Makhti to pay Rs.500/- or to give personal bail on the ground of a Missionary representation against him. See Kareem K.K.M.A., *Op. cit.*, p.49.

This shows the nature of the receptivity of his speeches. Thus though we see certain impact of his work in Kodungallur and Kannur, he could not make much heady forays into the south Malabar. The only exception was a Maqdam at Ponnani.<sup>130</sup> Though not influenced directly by him, a group of rich Mappilas in Manjeri had formed themselves into Hidayathul Muslimeen Sabha around 1890. But this was not enough to create fissures in the hard tracts of traditional religions in the era. He could not attend the social issues like women education and their freedom of movement etc. Though he slightly changed his position he was not for opening the doors of education for women.<sup>131</sup>

Chalilakath Kunhamammed Musliyar was a religious scholar of high reputation in Malabar. Born in Tirur, after a short duration in primary school, he went for education to *Darses* of Kozhikode and Ponnani. For higher learning he went to Lathifiya Arabic College, Vellore. Apart from Arabic language he had become proficient in Philosophy, Astronomy, Astrology and languages like Urdu, Persian and Tamil.<sup>132</sup>

Chalilakath's primary concern was education. Having taught in *darses* at Pulikkal, New Mahi, Peringadi etc., he was invited to '*Darul Ulum*' a

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p.49.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.

<sup>132</sup> Samad, M. Abdul, Op. cit., p.49.

prominent institution of higher learning in Islam at Vazhakkad. Here he began reform of education. He introduced classes, benches and desks, black board etc. The arranging of students in classes required text books. Hence he himself prepared text books. Malayalam was adopted as medium of instruction. He also included Basic Arithmetic, General Science, Malayalam alphabet in primary classes and Logic, Astronomy and Geography in higher classes.<sup>133</sup>

He also modernized Arabi – Malayalam script which was accepted by all groups in Malabar. He had earlier indicated the limitations of Makhti Tangal's improvement in Arabic – Malayalam script. In the matter of women education, Chalikkath set a new example. Not only did he advocate their education but also dared to send his daughters to school defying the orthodox dictum that it was sacrilege.<sup>134</sup> At the same time Chalilakath had only limited agenda of reforms. In theology he was for orthodox view. He was an ardent critic of Jamaludhin Afgani, Muhammed Abdu and Rashid Rida in this matter.<sup>135</sup>

Though Kunhammed Musliyar had such a bend of mind towards reform and as such was criticized by many of *Ulema*, he was not that radical

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p.50.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p.51.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p.52.

as Mukthi Tangal. Even his effort in modernizing *Darul Ulum* he found himself out of place as a result of orthodox scholars' reaction.<sup>136</sup>

Muhammed Mahin Hamodani Tangal was another scholar reformer. Born at Vaduthala in Ernakulam, he spent some years in Kodungallur Mosque as a student. Then he joined Lathifya College, Vellur and acquired proficiency in Arabic, Urdu, Persian and Tamil. His acquaintance with Hamadani *tariqa* started there to become an ardent discipline of the same. Returned from Vellore and immersed in *tariqat* activities he was sad to see Muslims quarreling over silly matters which according to him hindered their progress. The unhappy sheik felt that restoration of unity among the members of the community was his prime duty.<sup>137</sup> He thereafter visited different areas delivering eloquent speeches stressing the need for unity. His guidance and inspiration ultimately proved instrumental to the formation of *Nishapaksha Sangham* at Azheekode, Kodungalloor in 1922 which later expounded itself to come to the stature of Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham.

Education was a prominent concern of Hamadani too. In an article published in '*the Muslim*', he put forward five point programme for reconstructing religious educations in a befitting manner.<sup>138</sup> He formed an

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p.51.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., pp.53-54.

organization called the Muslim Conference to take up programmes to promote education. He wanted to introduce a system of education in which both religious and secular subjects are taught. An attempt to establish a college under the Islamic cultural society for the purpose was failed for want of support from the community.<sup>139</sup> But *Lajnatul Muhamadiya* at Alappy, organized under his guidance and inspiration proved successful in the cultural resurgence of Travancore. *Lajuthul Hamadaniya* and *Lajunathul Islam Sangham* at Kodungallur founded by him played a crucial role in the amelioration of the Muslims of Kodungallur.

Muhammed Abdul Kadar Maulavi was born in Vakkom in Travancore after which he is called Vakkom Maulavi. A son of a wealthy merchant, he got quality education of the time and became proficient in English, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit and Arabic. His initiatives of reforming the Muslim began at a time when the Ezhava community had made great advances in reforming themselves. His endeavour in journalism, theological reform, organization of institutions and educational activities touched almost all facets of life of Muslims. Apart from *Swadeshabhimani* (1905) he had *Muslim* started in 1906. A journal intended to address various issues pertaining to reform; it tried to impart scientific and religious knowledge among muslims. The situation and aim of the *Muslim* is put in its first issue as follows.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., pp.54.

“Each and every community of Kerala has started to strive for his welfare and therefore Muslims also must have a journal like this to educate them about their problem and to bring out necessary reforms”.<sup>140</sup>

For fear of space let us skip a wide variety of activities and programmes held under his inspiration. But the attempts at theological reform is important because more than every one else, he was the inspiring force of the reform movement held later under the auspices of Aikya Sangham and Kerala Jamiatul Ulama. He was a regular reader of at *al Manar* of Rashid Rida, which was a guiding force to him in the question of theological reform. He defined his movement as an attempt to restore the pristine purity of Islam. He stood for ruthless rejection of accretion and declensions from the body of Islam. This was the direct influence of ideas of Rida on *Tauhid* and *Shirk* and decided to impart these ideas among the people and set a Journal '*Al Islam*' for the same. He basically believed that all endeavours to reform Muslims should be based on religion without which it would be a frivolous effort.<sup>141</sup> It was these ideas that greatly influenced the organized attempts of reform afterwards. Though the air for the formation of *Nishpaksha Sabha* had created by Hamadani Tangal, it was the ideas of Vakkom Maulavi that guided *Aikya Sangham*'s priorities. The volume of activities Vakkom had done has

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<sup>140</sup> *The Muslim*, 1 January 1906 in *Ibid.*, p.62.

<sup>141</sup> *Al Islam*, April 1918, in *Ibid.*, p.67.

made him to consider him as the father of Muslim Renaissance in Kerala as well as one among the builders of modern Kerala.

The first organized attempts to reform Muslim grew after the formation of *Nishpaksha Sangham* at Kodungallur. We saw how Hamadami Shaik was instrumental to the formation of the Sangham. Soon after branches of sanghams began to be formed and the name of the organization changed to *Muslim Aikya Sangham*. Later it became *Kerala Muslim Aykya Sangham*. Founded in 1922, the Sangham worked only for twelve years. The first annual conference of the body was held at Eriyadu in Kodungallur under the presidentship of Vakkom Abdul Quadar Maulavi. It took the decision to expand its activities to all parts of Kerala. The renaming did not materialized for two years due to technical difficulties.<sup>142</sup>

A detailed exposition of the activities of Aikya Sangham is not attempted here for fear of space. The table below shows the places where the Annual Conferenes of the Sangham held and its presidents.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p.80.

<sup>143</sup> The table is derived from Moulavi, N.K. Ahmad, *Aikya Sanghavum Kerala Muslimkalum*, Calicut, 1998.

Year	Annual Conference	Place	Prsident
1923	First	Kodungallur	Vakkom Abdul Quadir Maulavi
1924	Second	Alwaye	Abdul Jabbar Hazrat Vellore
1925	Third	Calicut	Muhamad Chemnad
1926	Fourth	Tellicherry	M.M. Pickthal
1927	Fifth	Cannanore	Maulavi Muhamed Ali. M.A.
1928	Sixth	Tirur	Dr. Abdul Haq Madras
1929	Seventh	Ernakulam	P.M. Moidu (President, Malabar Dict. Board)
1930	Eighth	Trivandrum	Colonal Abdul Hamid
1931	Ninth	Malappuram	Khan Bahadur Mir Sainudhin (District and Sessions Judge North Malabar)
1932	Tenth	Kasargode	Syed Abdurahiman Bukhari, Madras
1933	Eleventh	Eriyad	B. Pooker Sahib
1934	Twelfth	Cannanore	Abdul Hamid Khan Madras

From the table it is clear that Annual conferences were held with a view to draw the attention of the people from all part of Kerala. Conferences were held from Kasargode in north to Trivandrum in south of the state. Conferences in twelve consecutive year without interruption also shows the will and dynamism of the Sangham leaders. The list of president shows that Sangham could get in touch with the Muslim scholars and leaders outside Kerala. A look in to the resolutions of these annual meetings shows that the

resolutions of all meetings generally focussed towards certain objectives. Rather than going through the resolutions of all conferences, let us see the resolutions of the second annual conference held at Alwaye. The selection of this is out of the comprehension that the resolutions of the other annual conferences rather pinpointed what is laid down in the resolutions of the second annual meeting. These resolutions are also significant in that they were taken under the presidentship of a reputed religious scholar of South India.<sup>144</sup>

In the Ulema convention met on 10 May 1924, the following resolutions were passed:<sup>145</sup>

(1) It is social obligation (Fard Kifa) of the Muslims to form an organization to keep the temporal and spiritual well-being of Muslims.

(2) It is decided to form an organization for the Ulama all over the state. As per the resolution, an Ulama organization was formed. M. Abdul Quadir Moulavi was its President, C. Abdullah Koya Tangal and K.K. Muhammed Kutty Moulavi was its secretary, P.N. Muhammed Kutty Moulavi and seven others were the members.

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<sup>144</sup> See Table above. Abdul Jabbar Hasrat was the teacher of many among the famous religious scholars of Kerala too.

<sup>145</sup> Samad M. Abdul, *Op. cit.*, p.85.

(3) It was decided to form a committee to go into the allegations made against the Muslim Aikya Sangham. A committee consisting of a number of prominent Ulema was formed accordingly. On 11<sup>th</sup> May, the conference took the following decisions.<sup>146</sup>

(1) Formation of the All Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham, which was decided at the first annual meeting, was postponed for one year because of certain urgent engagements.

(2) Appealed to all Muslims to render all possible help for the establishment of Arabic College at Alwaye.

(3) Request the Ulema Sangham to take efforts to put an end to evil practices like, Kodikuthu, Chandanakkudam, Muharam, etc.

(4) Request the Ulema Association to point out anything that is anti-Islamic in the functioning of Aikya Sangam, and its members were asked to abide by the suggestions.

(5) To set up a team of efficient scholars and impart training to them to resist and defend false propoganda of Arya Samajists and Christian Missionaries and to spread the ideal of Islam especially among the non-Muslim. A committee consisting of Manappatta Kunhu Muhammed Haji,

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p.86.

Maulavi Abdurahim Sahib and Janab Noor Husain Chaudhari were formed for the same.

(6) Muslim members were requested to desist from anti-Islamic practices of treating certain classes of Muslims in certain parts of Kerala as backward and denying them their due rights.

(7) Establish more schools for the encouragement of women's education.

(8) Extend Maximum relief to these who were suffering from Malabar Rebellion. The resolutions of the conferences afterward seem not to be making any leap beyond these objectives. The concerns and programmes always confined to what is there in the resolution above. Its aim, thus, was to form a homogeneous religious community who would follow the pristine pure Islam as against the traditional syncretic and symbiotic Islam, through educating the community using the modern methods of education and organized preaching and to do out the missionary endeavours among Muslims, to convert them.

In general, Aikya Sangham was attacked by the traditional Ulema everywhere. The Mappilas of South Malabar with their traditional Ulema stood stubbornly against the Aikya Sangham. Among the Many Annual Conferences, those which were held at Calicut, Tirur and Malappuram faced strongest resistance from the population. At the third conference held at Calicut people at the head of the *Ulema* took all opportunities to obstruct the

Aikya Sangham Conference. But through the Mediation of a wealthy Tangal Aikya Sangham could argue out others and the conference held peacefully.<sup>147</sup> When the sixth annual conference was held at Tirur people created all sort of difficulties for the organizers and participants of the conference. As people pelted them, they could not move freely. Even the police did not come to their rescue. They could not even get a vehicle to pick their chief guest from the Railway Station to the conference venue.<sup>148</sup> The conference could go along with its programmes only after the deployment of police after higher level interference.

Three years after the Tirur Conference, the ninth annual conference was held at Malappuram. There was organized actions of traditional Ulema and Mappila gentry. The entire town seems to have boycotted the conference. Malappuram did not provide the service of giving water and food for the participants. Even men with the status of P.M. Attakoya Thangal failed to get soda water from the town because they were the participants of the conference. To meet this situation the conference opened its own centre for providing food and water on its own.<sup>149</sup> Though the opposition to Aikya Sangham was general it was strongest in the areas of South Malabar. This

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<sup>147</sup> Moulavi, N.K., Ahmad, Op. cit., pp.33-38.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., pp.43-44.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., pp.48-49.

shows that despite the intended actions from the sangham, it could not make much head way in the area.

The revamped Jamiathul Ulema and Mujahid Movement after 1935 in the area under the leadership of K.M. Moulavi, of course, could earn a space in the Mappila mind. But that too was meagre to transform the Mappila society in a way the Jamiatul Ulema envisaged. But it could develop a base for further spread of their ideas through Arabic College Movement. Failed to bring about the modernization of Darse System, Jamiathul Ulema had started its first Arabic college at Pulikkal in 1947 called Madeenathul Uloom Arabic College. Following the pattern of this Arabic College a number of colleges were started afterwards. These Arabic Colleges provided the skilled scholars in large number who took up the propagation of the reformist ideas. Nevertheless, Mujahid Movement was rather weak until 1970s in the South Malabar region.

At the same time the rival movement institutionalized latter as Samastha Kerala Jamiatul Ulema got popular backing from the Mappilas of South Malabar. The individual oppositions to Aikya Sangham and the Kerala Jamaiatul Ulema got institutionalized after a meeting of prominent Ulema of Malabar convened at the Jamma Masjid at Calicut in 1925 and another Kerala Jamiatal Ulema was formed as K.P. Muhammed Meeran Musliyar as President and Parel Hussain as General Secretary. In the next year a large

conference was held at the Town Hall, Calicut in which the organization was reconstituted under the leadership of Varakkal Mullakoya Tangal and Pangil Ahamed Kutty Musliyar. For feeling the difference a prefix Samastha was given to the organisation's name to know it as Samastha Kerala Jamiatul Ulema.<sup>150</sup>

Despite their stringent opposition to the theological reform expounded by Aikya Sangham, Samastha Kerala Jamaitul Ulema followed the same methods followed by Aikya Sangham. When they entered the field of religious education, it became a spectacular success. For the propagation of a religion imbued with traditional values, they organized *waad (Night talks)*, issued pamphlet and published journals. The Madrassa Movement was so influential that in the present Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidyabhyasa Board is the greatest Islamic educational board<sup>151</sup> in Kerala which has more than 6000 Madrasas under its control.<sup>152</sup> The educational movement of Samastha found its way to the higher education when Jamiya Nooriya College was established at Pattikad near Perintalmanna in Malappuram District in 1963. What we see thus is that the Mappila gentry of south Malabar in general was highly receptive of the ideas of Samstha Kerala Jamiatul Ulema.

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<sup>150</sup> *Arupathu Thikanha Samastha*, Samastha Sixtieth Anniversay Souvenir, Calicut, 1985.

<sup>151</sup> Formed later in 1951 under Samastha Kerala Jamiatul Ulema.

<sup>152</sup> Samad M. Abdul, Op. cit., p.134.

What is important here is that Samastha too imagined a homogeneous Muslim community wedded to the traditional symbiotism. As Aikya Sangham attacked all kinds of symbiotic practices to see pristine pure Islam won, Samastha too ventured to quell different voices. Apart from opposing Qudiyanism and Jama-at-e-Islami, it opposed a number of sufi *tariquas* existed among the Muslims of Kerala during the beginning of twentieth century and declared un-Islamic.<sup>153</sup> Further just like Aikya Sangham they also understood the role of education in the furtherance of the ideology. As a result they too followed a scientific way of imparting religious education. In Madrassa system they set standards from I to X which goes to primary and secondary levels and introduced text books, classrooms, terminal and annual examinations, teachers training and inspections.<sup>154</sup> Though they were a bit later, some of the leaders too turned towards fighting Christian Missionaries.<sup>155</sup>

Thus, though started as a movement rivaling the programmes of Aikya Sangham, Samastha Kerala Jamaithul Ulema virtually followed the path opened up by the former. Of course Samastha resisted the theological reform. But in doing this it did not keep away from moving through the path opened

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., pp.132-33.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p.134.

<sup>155</sup> Ibrahim, Mundakkal, *Edakkaraprasangavum Nhangalude Islam mathushlashnavum*, in Saikuna Samsul Ulama Smaranika, Nandi, 1996, pp.151-59.

up by Aikya Sanham. Like Aikya Sangham, they too started propaganda through evening religious sermons. It also used the print world by issuing pamphlets and journals. The value of education as a medium of ideological dissemination is well understood by Samastha. The successful practice of this shows in the religious educational system set up under the Vidyabhyasa Board. Though proscriptive of women education, English language and Malayalam, it did not develop an educational system parallel to the state secular education. The timing of Madrasa instruction<sup>156</sup> was not incongruent with the timing of secular educational institutions of the state. This ultimately proved conducive for Mappila Muslim to enter the arenas of secular education later.

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<sup>156</sup> The time of instruction in Madrassas was (and still it is) a duration of 2 (7 AM to 9 AM) in the early morning, so that students could go to modern schools which generally begin by 1.30 AM.

**SOCIAL LIFE IN SOUTH MALABAR (1921-1947)  
RELIEF, REFORM AND NATIONALISM**

**Thesis  
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**MUHAMMEDALI T.**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

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## CONCLUSION

An understanding of social life in South Malabar in the last three decades of colonial rule is attempted through the exposition and examination of both economic and cultural trend that prevailed in the area. Social life may always have some relation with the material situation of any society. We have outlined the changes in the basic economic structure and conditions of production along with the position of industry and literacy in the second chapter. What we see is that after 1921 though there is a trend of increase in the cultivated area, it does not contain the growing population in the period. At the same time we see no commendable growth in the industrial field. This allow us to conclude that the economy was growing unsatisfactorily. As such land was highly valuable in the economy.

We see the distribution of proprietorship of the land into the hands of more people in 1935 resettlement. This alongwith the joint holding might have been instrumental to the growth of cultivation. As *Kanakkar* alone were destined to get the fixity of tenure by 1930 Act the extending proprietorship might have been put at the disposal of this class. This class was mainly constituted by Nairs. Tiyyas and Muslims too have benefitted from this to some extend. This alone is a change that we come across in the possession of

land holdings. The rise of Nairs to a great extent, probably, was supported by this material benefit of becoming the permanent proprietor of land.

Among the Kanakkar, Nairs alone could rise into prominence. Thiyyas and some Muslims who could get the fixity of tenure may have benefited a lot from the land. But they could not rise into prominence. Was it because of their unacceptance of colonial ideas? If the answer is yes we will be at pains to explain the lag of Ezhavas who imbibed colonial ideas more than that of Nayers. An answer is possible when we use the concept of cultural capital. People and group in newer situation can convert their cultural baggage to the benefit of themselves in changing situation. Nairs with a traditional baggage of warring and administering culture might have been more acceptable in the colonial realm than the toddy tapping Thiyyas – not withstanding the fact that they had initiated into Industrial works now.

One of the most important impact of the rebellion was the Pan-Indian pull both from nationalist politics and the Relief agencies. The Relief agencies who came to Malabar in the wake of rebellion sought to interfere in the social and religious life of the people. Relief can be a weapon of proselytising. The demarcation between relief work and missionary work is too thin. The successful agents of relief work in South Malabar were nationalist missionaries who tried to instill a notion of Pan-Indian Hindu religion into the minds of the people. Though at the first phase they could not out do the

defence of traditional life world, they could earn their desired object through the reconstruction work.

Their attempt was a deliberate but concealed one. Chapter 3 exposes this very clearly. What they did was that they educated the people belongs to the downtrodden classes and trained them in a nationalist Hindu religion – a religion that had only smoothed the prominent Jati angularities in the society. Though they proceeded their work unrelated the nationalist political leaders, their work produced a situation which was suitable for the furtherance of nationalist politics afterwards.

The nationalist politics of post-revolt Malabar was very much related to this. Until 1930 when Congress had no agenda of political action, Congress politics in Malabar became temple-centred. The major agenda of congress, then, in Malabar was to gain entry for the lower class men through the roads beside temples and into the Guruvayur temple. This was really the manifestation of the attempt of rising middle class (predominantly Nairs) to capture the core space of the (imagined Hindu) religion, i.e., the temple, with the help of some lower class men who had been trained both by the political nationalists and the missionary nationalists. We have seen the formation of a common platform to discuss over issues that come within the purview of common interests of the component bodies immediately after Madhavan Nair became the President of K.P.C.C.

The beginning of reform among Nambudiri Brahmins had relations with this. Nationalist politics was disturbing the isolated life world of Brahmins with temples becoming the former's target. In addition to the shock of the Rebellion they also found the Kanakkar politics gaining victory. These factors contributed to create an impulse of restructuring the Nambudiri life world in South Malabar. This also had some dialectical relation with the Nair reform and their rise to power. Along with reform, Nambudiri began to occupy politics in the nationalist leadership.

Innate with process of both nationalism and reform was to construct a temple centred monolithic Hindu community posing an 'other' in the Mappila. Both political nationalism and missionary nationalism had attempted to create a national Hindu religion posing a potent enemy 'other' in Muslims especially Mappilas. Arya Samaj came to Malabar to rescue the forcibly converted by bringing them back to Hinduism. As the open request and action found unsuccessful in this regard and understanding the 'social' problem behind the conversions DMRT trained the downtrodden to be Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi who exhorted Mappilas to political action, once the latter went wrong, not only accused them but also put the responsibility on the shoulders of 'Indian Muslim'. The very Mahatma Gandhi who interfered in the religious issue of Muslim during the days of Khilafat Movement in the name of nationalism could not accommodate the presence of Muhammed Abdurahiman and

George Joseph at the site of *Vaikkom Satyagraha* for themselves being belongs to 'non-Hindu' religion.

Muhammed Abdurahiman's politics from now onwards became unacceptable to the dominant congress men in Malabar, the failure of whom to withstand the intrigues of the latter in the former seeking a political asylum in Forward Block at last. Even the nambudiri reformer who made an outcry of Humanism could not accommodate a Muslim.<sup>1</sup>

Here lies, possibly, the distance of Mappilas of South Malabar from politics of any kind. Though the jailed Mappilas had been released by 1930 we cannot see active participation of Mappilas in politics. Some number of them could work in Communist Movement. But this section too is marginal. All India Muslim League had reached Malabar by 1934. But this too could not gain much support from this area. It was only by 1940 that League got some footing in the area. Predominantly led by the landed and wealthy class among the Muslims, League began to capture the minds of the common Muslim after the partition.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bhattatiripad, "Umade Edathe Annam" (Mal.), in *V.T.yude Sampurnakritikal*, Kottayam, 1997, pp.322-30.

**SOCIAL LIFE IN SOUTH MALABAR (1921-1947)  
RELIEF, REFORM AND NATIONALISM**

**Thesis  
submitted to the University of Calicut  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in History**

**MUHAMMEDALI T.**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**2003**

## GLOSSARY

*amsam* – smallest revenue administrative division.

*chanda* – weekly fair in villages.

*chandanakkudam* – a popular ritual festival celebrated by Muslims of  
Malabar.

*chatti* – pot used for collection of toddy after tapping.

*cheruma (cherumar)* – a low caste agrestic slave.

*fatwa* – legal decision of a recognized muslim jurist or scholar.

*jenmam* – hereditary proprietorship in land.

*jenmi* – landlords who had absolute ownership in the land during British  
period.

*jihad* – holy war.

*kadamai* – personal obligations.

*kanakkar – kanomdar* – one who hold land on kanam tenure.

*kanakkudiyar* – one who possess kanam rights over land.

*kanam* – land tenure based on mortgage or lease.

*karyasthan* – manager of the property of the land.

*katti* – a sharp knife used for toddy tapping

*kizhakke kovilagam* – one of the branches of Samuthiri kovilagam.

*kizhakke palli* – lit. eastern mosque, especially the mosque where Ali Musliar  
lived as a religious teacher in Tirurangadi.

*kodikuth* – a ritualistic observance at the grave of a holy man.

*kovilagam* – palace.

*lajnath* – association.

*madrassa* – school in which children are taught religion.

*maryada* – custom.

*maulavi* – *moulavi* – a title of respect for a Muslim religious teacher.

*melcharth* – over lease

*mujahid* – one who go for a holy war.

*moulid* – celebration of the birth day of prophet or a saint.

*muharram* – the first month of Hijra year / celebrations in connection with  
battle of Kurbala and other events in that month.

*mukhyasthan* – a village chief.

*nishpaksha* – non-partisan.

*pattadar* – a holder of a land deed.

*pattakkudiyan* – one who is a tenant-at-will.

*pattam* – rent.

*polichezhuttu* – renewal of tenancy right.

*pulaya* – an agrestic slave caste.

*qazi* – religious / judicial head of mappilas in an area of discretion.

*sambandham* – a system of conjugal arrangement between Nambutiris and  
other males with Nair women.

*shahid* – martyr.

*shirk* – ascribing attributes of God to those other than the god head.

*swajathi* – belongs to the same caste.

*taluk* – subdivison of a district.

*tarawad* – a joint family.

*tawhid* – monotheism.

*thavazhi* – a lineage forked away with the mother as a referent in a joint  
family.

*ulema* – learned ones in Islamic religion.

*valiyakkaran* – personal attendant.

*verumpattam* – tenant-at-will.

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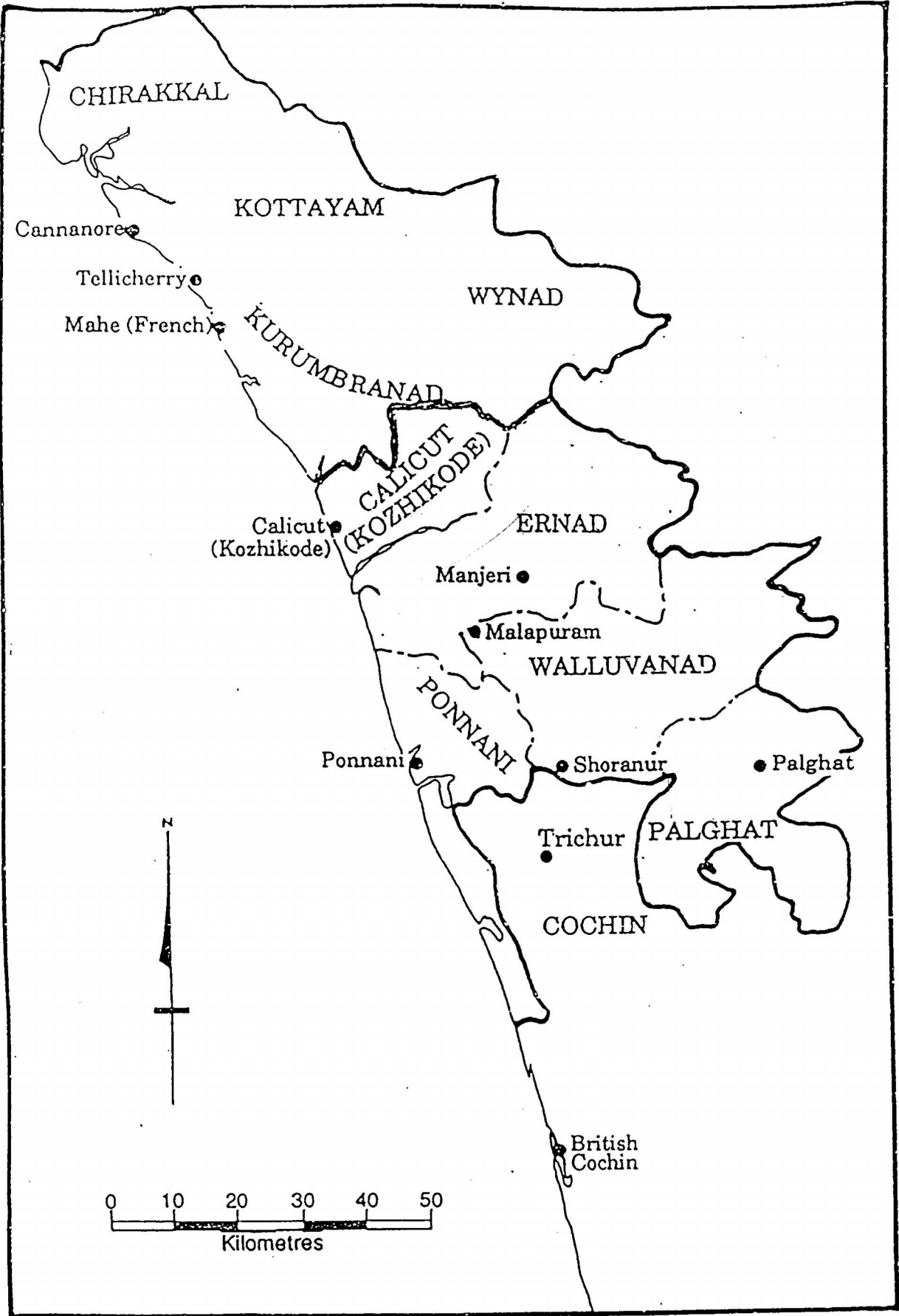
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Map South Malabar in 1930s

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**A P P E N D I X**

who have helped in upholding the reign of law and order and particularly Messrs. E. F. Thomas, T. Austin, F. B. Evans, Hitchcock, and Tottenham.

b. That this conference thanks the officers and men of all regiments that have helped in suppressing the rebellion as well as the ordinary and special police for the efficient work they have done at considerable risk and conveys its sympathy with the bereaved families of those who have fallen in the fight.

c. That this conference thanks the various agencies as well as individuals who have been carrying on relief work among the refugees during this period of distress and appreciates especially the devoted labours of Mr. G. K. Devdhar in this field.

XI. That the Secretary of the Reconstruction Committee be authorised to communicate these resolutions to all persons and public bodies concerned.

These two resolutions were moved from the chair.

THANKS GIVING

Mr. E. Raman Menon B. A., L. T., Joint Secretary of the Conference next proposed a vote of thanks to the Zamorin Raja, the Valia Raja of Nilambour and Raja K. C. Manavedan Raja for their ungrudging support to make the conference a success. Thanks were also offered to Messrs. Kulu Nedungadi, Principal of the Zamorin's College and Sreenivasa Rao, Zamorin's Estate Collector, for having allowed them the use of the premises and furniture. The president was next garlanded amidst cheers.

With three cheers to the King Emperor the gathering dispersed at about 6-30 P. M.

K. APPU MENON,

E. RAMAN MENON,

Secretaries.

6  
low who have been engaged in the task of restoring law and order.

It is satisfactory to note that the youth of our country readily responded to the call for service, when men were wanted for the Territorial Force. I have no doubt that there will be further response if more recruits are needed. May I also appeal to the young men among you to kindle once again the old fire of martial spirit? I have, I think a right to ask you this and I am sure I shall not be asking in vain.

The feeling of vengeance against Moplas is surely not in you. But you have a right to insist that the rebel Mopla should repent his ignoble conduct. It is your turn then to forget and forgive. The Government, doubtless will stand justly between you and him. While I do not dissuade you from asking for redress of wrongs done to you by the Mopla I exhort you to strive to maintain friendly and neighbourly relations with him. It is alike your duty and your interest.

The darkness and gloom of the past few months cannot easily be forgotten. Like dark clouds they still overhang us all and obscure our vision. Do not fail to realise that peace and order are the first requisites for existence. Uphold everywhere and always, law and authority, and to the best of your powers, combat attempts made by irresponsible agitators and others to lead the country to lawlessness, confusion and bloodshed.

I invoke upon you all, the blessings of Almighty God and wish you success in your deliberations.

After the presidential address was over Mr. C. Kunhirama Menon B. A. Editor of "Kerala Patrika" read letters from the following gentlemen who expressed their regret in not being able to attend the Conference but wished it all success: Raja Vasudeva Raja of Kollengode; Raja Raja Varma, Valia Raja of Parappanad; Raja K. G. Manavedan Raja; Vasudevan Somayajipad;

Kadambatta Manakkal Nambudiripad; Rao Sahab P. T. Raman and others.

Before proceeding to the actual business on the agenda some of the sufferers were asked to relate their personal experiences.

Ammassa Veettil Narayanan Nayar, Kariastan of Oorupullesseri Manakkal in Kulukkallur amsom, said that on the 21st of August last at about 3-30 P.M. a huge mob rushed upon the Mana and removed valuables including money, ornaments and vessels. The mana pays an assessment of Rs. 5000 per annum. The estimated losses Rs. 14000.

Ryru Nayar of Thekkankuthan amsom said that about 150 Moplas entered his house and took away valuables worth over Rs. 16000. All the members of the family were tied up and were threatened with death. Though he submitted a list of the rebels and the extent of his loss, as far as his knowledge goes the rebels have not yet been captured.

Mr. P. Komu Menon narrated his experiences of the rebellion and the attempt of the rebels to force his family to become Mohamadan. He also gave an account of the serious losses which the rebels had inflicted upon him.

Manгалasshery Vishnu Namboodiripad said that he had an illam in the disturbed area though he usually lived at Quilandy. On the 12th October a large mob of 1500 Moplas broke into the illom and removed all valuables from there. Several wellknown temples belonging to him such as Chennattur Bhagavathi Temple, Etaparambil Vishnu Temple, Karinkali Bhagavathi Temple etc were desecrated and the idols were shattered to pieces. He estimated his losses at about Rs. 20,000.

One Chathu of Puthur amsom was next brought to the platform. He had two severe sword cuts one on his head and the other on the shoulder. His story was explained

by Mr. C. Kunhiraman Menon; the notorious Avokker Musaliar whose work was butchery and butchery alone cut this poor Chathu twice and threw him in to the well for dead along with other corpses. He escaped from there and was treated at the Calicut Hospital.

Chemu Nayar of Cheruvayoor amsom said that at the early stages of the rebellion there were no disturbances in his amsom. But later, rebels began to wreck temples and illoms, murder men and molest women including Nambudiri women and drove them all to forests where they were in hiding for a few days. This orgy began on the 15th October; his two houses and one temple were set fire to, eight of his near relations were butchered, Till then the offenders had not been captured by the authorities. His losses amounted to about Rs. 30,000.

Gopalan Nair, an Adhigari related his own experiences as well as that of Poozikal Narayanan Nair. On the night of November 14 about 300 armed Moplas entered his (Gopalan Nayar's) house. Five of his relations were taken to the adjoining field and were tied and slaughtered in cold blood, his younger brother was also captured by rebels. His elder brother alone survived out of wounds inflicted on him. This brother whose name was Raman Nair was brought to the platform and the audience was shown the ghastly scar on his neck. 8 nephews of Narayanan Nair were captured of which only two survived. His son Madhavan Nayar was murdered and thrown into a well. For 11 days the Military did not arrive at the place. So the rebels thought that British Government had ceased and Khilafat Government established. All the houses were looted and set fire to and all the temples were desecrated. The speaker and Narayanan Nayar had to spend several sleepless nights and days in jungles and other hiding places without food. Narayanan Nayar further lost about Rs. 28,000 in paddy.

Dewan Bahadur V. Kellu Erady said that his position was better off compared with those of the previous speakers. But he had also suffered much. In his farm house at Tenhipalam he lost several valuable vessels and paddy. A petition with the names of culprits was given to the District Magistrate but no heed was paid to that till then and only recently he heard that some people were arrested. He was also not able to realise his Kanni and Makaram rent. When he was asked to pay the kist to the Government he petitioned the Hon' Mr. A. R. Knapp but he did not know what became of that. Several murders were committed in that ansom but murderers were still at large. He said that the realities of the present Mopla rebellion should be made known to the world at large and that could best be done only by a thorough investigation to sift out the truth and to publish the complete facts in the form of a book. [The Secretaries said that they were going to do so]. He felt glad at that. They must do everything with the help of the Government officials. Without their active support they could do nothing. He was told that the secretaries of the conference had invited all the District officials to the conference but he was sorry that he missed their presence very much.

Mr. E. Raman Menon, joint-secretary of the Reconstruction Committee read a statement of the sufferings of Thelapurath Ramakurup. This statement had been given by the Kurup about a fortnight back to the secretaries. But, unable to bear the poverty and other troubles which the rebellion had brought upon him this gentleman who was a landlord paying an assessment of about Rs. 1500 committed suicide on the day previous to the conference.

Pokkat Narayana Menon, who had once been a congressman and who had been forcibly converted and circumcised narrated his experiences.

There were about thirty more sufferers who had come to tell their stories before the conference; but they

could not be given an opportunity to speak for want of time.

Then the resolutions on the agenda were taken up. The Zamorin Raja who on account of ill-health had stipulated, when he agreed to take the chair, that he should be allowed to leave the conference after one hour, vacated the chair after the first resolution had been discussed and passed. The Senior Raja of Nilambur acted for him as president.

The following resolutions were then adopted.

I. That this conference cordially agrees with Sir William Vincent in his speech in the Legislative Assembly on 8th February 1922 that

a. The cause of the Moplah outbreak is the Khilafat and non cooperation agitation.

b. That the administration of Martial Law was just, humane and successful and c. that if the Martial Law is withdrawn the local Government should be given extra authority to protect the people.

Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer moved the resolution.

In moving the resolution Mr. M. S. Rama Iyer said that interested persons were spreading false rumours that this Mopla Rebellion was brought about by the unscrupulous use of section 144 Cr.P.C. by Mr. E. F. Thomas. This was a very false statement and falsity could never be exaggerated further. He was quite sure that it was the Khilafat agitation that brought about all the trouble. These agitators preached to the ignorant and fanatical Moplahs that the Khalif had lost his sway, their holy places were all captured and that they should fight the Englishman who did all this mischief "not with sword but by the weapon of non violent non cooperation." This preaching was begun at the Manjeri Conference. People did not realise then that the movement would bring about such Hindu Moslem unity as was evident from the case of Pookat Narayana Menon, who himself was an active Khilafat

worker. And the result of non violence preached by them was also very well exhibited in the present rebellion in Malabar. A Khilafat and a Ulema Conference were next held at Ottapalam and there also the same preachings were made to immense multitudes. Later a huge Khilafat Conference was held at Ponani at which the sanctified Ali Musaliar dressed in Khadhar addressed the fanatics.

He felt sure that Martial Law could not be better administered than in Malabar. Administration of Martial Law in Malabar was very humane. His friends most probably did not know that war meant not the sprinkling of rose water but the killing of enemies.

When Mr. C. F. Andrews a man having sympathies with the Non cooperation movement came to Malabar, he did not believe the speaker when he said that there were some cases of circumcision also. So he caused Mr. Andrews to examine Pookat Narayana Menon and at last he was satisfied.

He also suggested the publication of a complete account of the present rebellion with appropriate photos.

Mr. C. Kunhirama Menon B. A., Editor of the "Kerala Patrika" seconded the resolution and spoke very vehemently denouncing Non cooperators.

II. That this conference is of opinion that the Government should ensure the safety of the lawabiding population of the disturbed areas by

a. Stationing a sufficient number of troops at Malapuram with detachments in important centres such as Manjeri, Nilambur, Wandur, Kundotti, Tirurangadi, Calicut, Perintalmanna, Tirur, Mannarghat, Nirilakkat, Pandikkad and Areakode.

b. Stationing Sub-Magistrates at Nilambur, Paramba (Amarambalam), Kundotti, Kottakkal, Cherplacherry, Mannarghat and Pattambi.

c. Opening new police stations at Pookotur, Paramba, Amarambalam, Uragam melmuri, Nellikuth, Toothaferry,

Ariyallur, Areacode, Kuttipala, Thuvur, Vazhakkat and Omasserri.

d. Issuing licenses for up-to-date guns liberally to deserving persons.

e. Prosecuting or deporting those culprits against whom definite charges of a very serious nature, such as murder, dacoity, forcible conversion, rape etc. have been made but who nevertheless are not yet arrested.

f. Taking special measures for the protection of the forced converts who have returned to Hinduism.

This resolution was moved by Mr. P. Komu Menon and seconded by Jemadar Johns.

II. That this conference is of opinion that the Government should take immediate steps for the economic reconstruction of the disturbed areas and for indemnifying the sufferers from the rebellion by

a. Remitting all taxes due for the current fasli year from persons who have suffered at the hands of the rebels.

b. Assessing the losses sustained by the loyal population with the help of a committee of officials and non officials with assessors in each amsom.

c. Giving full compensation to the loyal population for their material losses by levying fines under the Moplah Outrages Act in the whole of the rebel area.

d. Conserving and distributing a sufficient quantity of seed paddy for the use of agriculturists as well as providing them with enough cattle and agricultural implements.

e. Instituting an immediate inquiry into titles to land in the disturbed area.

f. Instituting an enquiry into the condition of the agriculturists with a view to improve their condition.

g. (If the Government was to remit the taxes the tenants also should comparatively be given a reduction in their pattom.)

The senior Raja of Nilambur proposed the 2nd Resolution (clauses a to e). He said that as the Hindus

and the loyal Muhammadans had suffered untold misery by not being able to realise this year's crops, the Government should not insist upon this year's land revenue. As they had lost almost all their movable property and most of their houses were burnt or otherwise destroyed, they should be granted compensation.

On the motion of Mr. Kottieth Krishnan and Mr. V. Sankara Menon clauses (f) and (g) respectively were added. These were admitted by the mover and agreed to by all.

IV. That this conference is of opinion,

a. that the Government should immediately take up the work of relieving distress in the interior and b. that the construction of public works such as railways and roads be immediately undertaken to aid in relieving distress as well as to open up the country.

Mr. K. P. Raman Menon moved the III Resolution. He made a very forcible speech and said that to relieve distress of the afflicted Government should immediately accept that resolution and do the needful in the matter. Moreover by their so doing they could avert possible future outbreaks.

The resolution being seconded by U. B. Srinivas Rao and supported by M. C. Sreeyallabha Raja, was carried.

V. That this conference is of opinion that

a. the Hindu temples destroyed by the rebels must be rebuilt out of fines imposed upon the Moplahs and b. the construction of places of religious worship in this district should be allowed only with the previous sanction of Government.

This resolution was proposed by Muthumala Purushotham Nambudiri who attended the conference as the representative of the Yogakshema Sabha and seconded by P. V. Nambudiri in a speech full of feeling.

VI. That the conference views with indignation and sorrow the attempts made in various quarters by interested

parties to ignore or minimise the crimes committed by the rebels such as

- a. Brutally dishonouring women
- b. Flaying people alive
- c. Wholesale slaughter of men, women and children
- d. Burning alive entire families
- e. Forcibly converting people in thousands and slaying those who refused to get converted
- f. Throwing half dead people into wells and leaving the victims for hours to struggle for escape till finally released from their sufferings by death.
- g. Burning a great many and looting practically all Hindu and Christian houses in the disturbed area in which even Moplah women and children took part and robbing women of even the garments on their bodies, in short reducing the whole non-muslim population to abject destitution.
- h. Cruelly insulting the religious sentiments of the Hindus by desecrating and destroying numerous temples in the disturbed area, killing cows within the temple precincts putting their entrails on the holy image and hanging the skulls on the walls and roofs.

Mr. Govindan Nair B. A., L. T., a teacher in the Native High School at Calicut proposed the resolution.

In doing so he narrated his own experiences how his two brothers were butchered. He said in his amsom about 36 Hindus were butchered under orders from the Chembraseri Thangal.

Mondambalath Mossad in seconding the resolution said that his illom also suffered at the hands of the Moplas. Two well known temples belonging to the illom were desecrated. The Moplas did all this mischief even in spite of free sites given to them from the Mana lands for the construction of their mosques.

VII. That this Conference is of opinion that persons

converted into Muhammadanism by force should be readmitted into Hinduism and that proper steps should be taken on that behalf.

The Senior Raja of Nilambur in moving this resolution said that people would be prepared to accept the resolution nominally but when it came to actually working it out they would demur. So he hoped that one and all would accept the resolution sincerely and boldly and put it into action.

Muthamala Purushothaman Nambudripad in seconding the resolution said that a Vaidika Sabha should be established to tackle with the problem and to bring it to a successful solution.

Mr. C. Kunhirama Menon was also of the opinion that a sabha should immediately be formed.

Mr. Rishiram, the Arya Samaj Missionary supported the resolution. He said it was criminal to refuse admission to forcibly converted Hindus.

Vagbhatanandan V. Kunhi Kannan Gurukkal further supported the resolution vehemently denouncing the caste prejudices. The resolution was carried unanimously.

VIII. That this meeting of the victims of the Moplah rebellion disclaims any feeling of vengeance against the Moplahs.

This was moved by Mr. C. K. Nair B. A. and seconded by M. C. Srivallabha Raja.

IX. That in the opinion of this conference it is highly desirable in order to unify and consolidate Hindu Society that the different castes should behave towards each other in a fraternal spirit.

Swami Siva Prasad in moving the resolution spoke very vehemently on the scourge of the caste system.

The resolution being seconded by Mr. Rishi Ram was carried.

X. a. That this Conference thanks the civil officers

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