

**SOCIAL CHANGES IN MALABAR
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
TWO TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES
1881 - 1933**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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September 2001

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis "**Social Changes in Malabar with Special Reference to Two Traditional Communities - 1881 - 1933**", submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of the University of Calicut is a record of bonafide research carried out by **Swarna Kumari E. K.** under my supervision and that no part of this thesis has been submitted for a degree.


Supervising teacher

DECLARATION

I, **Swarna Kumari E.K.** do hereby declare that this thesis "**Social Changes in Malabar with Special Reference to Two Traditional Communities 1881 - 1933**" has not been submitted by me for the award of a degree, diploma, title or recognition before.

Calicut University,
September 2001.


Swarna Kumari E.K. 5-9-2001

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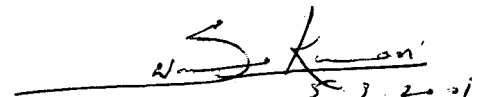
My parents **Late.C.M.K.Nair**, Advocate, Quilandy and **Rugmini Nair** have always been keen to shape my academic career. Their love and affection accompanied me every where. My sisters and brothers have in one way or other, contributed to my career. My husband **Divakaran** and daughter **Kavya** were always at my side encouraging and supporting me. I have often appreciated and admired their understanding adjustments at home.

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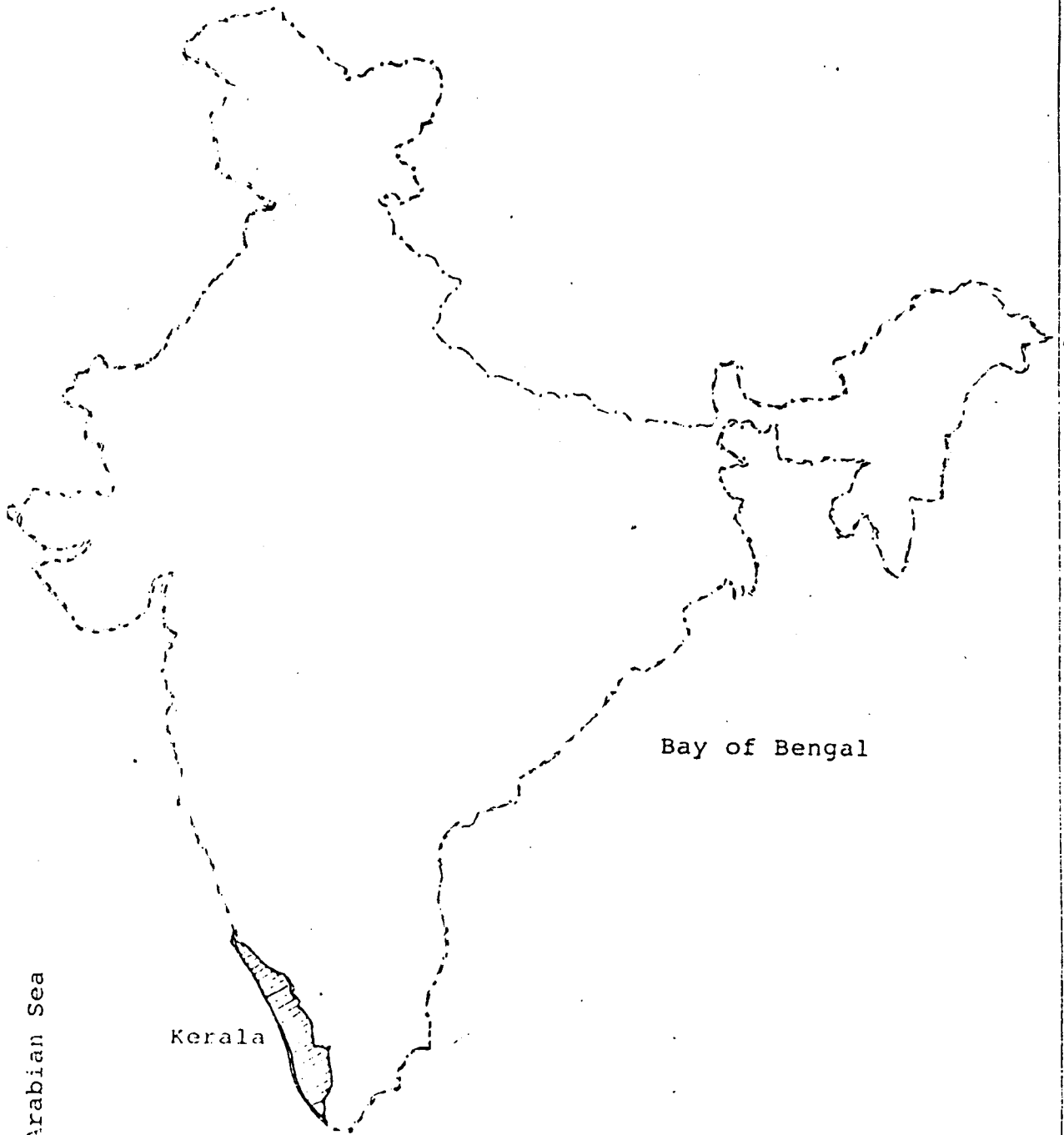
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SWARNA KUMARI.E.K.

Map. 1

INDIA - KERALA

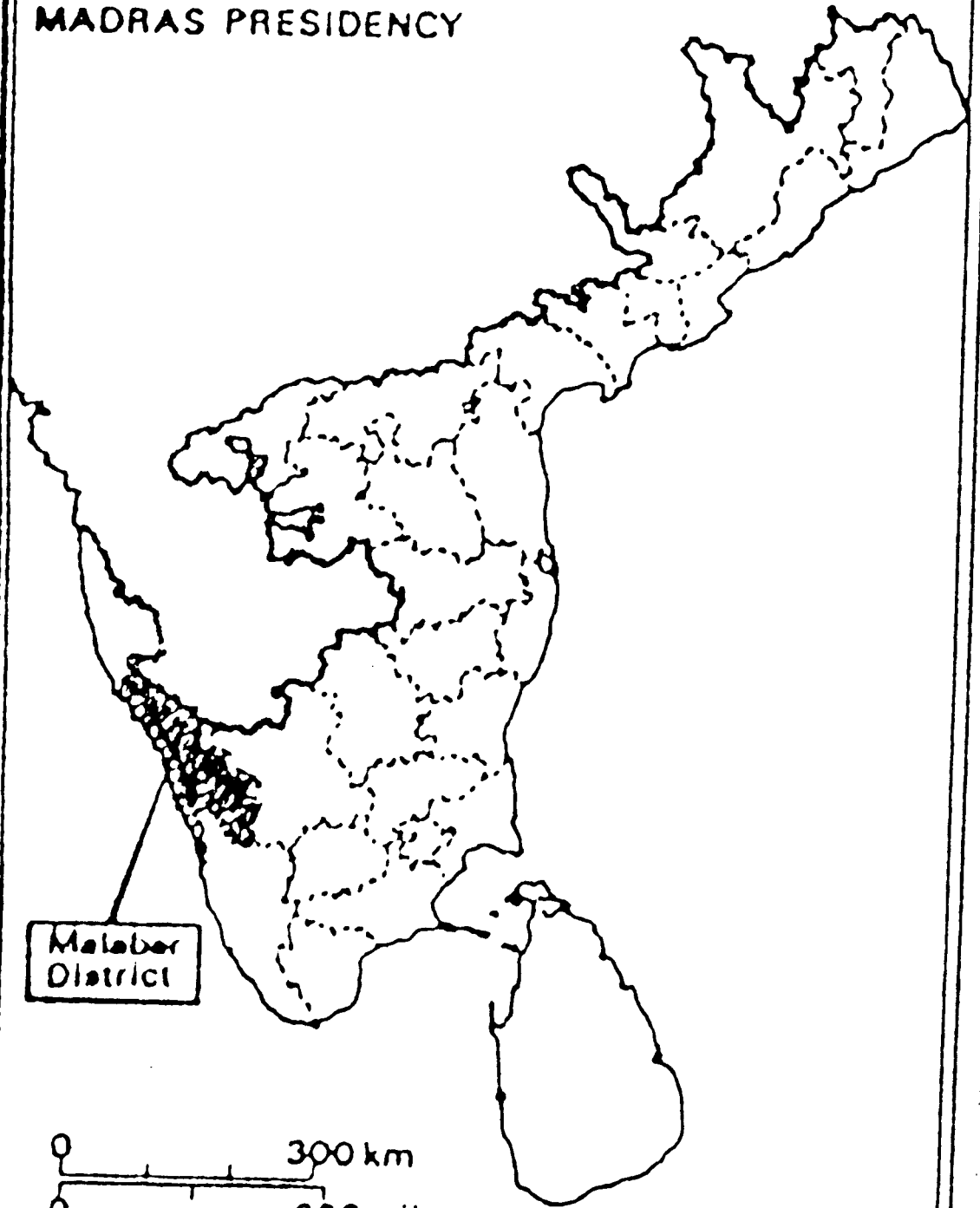


Arabian Sea

Kerala

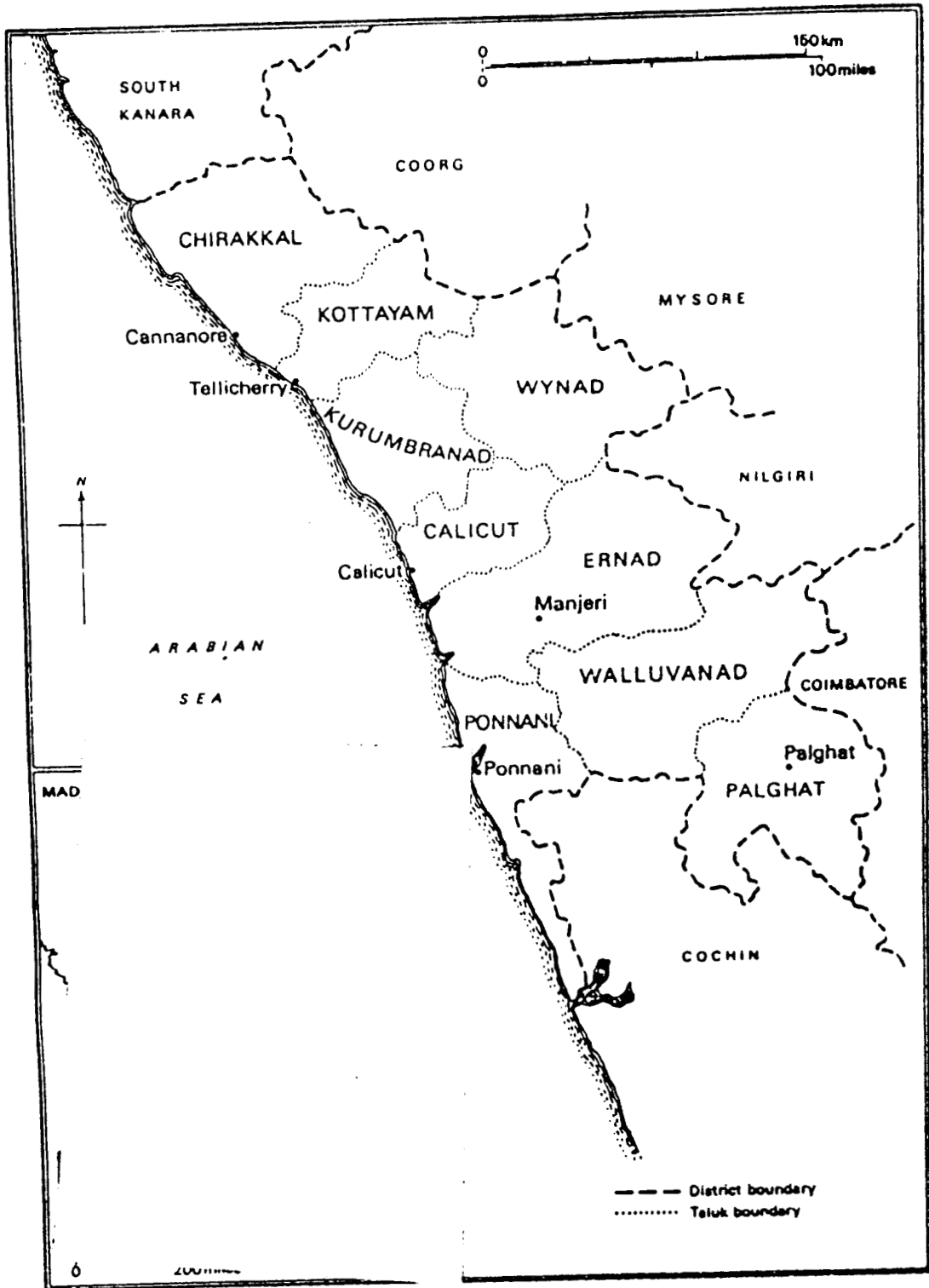
Bay of Bengal

MADRAS PRESIDENCY



Malabar District

0 300 km
0 200 miles



ABREVIATIONS

1. I C H R - Indian Council of Historical Research
2. I.H.C. - Indian History Congress
3. I L R - Indian Law Report
4. M L R - Madras Law Report
5. M M C R - Malabar Marriage Commission Report
6. M N N P R - Madras Native News Paper Report
7. N A I - National Archives of India
8. N S S - Nair Service Society
9. R M S C - Report of Malabar Special Commission
10. S.I.H.C. - South Indian History Congress
11. S N D P - Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam
12. T L R - Travancore Law Report
13. V.T. - V.T.Bhattathiripad

INTRODUCTORY

Swarna kumari E.K. “Social changes in malabar with special reference to two traditional communities 1881-1933 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2001

Chapter -I

INTRODUCTORY

This study is an attempt to examine the changes which affected the society of Malabar* in the second half of the 19th and 20th centuries, when the region was integrated with the British empire in India. Though Kerala has evoked the interest of historians, sociologists, economists and anthropologists, because of various reasons, the existing literature does not monitor and analyse social changes in this period, particularly within the framework of a colonial society and economy. What is proposed in the present study is to examine how the traditional communities of Malabar responded to the challenges thrown up by colonialism and how it altered the shape of society in the present century.

The present effort concentrates on a regional study but it is part of a wider topic of social changes. The study looks at two communities and the growth of social consciousness within the larger horizon of national consciousness. The period shows the preoccupation of social themes which can be perceived as the manifestation of a growing sense of introspection. The study has two broad dimensions. It is an attempt on one hand to grasp the changing scenario of Malabar and on the other, how

* Malabar is the area which has Malayalam as the language and from 1800, was part of Madras presidency of the British empire till India got independence on 15th August 1947. It was integrated with the Kerala State, when the states were reorganised on 1st November 1956. See the maps of Kerala and Malabar.

these trends of changes reflected in the literature of the period. Though the thrust is on the modern period, the traditional socio-economic structure has to be dealt with in detail to form the background for a period of transition. Actually it shows two distinct phases - one of tradition and the other of modernity. The time frame is significant that 1881 is the year in which Mr. William Logan, the British Collector of Malabar, was deputed by the British Government to make an indepth study of economic situation by examining the tenurial system of Malabar. This was necessitated by sporadic violent incidents and riots in Eranad Taluk. The result was the Report of the Malabar Special Commission in 1881. It was a colonial initiative trying to study the tenurial pattern of this region. Logan identified tenurial problems behind the grievances of the people and could catch the inclination for an alternative in tenurial, inheritance pattern and for marriage reforms. By 1940's, Malabar had learned to reformulate and adopt certain new values appropriate to time and space. This study concentrates on an area which was directly under the colonial political apparatus and thus the historical placement of the region is possible only with the understanding of India as a whole unit especially during the period in transition namely 19th and 20th centuries.

The term 'Social Change' is engaged to convey the meaning of the adoption of certain new attitudes appropriate to the context of modernity but retaining the old identity. It does not mean that a society or a community underwent a complete transformation, totally abandoning its old face and attitudes. Here it is implied, that various sections felt the need to appropriate a space which would benefit them in the fast changing scenario. The development of social consciousness in various parts of India coincided with the national consciousness thus becoming a part of nationalist movement. Thus the whole movement was an interaction of political, social and economic aspects.

As noted earlier, the study tries to situate two prominent communities of Malabar namely Nambudiris and Nairs in this broad space and the shifting of their perceptions of life in the wake of colonialism. It is imperative to understand that each community had their own cultural identity irrespective of their placement in social order. Culture is a way of life, that encompasses all the aspects of life like ideology, rituals, dialects, dress and jewellery. Even at the wake of judicial sanctions for property rights or inheritance pattern, this cultural streak remained a sentimental hold on each community.

Social changes are not sudden. It is a gradual, internal process. No legislation or judicial sanction can effect a social change unless it is felt from within. Other factors would then help the process. It is argued here that some of the communities, atleast a small section emerged to argue for reforms within the framework of the identity of caste and community and religion. This introspection addressed problems of caste inequality, gender inequality, marriage and inheritance pattern thus leading to reform movements in many communities and incidentally got linked to the process of realisation of national consciousness.

The 19th and 20th centuries are a period of transition in India. Colonialism threw up a number of challenges to a tradition based society. Its administration was keen to legitimise it hold through different ways and acted concerned about the socio-economic situation. For them, the traditional customs and ideology were outdated since their concepts were based on western attitudes. For instance, the marumakkathayam practice of Nairs was perceived as a barbaric stage where only the female descent could be identified and as the result of promiscuity. While the colonial administration was keen to interfere, there was a section of educated Indians progressive

in disposition to effect certain modifications and created critiques of the existing customs in the context of a uniform judiciary and emerging consciousness. They suggested reforms within the framework of a new found identity. The idea of a community itself was a new concept. In Kerala, within a group recognised as caste, multiple constituent groups of sub castes are found. Marital connections between and among were not encouraged. The third section was the conventional who did not welcome any change in the social set up and posed as protectors of Indian culture to retain it undiluted. They could never tolerate the intervention of a foreign agency in their social beliefs and customs.

The new wave of social trends were reflected in the literary dialogue of the region. It is believed that literature gives a start to social movements. But it is seen from this study that the social trends were being reflected in the contemporary Malayalam literature namely novels and plays. As such, it is an important part of this study.

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. The introductory chapter points out the purpose and scope of study. It also deals with the sources and previous studies helpful in providing information for this study.

The second chapter projects the traditional society of Malabar in relation to the particular communities taken up for discussion. The characteristics and behaviour of these are discussed here. The agrarian and tenorial pattern which was the base for social relationships is discussed in the third chapter. The disruption of the customary pattern due to internal process and external intervention are also examined here. The emergence of a small section of Nambudiris and Nairs by the end of the 19th century, as advocates for reforms is discussed in the fourth chapter. The marked erosion in their relationships who had for long adjusted to a harmonious adjustment is notable with the cultural identity acquiring intensity. On one side, the reform movements upheld the uselessness of jati restrictions, untouchability or distance pollution but on the other, each community displayed a shrinking attitude demanding endogamy which would lead to the end of a long social relationship resulting in a shift to a new meaning to claim father's property. This chapter also provides an understanding of the status of women and how most of the issues of reform movement centred around 'women', the growth of a slow and gradual introspection among them and the gradual disappearance of a separate moral and ethical code expected from them. It is also an endeavour here to see the change in perceptions in social behaviour like the changes in dress, food, etc. these peripheral modifications did not affect the cultural identity.

The fifth chapter focuses on Nairs and the active involvement of an educated section to argue for judicial sanctions for changes in inheritance pattern and right of property of father. This in turn centres round the status of women, what matriliney was to Nairs and their aspirations to shift to an alternate model without rejecting, tradition. This further led to formation of community organisations.

The sixth chapter is an effort to catch the trends of social changes being reflected in contemporary literature especially two novels and one play of the period. Novel was a new literary venture with the characteristic of a wide space enabling a detailed discussion of a theme. The novels discussed here are selected on the basis of their social significance and pertaining to the specific period of transition. This approach to see historical events reflecting in literature is new and it is an attempt to intergrate two disciplines like history and literature. It is because of the conviction that literature is the reflection of a contemporary society and are cultural expressions of a community and society.

A significant contemporary play which highlighted the problems and the shifting perception is also focused here. Plays have two characteristics. It is on one hand, a literary creation

and on the other the articulation of a theme on a stage which is directed towards a direct audience to create a rapport. The message reaches the people more clear and instant. Play discussed here is of socio economic significance.

The last chapter provides the conclusions and observations of the study. The effects of the movement, its significant influence are discussed here.

Malabar, a compact cultural unit remained under the direct colonial administrative set up, had been noted and recorded by visitors and scholars in relation to the social behaviour of the different communities. But an integrated approach to the problem of social, economic, cultural factors is almost absent. This effort is to understand traditional and colonial society and the significance of a dialogue through literature of the period.

The term 'Malabar' had been used and noted by foreign writers. The entire west-cost of South India was called variously as Manibar, Malibar and Malaibar by early writers and visitors like Al Beruni (10th & 11th C), Al Idirisi (12th C), Abulfeda (13th C), Marco Polo (13th C), Ibn Battuta (14th C).

The first two syllables denote the hilly area - Mala means hill - Bar specifies an area. Durate Barbosa who travelled from Lisbon to India, most probably in 1500, after the successful voyage of Vasco-da-Gama to Calicut, learnt Malayalam and stayed at Kochi, has left behind a detailed note about his acquaintance with this territory. His writings were later compiled as the Book of Durate Barbosa: An Account of Countries Bordening on the Indian Ocean and Their Inhabitants, Barbosa describes the life and society of Malabar as he understood it. Buchanan in his travel account A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar, London (1811) gives a descriptive account of matriliney in Malabar. William Logan, in his Malabar 2 vol. 1887 and his Special Commission Report 1881 had attempted an understanding of the existing society from various angles and these works are informative but his approach was the official exigency of a colonial administrator. Moreover these works were not the result of any scientific approach or based on source materials. The main handicap one confronts in such works is due to the application of western social concepts to a traditional society of this region. There are other works like Malabar Law and Custom, 1905 by Lewis Moore, Gazetteer of Malabar by C.A. Innes 1915, The Nayars of Malabar by Fawcett 1905, Malabar and its Folk by T.K. Gopala Pannikkar 1900, Caste and Tribes of

Southern India 1906 by Edgar Thurston, Malabar and Aliyasnathana Law by Sundara Ayyar 1922, History of Kerala IV.Vols.by.K.P.Padmanabha Menon,1929.Menon's history gives a new perspective to the historiography of Kerala. This is a valuable source based on the Dutch missionary visscher's letters, who was in Kerala in the 18th C. Most of these works portray the traditional society with a tendency to generalize, without looking into variations and socio-economic,moral issues involved in behaviour pattern of these two communities. Moreover, they do not analyse several aspects. Still they remain as valuable source materials. Apart from these, sources like Vadakkan Pattukal or Northern Ballads throw a lot of light about the contemporary society. Family records liked Koodali Granthavari (1995) and Kavalappara Papers (1984) help in understanding the structure and characteristics of joint family houses. Later works like Kerala Charithram by K.Damodaran 1962, Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi by E.M.S.Nambudiripad 1947, Studies in Keralam History 1971 and Janmi Sambradayam Keralathil 1959 by Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai have focussed on various aspects of Kerala life and he has raised a series of academic questions and discussions on various aspects of Kerala's socio-economic history. This initiative led to stimulating research, though many of his generalizations and findings have been questioned.

M.G.S.Narayanan started from where Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai stopped. Though M.G.S.Narayan's best endeavour was to reconstruct the history of Kulasekharas through his doctoral thesis, "Political and social conditions of Kerala under the Kulasekhara Empire" now published as 'Perumals of Kerala', he has touched On various questions pertaining to the socio-economic aspects of Kerala. His works like Cultural symboisis, and various essays, enable the students of Kerala history to grasp the contemporary situation.

Kesavan Veluthat's Aryan Brahmin Settlements in Kerala has concentrated on the socio economic effects due to the settlements. Fritz Stael edited Agni 1986 provides a lot of information about Nambudiris rituals and customs, etc. The autobiographies of E.M.S.Nambudiripad 1985, V.T.Bhattathiripad 1988, Kanippayoor Sankaran Nambudiripad are helpful in understanding the contemporary society. Keralathinte Ennalekal by K.N.Ganesh, 1990 brings in a new approach to understand the life pattern of Kerala people. He discusses about the various skills, professions, trade, settlement pattern, the age of transition, the shifting role of literature in the modern period.

Some foreign scholars who have taken up interest in the study of matriliney are Kathleen Gough, Schneider who edited Matrilineal Kinship 1972, Robin Jeffrey who wrote Decline of Nayar Dominance 1976, C.J.Fuller who wrote Nayars today 1976. Jeffrey's observations are about Nairs of Travancore but provides a lot of information about Nairs in general. Recent works like Marriage and Family in Kerala 1977 by Father Puthenkulam, Matrilineal System in Kerala P.V.Balackirshnan 1981 (Ph.D.Thesis) from a legal perspective are useful to the students interested in this topic. Dr.K.K.N.Kurup in his William Logan: A Study in the Agrarian Relations of Malabar 1987 has analysed the agrarian relations and its effect on Nair tarawads. His other works like Kayyur Riot, Pazhassi Samarangal, Nationalism and Social Change, Tellichery consulation fill the gaps and have succeeded in reconstructing various periods of Kerala history.

Our literature is rich and the literature of this period reflects the messages of the time. Both novels and plays emerged during 1880s. Both are a strong mediums in their own way. Literary works are generally assessed and examined from literary dimensions. The approach here is to assess literature as historical reflections. As such this is a new attempt. The

period under discussion was of a struggle for freedom, struggle for socio-economic rights and it is just natural that perceptions of change and aspirations reflected in the artistic manifestations of contemporary writers.

The source material consists of a variety of texts like travel accounts of foreigners, official reports like census, commission reports, Legislative Department Proceedings of the Period, Native Newspaper Reports from 1870s, Newspapers like Mathrubhumi, Malayala Manorama, judicial records, autobiographies and talks with contemporaries.

Primary sources have been utilised from National Archives of India, Tamil Nadu Archives and Regional Archives, Kozhikode. The judicial proceedings have been collected from the District Court of Talassery and Kozhikode. Some of the materials were obtained from the library collection of late Sardar Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair of Talassery. Daily like Yogakshema, journals like Unni Nambudiri are available at Appan Tampuran Smaraka Library. Some of the magazines available at Sri Chithra Tirunal Library, Thiruvananthapuram have been useful for this study. Other institutions which facilitated the collection of sources are Sahitya Academy, Trissur,

Department Libraries of History and Malayalam of Calicut University and C.H.Muhammed Koya Library of Calicut University. Talks with some contemporary social activists like Kurumattur Narayanan Nambudiripad, K.Madhavan, Priyadatta kallat helped to have a clear insight of the contemporary social trends. Illustrations provided at the end have been collected from Ente Smaranakal of Kanippayyoor Sankaran Nambudiripad, Cochin tribes and castes by L.K.Anantha Krishna Iyer and from some old tarawads and illams to signify the age of transition.

This study intends to encompass a variety of issues related to the two communities of the region and to focus on their tradition, culture, economic status, gender distinction, property rights, judicial intervention and reflection of new aspirations in Malayalam literature.

NAMBUDIRIS AND NAIRS IN TRADITIONAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Swarna kumari E.K. “Social changes in malabar with special reference to two traditional communities 1881-1933 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2001

Chapter - II

NAMBUDIRIS AND NAIRS IN TRADITIONAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The present State of Kerala was formed on 1st November 1956, when the states were reorganized on linguistic basis after independence on the recommendations of the State Recorgnization Committee.¹ Kerala was organised by integrating Malabar and Kasaragod which were under Madras Presidency of the British and Kochi and Travancore, two princely states.

Malabar was annexed by the British in 1792 after the fall of Tipu Sultan of Mysore according to the Treaty of Seringapatam and it was brought under Madras Presidency from the 1st of July 1800 according to the Government order.² Malabar covered an area of 5795 square miles and was made up of nine taluks namely, Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Kozhikode, Wynad, Eranad, Valluvanad, Ponnani and Palakkad.³ It was

-
1. (1) Gazetteer of India - Kerala, kozhikode, 1962, P.2
(2) India State Recorganisation Commission Report, 1953-
New Delhi - 1954
 2. (1) William Logan (ed) A Collection of Treaties and Engagements Madras-1951 edi., P.10
(2) Logan, Malabar Vol.1, Madras, 1989 P.528.
 3. Innes, C.A. Malabar and Anjengo, Madras, 1951, P.2 Today seven districts come under this area. Kasargod, Kannur, Kozhikode, Wynad, Malappuram, Palakkad and Thrissur.

bounded on the north by the province of Canara, on the east by those of Coorg and Mysore and to the South east by Coimbatore and to the South by Kochi. According to a census of Malabar taken in 1827 the population was 1,022,215.⁴ But in 1871, it rose to 2,261,250, in 1881 to 2,365,035 and in 1891 to 2,648,172 and in 1931 it was 3,533,944⁵ Out of these, the Hindus were 1,637,914, Muslims 581,609, Christians 40,268 and others 1,459.⁶

Literacy was comparatively high in Malabar with 235,990 literates in 1881 and 509,051 in 1931. Of these, 51821 were literate in English.⁷ According to the census of 1901, Malabar stood fourth among Madras districts in the literacy of its population. In 1880-1881, the total number of students were 31,894, in 1891 - 70327, in 1901 - 84408 and in 1903-491661 including 19,331 girls. In 1904, there were 954 primary, 75 secondary and 6 training and special schools and three arts colleges at Calicut, Palakkad and Talassery.⁸ The following table corroborates the growing sense of education.

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4. Ward and Corner, A Descriptive Memoir of Malabar, Government of Kerala, 1995, Originally published in 1906.
 5. William Logan op.cit., P.107, Population was steadily increasing.
 6. Ibid P.211
 7. Census of India 1881, Vol.V, PP.116-117, Census of India 1931 - Vol XIV - Part II Madras PP 4 and 21
 8. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, Madras, 1908, P.344

TABLE - I

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL - YEAR 1881 CENSUS

9

Taluks	Under Instruction	Instructed	Illiterate including not selected	Total
Chirakkal	9,486	17,772	245,411	272,669
Kottayam	5,567	12,764	147,444	165,795
Kurumbranad	7,944	20,206	232,874	261,024
Wynad	1,370	3,853	82,868	88,091
Calicut	6,384	18,721	180,857	205,962
Eranad	5,114	14,823	276,206	296,143
Valluvanad	7,117	19,149	281,836	308,102
Palakkad	11,018	25,703	305,733	342,454
Ponnani	12,769	27,762	352,123	392,654

9. Source-Willian Logan - Malabar - Vol.1 Madras 1989, P.106 of these under instruction 59,264 were males and 9550 were females. Of the instructed 147167 were males and 20009 were females.

TABLE - II

10

Year	University Pupils	High School Pupils	Middle School Pupils
1857 - 58	-	205	580
1862 - 63	-	381	577
1867 - 68	10	753	2012
1872 - 73	32	562	3696
1877 - 78	55	295	1180
1882 - 83	149	431	1431

10. Source : Census of India - 1881 Madras Vol.V P.133

The major occupation was agriculture and according to the 1881 Census, there were 575, 499 whose occupation was agriculture and in 1931, there were 431,263 who followed agriculture as occupation¹¹. In different industrial sectors, there were 354, 404¹².

TABLE - III

DISTRIBUTION OF NAMBUDIRIS IN MALABAR 1886 13

Sl.No.	Taluks	Families
1	Chirakkal	79
2	Kottayam	30
3	Kurumbranad	70
4	Calicut	152
5	Eranad	120
6	Valluvanad	277
7	Ponnani	289
Total		1,017

11. Census of India, 1881 - Madras - Vol.V P.141

12. Census of India, 1931-Madras- Vol.XIV Part II,PP 4 and 21

13. Source: The details are given in Malabar, Logan Madras 1989
PP. 119 - 120.

The social structure was complex with a rigid caste order. It was caste based and custom bound and occupations were linked to caste identity. It was a highly stratified society with the regional variations.¹⁴ The communities under study are Nambudiris and Nairs. Caste order existed with Brahmins or Nambudiris at the top. They numbered 26,333 and Nairs were 537,618 in 1931.¹⁵ Much of Kerala's early history is tinged with a divine colour with legends trying to explain the origin of Kerala, evolution of caste system or an explanation of the social behaviour. Even today, Kerala is described as 'Gods own country'. Legend has it that, one of the incarnations of Vishnu called Parasurama created Kerala by throwing an axe to the sea from where came up the land which came to be known as Parasuramakshethram or Bharaghavakshethram. This land later came to be called Kerala. Parasurama brought Brahmins to Kerala, bestowed land to them and instructed other

14. For a discussion on evolution of a complex society, See Rajan Gurukkal "From Clan and Lineage to Hereditary occupation and Caste in Early South India" in Binannual Journal of ICHR, Vol.XX, Nos 1-2, July 1993 and January 1994.

15. Census of India, 1931, Madras, Vol.XIV, Part II, P.98 and P.308.

castes to serve them in all capacities.¹⁶ This legend can be perceived only as a successful attempt in creating an ideological grip by the Brahmins to remain at the top of the specific caste structure and exert dominance. It was they who dominated the social order which existed in Kerala from roughly 11th century A.D. to 19th Century A.D. The traditional status has been referred to as Jati, Janmi, Naduvazhitham by E.M.S.Namboodiripad.¹⁷ It is relevant here to discuss how a lower caste adjusted and performed their socio-economic roles by submitting to Brahmin dominance.

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16. Parasurama legend had its genesis in Gujarat and it is likely that this legend also moved along with the moving people. See P.Narayanan "Samavartan". Paper presented at IHC 1997, Bangalore.

Kerala Mahatmyam, a poem in sanskrit purports to be a monologue addressed by Rishi Garga to Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas of Mahabharata.

Kerolpathi is a work in Malayalam trying to explain the origin of Kerala. These two works contain the traditions current among people about history of Kerala. These two works are obvious examples of a creation of an ideology by the Brahmins.

See M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan - "A History of the Nambudiri Community in Kerala" in Frits Stael (ed) Agni, Berkeley - 1983, P.274.

17. E.M.S.Nambudiripad - Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow Thiruvananthapuram 1969 - P.41.

According to tradition, there were 64 Brahmin gramams, out of these 32 are in Tulunadu and 32 in Kerala and subsequently a number of upagramas emerged around the main gramams.¹⁸ They are believed to have settled in 32 villages and these settlements acquired a clear shape by 7th century A.D.

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18. (1) Veluthat Kesavan, The Brahman Settlements in Kerala, Calicut University, 1978, P.5, Different theories surround the settlements of Brahmins and their dominance here.
- (2) See R.S. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, Calcutta, 1965, PP.1-3 He says that it was their spiritual authority, solar calendar, Ayurvedic Medicine and above all their superior technology of agrarian management which bought them royal grants.
- (3) E.M.S.Nambudiripad says that instead of thinking that the different castes of Kerala have come from outside, it is reasonable to believe that the castes were formed due to the growth of inequality in society. E.M.S.Keralathinte Deseeya Prasnam, Trivandrum 1955, P.XII.
- (4) Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal put forward the view that it is reasonable to think that these Brahmin might have migrated from neighbouring areas. Kerala Charithram, Sukumarapuram, 1991, P.110.
- (5) M.G.S.Narayanan is of the view that the influence of Brahmins might have been due to royal patronage, See Perumals of Kerala, Calicut, 1996 - P.142 - 144.
- (6) For a different view, See K.P.Devadas, "The Problem of Brahmin Migration to Kerala" in Keralam, Vol.3, Trivandrum, 1994 - P.117.

The Nambudiris were not a people who migrated to Kerala, Rather they were the elite priesthood of other different tribes who had settled down in Kerala in the Pre-Sangam, Sangam and Post-Sangam period who later evolved and formed the Nambudiri community

- (7) E.M.S.Nambudiripad adds that the Brahmins of Kerala, the Nambudiri had the customs which had no comparison with the Brahmins of other parts of India-Keralam, Vol.5, Thiruvananthapuram - 1994, P.215-216.

Those villages have been identified and these were on the fertile plains on the valley of rivers.¹⁹ The family names mentioned in inscriptions and sangam literature have continued to exist.²⁰ Of the prominent Brahmin Villages, only six were in the Malabar area.²¹ This might have been because of the comparative infertility of the area for agriculture. Most of the Brahmin villages centered round areas fit for paddy cultivation.²² It can be seen that the agricultural sector expanded with the growing dominance of Brahmins or Nambudiris in the Kerala social sphere. The caste divisions, social structure and control over production grew with the rising dominance of the Brahmins. Along with this, occupational distinctions also emerged based on caste. These Brahmin settlements centred round the temples which were centres of socio-economic, artistic, educational centres. The two

19. Veluthat Kesavan op.cit., PP.21-22, The Villages are Payyannur, Perumcellur, Alathur, Karanthola, Cokiram, Panniyur, Karakatu, Isnamangalam, Trissivaperur, Peruvanam, Comanda, Irungalikkulal Avattiputhur, Paravur, Airanikulam, Kumaranellur, Kitangur, Katamaruka, Tiruvalla, Mulikkalam, Kalavur, Atavur, Cennamatur, Ilibhayam, Uliyannur, Errannur.

20. Ibid., P.7

21. Payyannur, Taliparamba, Alathur, Karathur, Karikkad, Isnamangalam.

22. M.G.S.Narayanan and Veluthat Kesavan, "History of the Nambudiri Community in Kerala", Frits stael Agni, Berkeley, 1983, Vol.II, P.261.

categories of land namely Devaswam and Brahmaswam enabled these Brahmins to be the supervisors of the land. Devaswam means temple property and Brahmaswam, the land under the supervision of Brahmins. Brahmins were related to both. The temple property was managed by the Brahmins in the capacity of supervisors of the temple and Brahmaswam was naturally managed by the Brahmins. In short, control over land and production came to the hands of Nambudiris. The temples had extensive landed property, gold contributed by chieftains and devotees. Apart from the religious significance, temples during the medieval period were centres of education and arts.²³ The expenses of education including food and accommodation were met by the temples. Art forms like Kuthu, Kudiattam, Sculpture, painting also evolved and were encouraged. Thus these temple centres appear to be of multi functional character. For instance, the Tiruvalla Copper Plate, a lengthy one, discovered from Tiruvalla temple testifies to the multifunctional character and how the temple catered to the daily and necessary

23. (1) Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, Studies in Kerala History, Thiruvananthapuram, 1971, P.268. Elamkulam provides a list of prominent temples receiving gifts and donation.

(2) R.S.Sharma, Social Change in Early Medieval India, Devaraj Chaman Memorial Lecture, Delhi, 1969 - P.6.

requirements of the community around it.²⁴ Salai, Aturasalai were attached to the temple and the inscription refers to bhattas, cattas, tevaticci and that the temple received three lakhs para of paddy for rituals and possessed a vast tract of land of thirty square kilometers around the temple.²⁵ Perumcellur, one of the earliest Brahmins settlements had three temples in the village. And Karikattu settlement had a wealthy Subrahmanya temple.²⁶ The ritualistic duties performed by the Brahmins by virtues of their mastery of vedas, recitation of the scriptures and the propagation of bhakti ideology gradually led to their religious and social status. The management of temple property and a new agrarian order facilitated their economic status. Studies have noted that the general body of the village administration was constituted by the Brahmins, this was called ur, urar or uralar and an executive committee called

24. Veluthat Kesavan, op.cit., P.47, Rajan gurukkal, The Kerala Temple and the Early Medieval Agrarian System, Sukapuram, 1992, PP.10-11.

25. Bhattas - Vedic Professors
 Cattas - Vedic cum marital students
 Tevaticci - Sacred Prostitute
 See Rajan Gurukkal - op.cit., P.11

26. Siva Temples at Taliparamba, Kanvirangat and Krishna Temple at Trichambaram - Veluthat Kesavan, op.cit., P.23.

paritai existed to supervise the day-to-day affairs of the temple.²⁷ The temple as an institution required the services of people of various professions for the necessary fulfillment of rituals and day-to-day functioning. Though it was based on reciprocal understanding or mutual dependence, they were employed by the Brahmins in the capacity of a superior status group. Each caste had its occupation and each felt obliged to serve the community. Blacksmith, Carpenter, Goldsmith, Washerman, Panas, Weavers, Oilmonger, toddy, tapper, Pulaya, Paraya were indispensable for a society and occupation was the primary concern.²⁸ It is clear that a society cannot survive without the involvement of different social groups and agriculture and hand work are mutually dependent. The emergence of Brahmins as a dominant power inflicted restrictions on the basis of caste rigidity and pollution. While consolidating their position or status through different ways, the Brahmins ensured that they received all the essential services and duties from other sections of the society and were able to convince all the other castes that they had obligations to the highest caste.²⁹ This ideological dominance could be

27. Veluthat Kesavan, op.cit., P.23

28. Raghava Varier, Keraleeyatha Charithra Manangal, Sukapuram, 1996, PP.144-145.

29. Jati hierarchy was the effect of Brahminical form of social representation, Rajan Gurukkal, op.cit., PP.52-55.

established through various ways.³⁰

Temples as discussed earlier, were not only centres of worship but artistic, educational and theatre centres. The temple festivals provided for the involvement and participation of different castes and their obligations. These festivals could be perceived as social events which attracted all sections for joy and merriment and an opportunity for a get together retaining the unequal status. It served the purpose of community life.³¹ Since the temples came to possess immense property, an efficient administrative machinery was essential and thus each temple was placed under the management of oligarchical corporation called *uralar* and naturally as the Brahmins or Nambudiris handled the ritualistic functions of temples, they became the trustee also. It had the royal

30. (1) Ibid., P.72 The people of agrarian localities, the temple centred brahmana corporations constituted the Government, they were the centres of contemporary political power.

(2) "Even Samanta chieftains took their coronation oath to protect cows and Brahmins". John.P.Mancher and Helen Goldberg "Kinship and Marriage Regulations among the Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala" in Man, New Series No.1, Vol.II, 1967, PP.89-90.

31. Vijayalakshmi.M "Temples as Consumer" in Keralam, Thiruvananthapuram, Vol.3, 1994, P.17.

occupying the land in return for which they rendered their services. Gradation emerged according to their birth and occupation and thus evolved a caste based order. The Brahmins ranking the top, the antaralar or temple functionaries forming the next layer, the Warrior cum Karalar or Nairs as the third, the artisans and craftsman as the fourth and then the actual tillers of the soil who were landless.³⁶ Thus the Brahmins who came to possess land through gifts or donation, used tradition, ideology and their oratory and skill in Sanskrit and Vedas to perpetuate their position. They styled themselves as Janmis but they were not directly involved in agriculture or production. They had rights over land and in the capacity of Janmis, claimed a considerable share of the produce and were entitled to receive gifts on important occasions. Religion and caste determined Janmi-tenant relationship and without direct participation in production, they were able to claim the returns and thus enjoy life without any physical labour.³⁷

36. Rajan Gurukkal. op.cit., P.63

37. Landlordism came into existence as a result of a very long and gradual process of evolution stretching over a long period of time, See E.M.S.Nambudiripad in Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi, Thiruvananthapuram, 1947 P.4. It has also to be observed that all Nambudiris were not rich. While some were rich many had to avail the free food provided by temples. V.T.Bhattathiripad, Kanneerum Kinavum Trissur 1979, P.30. There were only 23 Nambudiri Janmis who paid Rs.3000 and above as tax in Malabar, Also see Yogakshema , 4 February 1925.

By 12th century, these Brahmins emerged as the actual proprietors of land. The temple lands were exempt from tax. Along with the emergence of the land owning class, the intermediaries also emerged who neither owned the land nor cultivated it.³⁸ This was called kanam which means supervision or protection, Nairs were the protectors.³⁹ The land was actually cultivated by others who were either the low castes or Nairs who held no kanam. The produce of the soil was divided into equal shares (a) among the farmer - kanakkaran or protector (b) the actual cultivator (c) the Janmi the landlord.⁴⁰ This arrangement was on a social equation, on the basis of mutual dependence and reciprocal interests.⁴¹

It is apparent here that the Nambudiri Brahmins were successful in establishing a comfortable position in the traditional social and economic set up. Though a wide label is given to Brahmins of Kerala, there are Gowda Saraswat Brahmins

38. Veluthat Kesavan, "Role of Temples in Kerala Society" in Journal of Kerala Studies, June 1976, Vol.III, P.192.

39. William Logan, Report of the Malabar Special Commission, 1881, Para 27, P.17, Madras, NAI.

40. Ibid., para 48, P.23.

41. K.N.Panikkar, Peasant Revolts in Malabar, A.R.Desai (ed) Peasant Struggle in India, Bombay, 1979, P.6.

called 'Konkini Brahmins', Tamil brahmins called 'Pattar' and Tulu Brahmins called 'Embrans' and Nambudiri Brahmins. It is only the Nambudiri Brahmins who are discussed here. The word Nambudiri is derived from Nambuka (to trust) and tiri (an honorific suffix meaning office or sacred or pure). Another derivation is from Nam (knowledge) and purikka (to impart) which indicates their status as great scholars. Nambudiris differ from other brahmins in appearance, customs, rituals and practices. Among them, there are three branches namely Rg Vedi, Yajur Vedi and Sama Vedi. In Kerala, Rig and Yajur Vedis are many but Sama Vedis are few. It is interesting to note that among Nambudiris, there are variations like those who could learn and teach vedas.⁴² Bhattathiris were the teachers and scholars. Ashta Vaidyas, Sastra Nambudiripad and Gramani Nambudiris were not allowed to dine with noble brahmins.

The Nambudiris had to wear a sacred thread on the body and a tuft on the head. Among them were Nambudiris who had the right to recite vedas and others who had no right to recite vedas and interdining or marital relationship were not permitted between the two. They observe samskaras or life cycle

42. L.K.Ananta Krishna Iyer, The Tribes and Castes of Cochin Delhi, 1981, PP.178 - 179.

rites. The samskaras symbolise the major stages of life like birth of a baby, initiation into education, marriage etc. The upanayana is the function whereby a holy thread is tied and initiation into the Gayatrimantha and a life of celibacy or brahmacharya begin. This investiture ritual was done at 7 or 8 years.⁴³ The children had to learn from the age of 4. They were taught by an ezhuthachan. While boys continue learning, girls were not permitted to have formal education, but had to get trained in domestic chores and rituals. The next stage of a Brahmin's life is permitted after samavartan which literally means retiring from the teacher's abode to one's home. Married life is allowed only after samavartan. Though annaprasa, upanayana, of Nambudiris matched with those of other Brahmins, samavartan of a Nambudiri is peculiar.⁴⁴ Usually samavartan was observed on the eve of the marriage, here samavartan was observed immediately after the studies which can be interpreted as the termination of brahmacharya and the younger Nambudiris could enter Sambandham.

43. Barbosa records the Samskara of Upananyana, Samavartan, Brahmacharya prevalent among the Nambudiris of 16th century. Barbosa - A Description of the Coast of East Africa and Malabar - London - 1888, Vol.2, PP.33-34. Also see Narayanan.P Towards Understanding Nambudiri Samavatan, Paper presented at the Chennai Session of Indian History Congress, 1996. The Samskaras include Annaprasmam, Upanayanam, Samavartan, Marriage and last rites.

44. Narayanan, P.op.cit.

The nature of education imparted to the children was more related to religious ideas than the realistic side of life and the day-do-day rituals only emphasised the need to be a part of temple and its activities. This naturally led them to a distance from social realities and since they were initiated to a world of beliefs and God, a humanitarian outlook did not develop, nor did they try to observe the situation outside the community. Thus customs and rituals determined their life style from birth to death. The morning prayers, bath, rituals, food all were prescribed to be followed strictly in the name of God. The Nambudiri women also had to observe routine chores like bath, prayers and remain confined to their world of kitchen. They remained in seclusion and while going out had to cover themselves and carry an umbrella. Chastity was very important and insisted on. They could leave the illams only to a temple or relative's house accompanied by dasis or vrishalis. They were convinced of the duties of a mother and wife and were taught to regard husband as a noble person. Widow marriage was totally denied. Though Nambudiri men could enter into marital relationship with women of lower caste namely Nairs, Nambudiri women could marry only Nambudiri Brahmins. Moral code expected from women was very rigid. The rigid morality code imposed on women was part of the obvious attempt

to regulate the purity of the progeny.⁴⁵ / Regarding the family structure of Nambudiris, they were patrilineal and followed primogeniture with only the eldest son allowed to marry within the caste. This eldest son called Moosamburi could marry three or four Nambudiri women who were brought to his illam. He could also have temporary liaisons with Nair women.⁴⁶ the younger brothers called Aphans entered into sambandham with Nair women. Sambandham means connection. While this was a virtual marriage for the lady, it was just a convenient, temporary liaison for the man. The children of this hypergamous relationship had no claim over the father or his property. the child could not even touch his father for fear of pollution. The Brahmin ideology had not failed to convince the Nairs that accepting Brahmaswam was a sin. This was a clear move to protect the property without partition or disintegration. The property of the Moosamburi passed on to his eldest son.

Rigid conventions were practised by this community. Thus the right bestowed only to the eldest Nambudiri to marry from his own caste had other effects and consequences. Many

45. K.N.Ganesh, "Polity and Society in Medieval Kerala", in New Dimensions in South Indian History, Calicut, 1996, P.116.

46. For a detailed information about the Nambudiri family structure. See Kalathleen Gough, "Nayars, Central Kerala" in Schneider and Gough (ed.) Matrilineal Kinship, Berkeley, 1962, PP.319-20.

Nambudiri women lived and died as spinsters because all could not get Nambudiri husbands. They could marry only once while men could practice Adivedanam or polygamy and this caused two or three wives living in the same illam in a spirit of competition trying to satisfy the husband. Old Nambudiris married young girls which ended in the girls becoming widows at a young age. The life of a widow was more pitiable and full of restrictions. Marriage was fixed more for convenience and benefits like dowry.⁴⁷

A glaring contradiction in the social practices was, while Nambudiri men indulged in a loose life pattern, rigid restrictions were imposed on women, their intelligence, free thinking and independence. This reflected even in the dressing pattern and ornaments. As noted earlier while going out, they had to cover their whole body with a shawl⁴⁸ and hide their

47. (1) The status of Nambudiri women was highlighted by Marriage Commission Report, 1891, Para 21, P.9, Legislative Department Proceedings, June 1896, National Archives of India.

(2) V.T.Bhattathiripad : 1.Karmavipakam, Trissur, 1980
2. Kaneerum Kinavum, Trissur, 1979.

(3) Yogakshema and Unni Nambudiri project the silent suffering of Nambudiri women.

48. Puthappum Kudayum (Shawl and Umbrella) See Illustration.

face and head with an umbrella. They were not to wear gold ornaments except a mangalasutra and could wear only brass or bronze bangles. Gold jewellery was worn only during occasions. Their world was confined to the interior kitchen and interest confined to daily prayers and rituals.⁴⁹ At every step of their life, they had to bear negative instructions like they should not talk loudly, should not go out, should not talk with boys etc. Thus from childhood itself, they were made to realise the distinction between boys and girls. This distinction grew by their age.

Nambudiri family structure and inheritance enabled the community to protect the property without alienation or partition. Thus impartibility of the property empowered the eldest son of the family who only had the right of marrying from the community. The younger Nambudiris were called aphans. These aphans followed all caste rules, restrictions but not in marital relationships. They indulged in a loose sexual behaviour since they had no economic liability towards the wife or children. Nothing prevented them from entering into any

49. Yogakshema, projects the age old restrictions an antarjanams

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number of such relationships. At the same time, in their own houses, they were not treated properly. Though they had to perform the necessary rituals and pujas, or undergo upanayana, samavartan, learning of scriptures, their status in their own family was pitiable and he was virtually a stranger in his own house, having only the right of food. He had no accessibility to the interior. He had no family nor right of property. His exgamous relationship did not provide him a secure family atmosphere and had no right of assertion. The role and status of an aphan can well be imagined, when one of the activists of the reformatory movement observed that one can take the birth of a cat or dog but not that of aphan.⁵⁰ In fact, it was the economic imperative rather than the urge to remain in spiritual pursuit throughout one's life which forced the community to deprive the male members other than the eldest one, the privilege of caste marriage. Marriage was fixed only after the horoscope of the bride and bridegroom match. The marriage was called veli or penkoda meaning giving away the girl. It was not important whether the boy and the girl saw each other. The wedding ceremony was conducted at the bride's house. The bridegroom enters the house in a special attire called "Thattudukkuka" and keeping a starched cloth over his shoulders. He holds a bamboo stiff in his right hand and a

50. V.T.Bhattathiripad, Kaneerum Kinaum, Trissur, 1979, P.47

string tied to his right arm. The bride had to cover herself completely with a shawl and only the hand is seen outside.⁵¹ she had to keep an arrow and mirror in her hands. They together had to take seven steps forward where she is stopped by her husband by holding her feet and then other rituals follow. Marriage continued for five days. The next stage was taking the bride to the bridegroom's house and it was called kudiveppu. Here also some rituals follow by making the bride sit at the centre in the courtyard and only antarjanams conduct this. Formal ceremonies were conducted during pregnancy and the birth of a child. Nambudiris observe pollution for ten days on the death of a relative.⁵² The daily routine, custom and ideology of the Nambudiri life was determined by tradition and religion.

While unequal relationship existed between castes, , there was unequal status inside the family set up of Nambudiris. As discussed earlier, the identity of a woman was not at all thought of. When a wide world was open for men, the place for women was the kitchen or the interiors of the house. Her every move was curtailed by quoting certain puranic slokas.

51. See the illustration

52 Bhaskaranunni.P - Pathonpatham Noottanddile Keralam, Trissur , 1988 - PP.65 - 67.

instance, a woman should not dress up or wear ornaments for fear or infertility. Separate codes existed for eating or sleeping. A wife should eat after husband eats, she should sleep only after he sleeps and wake up before he gets up and such women are the ideal women. Sita, Savithri and Sheelavati were the perpetual images for women.

A curious practice followed by this community is called Smartha Vichram. This is a trial of a Nambudiri woman suspected of adultery. This was conducted even on a light suspicion. It is noted that between 1893-1913, there were four such trials.⁵³ An elaborate arrangement was made and a council for this purpose was organised with the sanction from the local chieftain. Thus Smarthas⁵⁴ held the trial or enquiry. Smarthavichram had six stages (1) Dasivichram ((2) to keep the sadhanam at a room called Anchampura (3) Smarthavicharam (4) Swaroopamchollal (5) Udakavichchedam (6) Shuddabhojanam.⁵⁵ Through this ordeal, if any one was accused by the Sadhanam, he

53. K.C.Narayanan, V.T.yude Sampurna Krithikal, Kottayam, 1997 P.16, Kanippayyur Sankaran Nambudiripad, Ente Smaranakal, Kunnankulam, 1963, Vol.I, PP.116-129. He says that five smartha vichrams were conducted during his period.

54. Smarthas means those who know smrithis.

55. Sadhanam means a thing. Hereafter she is not called in the feminine gender.

had to undergo the trial called Suchindram kaimokku. The Nambudiri woman if suspected of adultery was questioned and her dasis or vrishalis interrogated. At this stage, if the suspicion was confirmed, the antarjanam or sadhanam was kept under custody. Thus the first stage was called Dasivicharam, when she is kept under custody, distancing her from her relatives, at a lonely place. Even her relatives were not permitted to enter temples or participate in any social function. Next is the smarthavicharam.⁵⁶ A committee consisting of a Smartha, a representative of the area called Akakkovil, Purakkovil or the king or his representative, two mimamsakas or juries conduct the smarthavicharam.⁵⁷ Sadhanam was questioned till they got evidence about men who had contacts with her. The sadhanam who was separated from her family and kept under restraint was continuously questioned and many times harassed through several methods like depriving food and water for many days, rolling up the accused in a piece of mat or letting in snakes inside the room or threatening or assurance of a peaceful future.⁵⁸ In any case, what the samarthas

56 Kanipayyoor Sankaran Nambudiripad, Ente Smaranakal, Kunnankulam, 1963 Vol. III PP.118-127.

57. The details of this interrogation are provided in Ente Samaranakal by Kanipayyoor Sankaran Nambudiripad.

58. Logan provided a lengthy description of this trial in his Malabar Manual which was published in 1887, New Delhi 1989, PP.121-126

intended was a confession of violating the prescribed moral code. The verdict was given after a brahmin boy, a pattar declares the names of men with whom she was involved. This is called swaroopam chollal. Next is udhaka vichchedam. Udhaka means water, vichchedam means breaking or cutting the bond. Now she is deprived of all her caste privileges, her umbrella is taken from her, and the members of the assembly clap their hands which is called keikottal⁵⁹, the relatives of the sadhanam like her husband and children are required to perform certain rituals like kottubali, the last rites done for a dead relative. With this, she was excommunicated, driven out, and for her family, she was virtually dead. This Kottubali is symbolic of her being banished from her illom, desam and region. The last stage is Shuddabhojanam. This is a feast conducted by the illom for all relatives and neighbours. This was to make it known that the relatives of the sadhanam have been accepted by others.

It is relevant to note here that the trial was usually conducted strictly till the woman was excommunicated but there were a number of escape routes for men involved in the affair.⁶⁰ The smarthas had the authority to decide whether they

59. Kanippayyur - op.cit

60. Alangot Leelakrishnan, Oru Smartha Vicharathinte Nizhilavazhikalil in Mathrubhumi Weekly, 30th November 1997, Calicut

should be punished and to what extent. There were exceptional cases where the innocence of the antharjanam was proved. In such cases, she was accepted into her family, illom and community. This is called Azhivuchollal.⁶¹ This sort of trial raises the contradiction within the community about the moral code prescribed for men and women separately. While Numbudiri men indulged in a loose life pattern, could have sapatnis and sambandhams, severe restrictions were imposed on women. Their status was inferior, they were never expected to have any identity and to have a voice and the rigid moral code was to ensure that they should be the procreators of Nambudiri progeny. The most sensational smarthavichram was conducted in 1905.⁶² Thattri, daughter of Kalpakassery Ashtamurthy Nambudiri was married to Kuriyedathu Raman Nambudiri. She was a ravishing beauty, proficient in smrithis, vedas, music and kathakali. Her neighbour Kandanchata Vasudeva Nambudiri submitted a report to the Raja of Kochi to order a trial on her since she had crossed all the limits of chastity and dignity.

61. Kanipayyur, op.cit., P.129. He records that of the five smartha Vichrams conducted during his life time, one ended in Azhivuchollal.

62. (1) Alangot Leelakrishnan, op.cit.

(2) Kanipayyur, op.cit., P.129

(3) V.T.Bhattathiripad, Karmavipakam, Trissur, 1988, P.626

(4) K.C.Narayanan, V.T.yude Sampurna Krithikal, Kottayam, 1997 P.15.

A trial was ordered, she was kept under strict surveillance and protection. The trial continued for 40 days. It has to be presumed that she was prepared for such a trial and she disclosed the names of 64 men with proper evidence like the identification or mark of each man. She went to the extent of challenging smarthas whether to disclose the name of the 65th man and showed a ring through vrishali. It is seen that the council hurriedly stopped the interrogation, excommunicated her and the 64 men. The point of significance here is, Thatri was single handed, raising the voice of protest, challenging the orthodox, dominant chamvinistic male section and was trying to break the age old hypocritic mask of Nambudiri men who conveniently interpreted and practised the moral and ethical codes but expected strict chastity from their women. The time factor is also significant that till 1908, the Nambudiris had no organisation to look into their problems concerning the community. Thatri is a symbol of the rotten situation in which the Nambudiri women lived. V.T. Bhattathiripad, a pioneer of Nambudiri reform movement remarks that Thatri should be considered as having started a social revolt and a revolt against the male members.⁶³ There is reason to believe that Thatri made deliberate plans to collect evidence of men who

63. V.T. Bhattathiripad, op.cit, P.626.

were involved and she organised this with the help of her dasis. Though she initiated a break boldly on a personal basis, her trial created a sensation and a wide publicity of the treatment meted out to women of the highest caste. For, we see a movement in the coming days to better the situation of women and most of the issues which emerged were concerning women.

The establishment of a uniform judicial system gradually put a stop to such regional, social ordeals. Another unscrupulous practice to be noted here is that many Nambudiri women died as spinsters since it was not possible to get Nambudiri husband for all. When such women died, all the rituals related to marriage were performed on the dead body because it was believed that a soul of a spinster or virgin should not enter the other world.⁶⁴ The parents of the dead woman arranged a Nambudiri for this. Thus the body of a woman was not spared. The variations within the Nambudiri community is striking. Though caste differences centered around even the

64. (1) Cochin Census Report 1875 - 76. P.35

(2) Adoor Ramachandran "Nambudirimaruteyidayile Nilavilarinna Oru Paishachikacharam" in Keralacharithrathile Chila Vismrithadhayangal, Kottayam, 1973, PP.137-142.

lowest of castes and the huts, within the castes, there were sharp differences in the style of dressing, jewellery, hair style, distance pollution and dining. The dress pattern specified the caste status. Generally, Malayalis preferred white dress. Nambudiris wore a dhoti and a towel over the shoulders.⁶⁵ But when performing rituals and prayers, they had to wear the dhoti in a style called "Thattu". They tied their hair as a tuft in front. Nambudiri women had to cover themselves when going out or practice gosha. Among them, Adhyan women had to wear their dhoti in a style called 'kolottu vechudukkal' while Asyan women's style was called 'okkuvechudukka'.⁶⁶ No woman covered their chest.⁶⁷ Even jewellery signified the caste status while Adhyan antarjanams wore brass bangles, Asyan antarjanams wore bronze bangles. The necklaces and chains varied. Adhyan women wore "Malathi thali", Asyan wore "Kamazthi thali" The

65. See Illustration

66. See Illustration

67. Nirmala, daughter of Kanipayyur Sankaran Nambudiripad and daughter-in-law of Kurumathur Naranayanan Nambudiripad told this writer that till 1946, she had seen antarjanams without covering their chest at Trichambaram, Taliparamba.

ear stud called "Toda , chirru or marakoradu⁴ was worn by women but the size of the stud reflected the relative aristocratic status of women. The Adhyan antarjanam was addressed as Tampuratti or Kunjathamma by Nairs and their daughter as makal or molothamma, Asyan antarjanas were called Athol and daughters as Kuttikavu or Kunjikavu. Generally all high caste women tied their hair on the left side which was regarded as an aristocratic style. Inter-dining was not permitted for Adhyan and Asyan. If an Adhyan antarjanam was married to an Asyan family, she was not permitted to dine with the rest of the Adhyan antarjanans. The house of Adhyan was called mana while Asyan was called illom. Thus an order was perpetuated not only relating to different castes but between and among different sub castes of a caste on the basis of their social rank.

Nambudiris developed a variety of interests. They pointed out the significance of each food item, its taste and recorded these in slokas. They formulated a system where they spoke of how a feast was to be organised, how to lay the banana leaf, how and where to serve different dishes.⁶⁸ They

68. Food was usually served on leaves. For details see Bhaskaranunni, op.cit., P.16

It is seen that at the end of the 19th century, a uniformity and order was accepted by most communities regarding feasts like what to prepare for feasts, how to serve etc.

regarded cow as sacred and useful and went to the extent of observing ten days pular or pollution on the delivery of a cow. Nambudiris were strict vegetarians and included milk, ghee and butter in their daily menu. They observed regular fasts on Ekadasi, full moon day, Sivaratri and these were regarded necessary for purifying the body. Equally important for them was oil bath. Ayurvedic system of treatment and rejuvenation was followed by most of them. Nambudiris contributed to the architectural style of Kerala and a peculiar style developed here called Nalukettu. Many of these ideas have been included in their works like Shilpiratnam, Vastuvidya, Manava vastulakshanam, Markandeyam, Kasyapeeyam.⁶⁹ In this context, it is interesting to note that house of different castes looked different. For example, the house of a Nair should never be equal to Nambudiri and the furniture and utensils used by each caste was different and related to caste status.⁷⁰ Even the right of using tiles for house was limited. Only temples, kovilakams and manas could have tiles. Thus rigid rules determined every aspect of life and occupation. There was no flexibility or relaxation in the occupation followed by each caste. To this was added the various customs and behaviour

69. Bhaskaranunni, op.cit., P.37

70. Ibid.

pattern of each caste. Thus the culture of each caste was different and distinct from one another. Apart from the variations within the community and among communities, social identity of men and women differed. Female identity was neglected. They had the traditional roles of being a daughter, wife, mother and grandmother. The role models were the much discussed Sati, Savithri, Sheelavati. The Smarthavicharam or Abdukkaladosham is the relevant example of the high degree of chastity expected from women. In spite of a number of restrictions on them, there were some moments of joy for them, when some celebrations were exclusively for them, whatever was the intention. In the Malayalam month Danu on the Thiruvathira day,⁷¹ women took fast to propitiate Lord siva. Anatarjanams and Nair women celebrated this in a grand manner. Preparations started seven days prior to the Thiruvathira. Women take bath in the pond, enjoy, singing songs, beating the water and making loud sounds, which is called Thudi, dressup, adorn themselves, put flowers, swing and sing, drink tender coconut water and eat fruits except rice. They were not supposed to sleep at night and put dasapushpam including flowers of

71. Bhaskaranunni, op.cit., P.54

koduveli which flower at midnight.⁷² Thus they had a celebration for themselves, though the intention was to have the blessing of Siva for a happy married life. In the same manner in the month of Meenam, women perform prayers and rituals to Siva and Kama. Lamps were lighted in coconut shells and made to float on water. In North Malabar, for nine days, girls and women perform Kama pooja. A small platform was raised on which flowers were kept and rituals done. It was a firm belief that Kama, the God of romance should bless young girls to have a successful married life. Ganapati pujas were also conducted by women. This was a prayer to get married. Sweets were prepared and served to children around. Antarjanans had to observe fast on specific days of the month like Ekadasi, Pournami, Amavasi and Mondays. The Monday fast was called Somavaravritam obviously to have a long married life. Even widows had certain obligations and had to be on fast. They could eat after the fast only after giving a feast and dhakshina to a brahmachari. This is called Iruthoottu.⁷³

72. Dasapushpam means ten flowers - They are Poovam Kurunthil, Muyal Chevi, Karuka, Nilappana, Kanchunni, Vishnukranthi, Cheroola, Thiruthali, Uzhinja, Mukkutti. It was believed that these flowers bring prosperity

73. Bhaskarannuni - op.cit., PP-556-557

When antarjanan was pregnant, functions called pumsavanam was conducted with the sole prayer of begetting a son. This was followed by seemantham. The husband also had to observe deeksha by not shaving during this period. When the child was born, the horoscope was made. On the 12th day, the naming ceremony was held. In the fourth month, the child was formally taken out of the house, which was called Nishkramanam. Annaprasmam or giving rice for the first time was during the six month. In the third month or fifth month, the hair was removed. Upanayanam was held in the seventh or eighth year. In the 16th year, samavartan was conducted. Till that the child had to complete the vedic studies, leading the life of a brahmachari. After Samavartan, he could marry.⁷⁴ When a Nambudiri boy passed through all these stages, a girl was not permitted to study, she had to learn the domestic duties.

The marriage ceremony was elaborate and ritualistic and extended for five days. While a man could have three or four wives at the same time, a Nambudiri woman could marry only once and widow marriage was not permitted. Only if the eldest Nambudiri could not marry or did not have children, the aphan was permitted to have a caste marriage. This was called

74. P.Narayanan Towards Understanding Samarvartan, Paper presented at the Chennai Session of IHC, 1997.

Parivedanam. One aspect which distinguished a Nambudiri widow from other Brahmin widows was that she was not required to remove her hair on the death of her husband. The life of a widow was pathetic since she could not participate in any function and was treated separate.⁷⁵ On the death of a relative, the Nambudiris observed ten days ritual pollution.

Socially the Nambudiris had a comfortable position in the society and culturally they had a distinct identity. But economic disparities prevailed among them. Not all were rich or prosperous. The sub caste differences also prevailed. In spite of their social prominence and practice of distance pollution⁷⁶ they entered into marital relationship with Nairs using an ideology. This social problem is different to comprehend but there are a number of aspects which made this relationship possible for centuries. An exception to patrilineal character of Nambudiris was the Payyannur Brahmin or Nambudiris who practised matriliney. They are called Tirumumpus. they are

75. See M.R.Bhattathiripad M.R.B yude Upanyasangal, Mathrubhumi Kozhikode, 1988 P.171

76. There are regularly graded degrees of distance within which one caste pollutes another. A Nair should not touch a Nambudiri, A Thiyya had to keep at least 32 feet away from him and a Cheruma 64 feet. Adrian.C.Mayer, Land and Society in Malabar, Bombay 1952, P.26.

considered inferior by Nambudiri Bhrahmins. They could not conduct the rituals at temples and for this had to employ other Nambudiri priests. They were not treated socially equal to any Nambudiri or could dine together. Nambudiri men married Tirumumpu women but women were not given in marriage to Tirumumpus. This clearly shows the restriction maintained between the two. The Nambudiri male's marriage was equated to Nambudiri- Nair sambahnadam he did not consider it a caste marriage.⁷⁷ The daughters and their children keep the family name and inherit the property. The senior male is only a manager. But they do not follow Nair customs like thaliketukalyanam or tirandukuli. They wear the sacred thread keep the front tuft, follow the daily routines of Nambudiris.

Nair

Nairs were Sudras, According to caste prescriptions, the lower caste should not approach the Nambudiris but a Nair could see him but not touch. The number of Nairs were numerically higher than Nambudiris.⁷⁸ The term Nair has been generalized and they were seen as a group of nobility born to protect other communities. But they were never a monolithic

77. Father Puthenkulam, Marriage and Family in Kerala, 1977 P.189.

78. Census of India, 1891, 1901, 1911.

egalitarian group. There were among them a number of sub castes or lineages. There were local chiefs, washerman and oilmongers among them. Nor were all Nairs equally wealthy. From very large landlords, they ranged through moderate landholders down to the poorest of them (who) are day laboureres.⁷⁹ This suggests the existence of a number of sub-castes in the Nair community and in 1891, there were roughly 130 sub-castes and there were restrictions in inter-dining.⁸⁰ some of the major sub-castes were Nair, Menon, Menoki, Muppil Nayar, Pada Nayar, Kuruppu, Kaimal, Panikkar, Kiriyaath Nair, Kidavu, Kartavu, Eradi, Nedungadi, Vallodi, Mannadiyar, Manavalan etc. It has been generally observed that Nairs were assigned the role of fighting and protecting the land. some of them were warriors.⁸¹ Some were supervisors or overseers or

79. Robin Jeffrey- Decline of Nayar Dominance, Delhi, 1976, P.14

80. (1) Census of India, 1891, See Thurston Castes and Tribes of South India, Vol.V, Madras, 1909, PP.296 - 297.

(2) K.Kannan Nair - The Nayars - Malabar Quarterly Review Vol.I, No.2 Ernakulam 1902, P.229.

(3) Fuller.C.J. Nayars today - Cambridge, 1976, P.34.

81. Barbosa, op.cit.P.37, F.Fawcett, Nayars of Malabar, Madras 1901, P.187, Fawcett, Thurston, Kannan Nair, further give the list of some sub castes. Nairs had the duties of eye hand and order which was believed to have been bestowed on them by Cheraman Perumal See H. Gundert (ed) Keralolpathi, Mangalore, 1890, P.14 Varthema Considers them like the nobility among the Europeans. He writes the second are the naeri who are the same as the gentle folk among us and they are obliged to bear sword and shield or bows or lances. The Travels of Ludo Vico De Varthema, London.1888, PP.141-143.

kanakkars. Each sub caste had a distinct duty to perform. It cannot be presumed that a whole community followed the same profession. Nairs had matrilineal joint family and inheritance. Matrilineal means descent or inheritance through mother. In Malayalam it is termed as marumakkathayam which can be interpreted as bestowing one's property to the nephews and nieces. It remained a concept because the whole property or family house belonged to the females and there was no partition. All the children of the female members lived together in the tarawad. The term 'matriarchal' often related to Nairs as the characteristic of Nair tarawad is also not correct because in the matrilineal set up, the trustee or the custodian of all matters relating to tarawad was a male member called karanavan who was regarded in high esteem. Even he had no right of alienating the immovable property of the family or the right of executing partition.

Matriarchy means female dominance and inheritance through women. Here though there was inheritance through women, there was no female dominance. In the Nair family set up, women obeyed and respected male members and karanavan supervised and decided the socio-economic matters of the tarawad. The matrilineal character provided a singular status

in the social sphere. The family unit of Nairs called tarawad was also an economic unit. In the traditional atmosphere, this joint family and house ensured a stable life with several customs governing it and the Nair tarawad was a unique institution where a harmony existed. At a time when needs and requirements were limited to clothing, food and entertainments at home, this joint family provided a sense of security and confidence. The accumulation of joint property rather of a centralised character ensured the maintenance of everyone and agriculture was the main occupation. Thus the tarawad symbolised the needs and aspirations of every member. Sometimes a tarawad was very unwieldy with large number of members. The children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters and sisters' children of a ~~an~~cestress lived in this unit. Every Nair took pride to be known in his tarawad name. Every member was born there lived there and cremated there. So a whole life span was completely related to the tarawad set up.

The tarawad had three structural principles (1) matrilineal descent (2) exogamous rule which means that Nairs considered the members of their mother's tarawad as related to them by blood. Marriage between members of the tarawad even distantly related was incest because the couple were related

by blood.⁸² Cross-cousin marriage was permitted. The members of the tarawad observed ritual pollution called balaima for 15 days on birth and pula on death for 41 days. The third principle was the impartibility of the tarawad. Generally tarawad was never divided. But when tarawad grew unmanageable, it was divided into tavazhi.⁸³ As noted earlier, this matrilineal unit had a male as the head of the family. He was the custodian of all property and in charge of the day to day administration of the tarawad. The term karanavan literally means man with responsibility and authority. He was succeeded by the next senior male member to whatever branch of the family he may belong. The karanavan was legally responsible for the welfare of all tarawad members and meet the requirements of every member in an impartial way. He had no right to alienate the immovable property for the family without the consent of all members, at least of all adult male or female members. Even the self-acquired property should merge in the tarawad property. Partition of the family property could be effected only if the tarawad became unwieldy and all the grown up members consented

82. M.S.A. Rao, Social Change in Malabar, Bombay 1957, P.75

83. For example Kavalappara Tarawad, Tay means mother and vazhi means way. A group of persons consisting of the female line was organized as Tavazhi. In this, there was no further possession of the same property but pollution on birth and death was observed.

to it. It was in every sense, a corporate body. No one could call for an account nor claim an individual share and the karanavan had to exercise an absolute discretion in matters of maintenance. The anantaravans or junior male members of tarawad, whether they were soldiers or tenants enhanced the income of the tarawad property and had the right of maintenance. But no one could ask for an individual share even if there was disparity in the earnings of different members.⁸⁴ A man's self acquired property merged with tarawad property after his death. Even the gifts to the members of a tarawa became the tarawad property. Thus instead of an individual satisfaction, the members of a tarawad pursued the interests of their family house and there are instances where tarawads had acquired a lot of property.⁸⁵ The family papers of Koodali Tahzath veedu shows that because of karanavan, tarawad flourished. Karananvan was entitled only to maintenance out of the joint property and must in no way alienate their trust properties without the consent of all members of the tarawad. A Nair tarawad is regarded as a matrilineal descent group which acts as a unit in respect of ceremonial as well as property matters and has its head the karanavan. The line of

84. Partition was rare and ocured only when the property of the tarawad become unmanageable. Only tavazhi divisions were permitted. No one had the right to alienate the property of the tarawad. See T.K.Gopala Panikkar, Malabar and its Folk, New Delhi, 1983, P.19.

85. M.G.S.Narayanan, op.cit., P.88

authority runs through men but group placement runs through women.⁸⁶ The central and northern part of Malabar is well known for Kalari trained people. The suicide squads called chavers were from the Nair Community.⁸⁷ Some prominent tarawads had their own Kavus. For example Koodali Tarawad had their Kavus.⁸⁸ This type of kavus was the traditional Teyyam shrine which was later modified by the Brahminical influence and adopted rituals in that pattern. The Teyyam cult embraced almost all castes, classes and divisions of the Hindu Community on the region. Thus tarawad functioned as a unit of land control, social relations and the prominent tarawads maintained marital relations among such tarawads only. For instance, the notable tarawads of Malabar like Kalliat, Chandroth, Vengayil, Echikanath, Chirakkara, Varikkan, Panmeleri, Koroth, Achikanath maintained relationship through marriages. Thus a Nair tarawad fits into the definition of a descent group which is a decision making group.⁸⁹ Tarawad holds property jointly, acts as a unit with respect to ceremonial as well as property matters and assembles on certain ceremonial occasions.

86. Schneider, "The Distinctive Features of Matrilineal Descent Groups in Matrilineal Kinship, Ed. By David M. Schneider and Kathleen Gough, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962, P.4.

87. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai Studies in Kerala History, 1971, Trivandrum, PP.294 - 291.

88. K.K.N.Kurup, Koodali Granthavari, Calicut University, 1995 Koodali Tarawad had a large number of holdings, dry, wet and gardens.

89. Schneider, op.cit., P.7

The controversy regarding the origin of matriliney in Kerala has not been settled so far. The broad theory of Frederich Engles and Morgan that every society was once matrilineal in the early stages of human development and mother right was overthrown as wealth increased because it made the man's position more important and man took command of the house and he wanted his children to inherit the property, does not explain the situation in Kerala. Many consider the matrilineal descent as the original systems⁹⁰ and the primitive one. In so far as group marriage prevailed, descent could only be proved through the mother and thus the female line was recognised. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai tries to establish that Nairs who were patrilineal, switched over to matriliney because of the compelling situation after the chera-chola war in the 10-11th century.⁹¹ But it is not convincing to accept that a whole community made a sudden shift to a peculiar social pattern just

90. (1) Frederich Engles, origin of the Family, Private Property and State, Peking, 1978, PP.62-65.

(2) Mc Lennan, Studies in Ancient History, London, 1876, PP.88-124. Mc Lennan recognised three kinds of marriages namely polygamy, polyandry and monogamy.

(3) Also see Morgan Ancient society, London, 1877 mentioned that group marriages prevalent everywhere at sometime.

(4) See Westermarck, History of Human Marriage, London, Vol.I, 1921 contradicts Engles by arguing that if mother right had everywhere proceeded father right, we might expect to find it particularly prevalent among the lowest savages.

91. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, Studies in Kerala History, Trivandrum, 1971, P.323.

because of the consequence of a war. M.G.S.Narayanan's view sounds more convincing when he says that it is more logical to assume that elements of tribal matriarchy survived in Kerala even during the Sangam Age and the Brahman elite of the new settlements accepting mistresses from the native gave a new lease of life to the institution. The emergence of a class of people born of Aryan Brahmin fathers and Dravidian mothers could have formed the nucleus of the Nayar sub caste. The anxiety of the Brahmin settlers to keep their family property undivided could have led them to encourage younger male members take more and more to this form of concubinage.⁹²

Nair women after marriage remained in their tarawads and their children grew with them. Nairs followed different forms of marriage existing in Malabar namely Pudamuri, vidaram kayaruka or usham porukka and sambandham or kidakkara kalyanam.⁹³ Pudamuri was a costly ceremony. The marriage day was fixed after the examination of horoscope of bride and bridegroom by an astrologer and on the day fixed for marriage, the bridegroom proceeded to the house of the bride after sunset

92. M.G.S.Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, Calicut, 1996, P.148 and P.151, Manorama, 11th May 1996.

93. Malabar Marriage Commission Report 1891, Legislative Department, National Archives of India, New Delhi, reports these different forms of marriages.

with a number of friends and relatives. There amidst ceremonies, he presented new cloth to the bride which is known as Pudava. Usham Porukka or Vidaram Kayaruga was celebrated on a smaller scale. No cloth was presented to the bride. The husband visit the wife's house and was not permitted to take her to this house unless and until he celebrates the regular pudamuri ceremony. In sambandham or kidakkara Kalyanan, money was presented instead of cloth. When pudamuri was conducted the wife could shift to her husband's house and in North Malabar, along with the visiting husband's custom, women had the practice of living with the husband.⁹⁴ The insistence on Pudamuri speaks of a regular system of marriage among Nairs and permanent unions of husband and wife though divorce and remarriage and widow marriage were sanctioned by custom.

Sambandham means connection. The Nambudiris entered into sambandham with Nair women. As noted earlier, only the eldest Nambudiri of a family could marry a Nambudiri woman and the younger brothers could enter into temporary relationship with Nair Women.⁹⁵ This marriage was considered a virtual marriage by the women but for the Nambudiri, it was not so. Though this had the status of a hypergamous marriage, the issue of this connection neither inherited any property nor had claim

94. C.J.Fuller, Nayars Today, Cambridge, 1976, P.141

95. See details of Nambudiri Customs.

to it. The child belong to the mothers caste. A marriage usually warrants the hope of protection, maintenance of the children and wife by the husband. But this was not in the vocabulary of Nambudiris. The eldest Nambudiris also could enter into such temporary relationship with Nair women. Nothing could restrict them from changing the first wife or having liaisons with a number of them. It had no specific pattern or duration. This type of marital relationships poses a number of questions. Nairs who were sudras regarded it a prestige to have Nambudiri husband and to bear their children. Though the Nambudiri father could not touch his children because pollution existed between them, still the vague credit existed that the child was of a Nambudiri. Though it is difficult to explain this unequal partnership, part of the answer can be found in the land tenure system.⁹⁶ Other aspects could be found in a strong ideology propagated by Nambudiris. It is interesting to note this peculiar social behaviour of Nambudiris who ranked high in the caste hierarchy and who observed distance pollution with all other castes, had marital connection with a lower caste. At the same time, the Nambudiri women or Nair women were never permitted to marry men of lower caste.⁹⁷ While Nambudiri

96. See next chapter on Land Tenures. Sambandham was first noted by Friar Jordanns who visited Malabar in the 14th century.

97. Barbosa records that if a low caste man touches a Nair Woman, he is killed, op.cit., P.46.

marriage was totally regulated by rituals and religious specifications, the Nair-Nambudiri sambandham had no such formalities.

Nairs have always been equated with marumakkathayam, sambandham and polyandry. Nairs were in theory and practice, matrilineal. But it is doubtful whether all Nair women had Nambudiri husbands. Nambudiri formed a small portion of the population of Malabar and they were prominent more in South Malabar. The matrilineal character often mistaken as matriarchal has invested the Nair women with considerable freedom, and enjoyment. Nair women wore a mundu, did not cover their chest, adorned themselves with ornaments and flowers.⁹⁸ But it is doubtful whether Nair girls had freedom or option to choose their husband or discard the marriage connection.⁹⁹ Sambandhams were fixed according to the discretion of the karanavan whether the Nambudiri was old or young, having Nambudiri wives or not, rich or poor. But there is reason to believe that Nair women had relative freedom to dress, adorn ornaments and flowers and had no purdah system. Widow marriage

8. Nair had peculiar jewellery

99. See Indulekha by O.Chandu Menon, 1889, where Kallianikutty, a cousin of Indulekha was given in marriage without even telling her.

was permitted unlike their contemporary antarjanams. Even here, matriliney appears a superficial garb because Nair women neither held the property nor had the right to individual share, alienation or disposal.

The subordination was obvious and they had to be content with the biological role of child bearing and the emotional role of child rearing. The shelter called tarawad protected them.

A natural corollary to sambandham was the assumption that Nair women were polyandrous. It has been widely believed that Nair women were polyandrous.¹⁰⁰ Most of the foreign travellers who had been to Malabar coast refer to this custom. They recorded that if a Nair was in a ladies' chamber, he leaves his stick or sword at the door and that others should know that

100.(1) Barbosa - op.cit. Vol.II, P.47

(2) Ceaser Frederick- Voyage of Master into East Indias and beyond the Indus - Vol.5 London 1927-P.394.

(3) Buchanan - A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, canara and Malabar - 2 Vols. Madras, 1870 P.173.

(4) Hamilton - Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindusthan and the Adjacent countries, Delhi - 1921., P.173. Most of the foreign visitors believed that Nairs practised polyandry.

(5) Indian Travels of Thevenot and careri - Indian Records series - s.sen (ed), Delhi, 1949, P.122.

the place is taken up and the custom is established all over Malabar.¹⁰¹ But Logan, Dr.A.Ayyappan, K.Kannan Nair hold that Nairs were not polyandrous.¹⁰² It is difficult to throw any light on the origin of polyandry. Polyandry can be termed as a plurality of husbands, acknowledged by society and an understanding among all husbands for mutual agreement. But this does not fit in the case of Nairs. Nair girls married to Nair men might have under the compelling ideological and economic situation, surrendered to Nambudiris. Regarding the customs in the ancient and medieval periods, the tradition bound the Nair women to satisfy the Brahmin who wished to have her. The two traditional works, Keralolpathi and Kerala Mahatmyam laid down that the Nair women need not be chaste.¹⁰³ The fact that any woman who gains the displeasure of a brahmin by

101.S.Sen (ed) - op.cit

102.(1) Willian Logan op.cit, P.164, He says Nair woman are a chaste as their neighbours .

(2) A.Ayyappan - "Nayar Polyandry in Man India, 1932, P.32

(3) K.Kannan Nair "The Nayars in Malabar Quarterly Review Vol.I- Ernakulam 1902, P.263.

103.These two works were quoted to justify Nair-Nambudiri alliance.

rejecting him suffered drastic consequences is true.¹⁰⁴ The mere indefiniteness of Nambudiri love might have compelled the Nair woman to have permanent alliance with the Nair husband. It was also possible that Nairs who occupied better socio-economic status had contacts with many girls. Tacholi Othenan, the hero of Tacholi ballads which form a part of Vakakkan Pattukal or Northern Ballads which reflect the socio economic conditions of medieval Kerala, had relationship with Nair women who were already married. Though the information available in the ballads does not carry the impression that there was polyandry during this period, it could be that women gave themselves up to persons like Othenan who wielded great influence in the society on account of his military exploits.¹⁰⁵ Sometimes even kidnapping of women was considered a heroic deed. In spite of the fact that Nair's was a matrilineal set up with the significance

104. For example : When a Nambudiri took a fancy to a pretty Nayar girl whose family held land in some of subsidiary tenure from his illam and was able to force her to become his mistress, even if she was already married and devoted to her nayar husband, otherwise he would cancel the assignment. Joan Mencher and Goldberg "Kinship and Marriage Regulations Among the Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala in Man, vol2 No.1, March 1967, P.30.

105. K.S.Mathew, Society as reflected in Vadakkan Pattukal, M.Phil, Dissertation,, Jawaharlal Nahru University, 1976, P.64.

of women as the centre point through inheritance ran, none of the general traditions noted her will or options. Her marriage was to a man decided by the elders or karananvan and they could be situations where if by any chance, the husbands created the ill will of the karananvan, he was not permitted to see his wife again and the relationship ceased. Again since remarriage was sanctioned, she had to marry the next person who was the choice of karananvan. Thus this could never be called polyandry. The social values and moral code of the period were different and cannot be that all Nair women were polyandrous. Beauty, social status, tenure relationships might have been responsible for it.

Marriage is certainly regarded as a contract between sane persons, the parents of the parties or the parents of the girl and the husband.¹⁰⁶ Most of the present day Nairs consider the label 'Polyandrous' a gross insult and believe that if it had existed previously then, it was a monstrous innovation due to the Nambudiris influence.¹⁰⁷

106. Sir Fitz James Stephen, Gazette of India jan.27, 1872, P.11

107. Government of Madras, Legislative Department, 1891, Enclosures C.10

Amongst the marumakkathayam marriage customs, the most peculiar, distinctive and unique is the Talikettukalyanam which means marriage by tying the tali. Tali means a small pendant either on a black thread or gold chain. Usually the ceremony was before the girl attained the age of puberty. Several girls of the same age go through the ceremony simulataneously.¹⁰⁸ Nairs took pride in celebrating this in a grand manner befitting their status. An auspicious day and hour was fixed, the house was decorated and guests and relatives invited for the function. An old man, a boy of her clan, a brahmin and in some cases, the mother could tie the tali. The manavalan or the tali-tier was welcomed by the girl's brother, and appropriately given a seat and honoured. He was offered suitable gifts. Songs were sung to bless the girl.¹⁰⁹

108. (1) C.Achutha Menon -Vadakkan Pattukal- Madras, 1935, Vol.2 P.180

(2) Malabar Marriage Commission Report, Legislative proceedings Madras, 1891.

(3) T.K.Gopala Panikkar, Malabar and its Folk, Delhi, 1983 PP. 135-139

(4) Logan, op.cit., P.135

109.Fawcett - op.cit., P.230

The tali-tier could tie the tali on a number of girls. The girls dressed up and adorned with jewellery were brought to the pandal. Now he ties the tali. Feast follows and traditionally, the celebration was for 4 days.¹¹⁰ The couple had to undergo the formalities like observe pollution for 3 days and on the fourth day, a cloth is severed in a symbolic way, denoting the separation of the boy and the girl. Two significant aspects to be noted here is that the retention of the tali was not at all important and though girls of 7-9-11 age usually are subjected to this custom, there were cases where infants go through this ceremony.¹¹¹

The intention of this ceremony remains an issue of dispute among scholars. Some are of the view that it was a real marriage while others insist that it was only a symbolic function. Kathleen Gough, Prince Peter believed that it signified a real marriage and that the tali tier was some kind of husband and the tali tier initiated for each individual Nair girl a state of marriage to a collectivity of men of

110. T.K.Goplala Panikkar, op.cit.

111. K.P.Padmanabha Menon, History of Kerala Vol.3, Ernakulam, 1984, P.253

appropriate caste.¹¹² But others refute this, Buchanan, C.J.Fuller, K.Kannan Nair, Dumont, Anantha Krishna Iyer, Muthuswami Iyer, K.S.Mathew hold that it was not a real marriage.¹¹³ The tali-tier had no claim over the girl and thus the whole ceremony appears symbolic to bestow blessings on the girl to have a prosperous life and in a way presenting the marriageable age of a girl. The fact that in comparatively poor families, the mother could tie the tali significies not a real marriage. Again, in some families, the tali was tied by

112.Katheleen Gough, Female Intitiation Rites on the Malabar Coast, II in JRAI, 1955, P.50. The Tali rite was clearly ritually, if not actually a defloration ceremony. Gough ed. Matrilineal Kinship, Berkeley, 1962, P.328. H.R.H.Prince Peter, A Study of Polyandry Hague, 1963, P.499

- 113.(1) Buchanan, op.cit., The Man and the girl never cohabit appendix I.P.2
- (2) C.J.Fuller, op.cit The Tali rite recognised a woman's right to enter a sambhandham union, P.106.
- (3) K.Kannan Nair, op.cit.P.274
- (4) Dumont op.cit, P.114. A rite of passage for the girl making her progress from the social category of girl to that of woman.
- (5) Ananthakrishna Iyer, L.K.op,cit, Vol. 2 PP.27-8, Marriage had two separate components-the bethrothal and the consummation - tali rite and sambandham taken together constitute marriage.
- (6) Muthuswami Iyer, An essential caste observance preliminary to the formation of sexual relation -Malabar Marriage Commission Report, 1891, Madras, P.12.
- (7) K.S.Mathew, op.cit, P.58, on the basis of the evidence from the Northern Ballads, this ceremony cannot be taken to relate to a true marriage.

some respectable, holy learned brahmin. If custom permitted the mother or elderly men to tie the tali, it could never be a marriage and for Nairs, the real marriage was pudamuri where the bride was presented pudava or cloth by the bridegroom. In North Malabar, the Nairs beleived that there was some stain or impurity, attached to a maiden which the Talikettukalyanan was designed to remove¹¹⁴ It is seen that Nairs celebrated Talikettukalyanan in a grand way than pudamuri, with the obvious intention to declare that girls have come of age. It could also be that women who were considered relatively inferior, required protection and tali tying was a symbolic gesture assuring protection, wishing prosperity and fertility. This ritual gradually disappeared at the wake of a movement by Nairs organized by Nair Service Society formed in 1914. As noted earlier, Pudamuri was not grand but Talikettu Kalyanam was and there were any number of instances where Nair families declined due to the expenses incurred for this.¹¹⁵

114. Chathu Nambiar in an answer to Malabar Marriage Commission, appendix II No.18, Answer 12, P.19, Malabar Marriage Commission Report, 1891, Legislative Department, Madras, NAI.

115. See Mannath Padmanabhan's speeches Mannath Padmanabhante Prasangagal, Changancacherry, Jan 1985.

Each social practice was distinct and gave them a peculiar cultural identity. Another ceremony related to Nair life was the custom known as Pulikudi. It literally means drinking of tamarind juice. It was a prebirth ceremony, when the wife was pregnant. The presence of the maternal uncle was considered compulsory. The husband had to present gifts and money to the wife on this occasion. The pregnant lady was given tamarind juice and a feast followed. The presence of Karanavan speaks of the matrilineal characteristic of the Nairs and the role of the husband signifies that the husband had the obligation to meet the expenses of the ceremony¹¹⁶ and be informed of it. This clearly implies the notion of fatherhood and that marriage serves to establish the legitimacy of children. Though the elementary family of father, mother and children was not institutionalized as legal or an economic unit, the Nairs certainly had the concept of marriage and paternity and accorded ritual recognition to it. The twenty seventh day after the child's birth and the first chorunnu or first meal of rice were conducted with great pomp and the expenses had to be met by the father of the child.¹¹⁷

116. K.S.Mathew, op.cit., PP.45-46. Tacholi Othenan, the hero of northern Ballads goes to the maternal house of Chirathakutty with the necessary amount for the expenses of the ceremony.

117. Fawcett., op. cit., PP.243 - 44.

Though the usual practice was for a Nair woman to stay back at her tarawad even after marriage and her husband visited her, there were instances where Nair women after Pudamuri¹¹⁸ stayed in her husband's house. This was specially in Malabar where even Sambandham relationships approximate much more closely to the Indian norm of marriage and it meant the union of one man and woman.¹¹⁹ But in such a situation, when the husband died, the wife had to leave the husband's house even before the body was cremated. She could never enter the house of her husband again. The children could remain for 12 days to complete the formalities of the dead father but had to leave to the mother's tarawad.¹²⁰

118. See Chapter - Colonial Experiments

119. Fuller, op.cit, P.141, and also Malabar Marriage Commission Report, 1891, Madras, NAI.

120. In an interview, K.Madhavan of Kanhangad, who was the youngest volunteer of Salt Satyagraha held at Payyannur and then an activist of tenancy, social movements told this writer on 22/10/1999 the precarious condition of Nair Women who had to leave their husband's house even before the cremation. In a talk with this writer on 3/7/1999

E.Thankamma aged 79, daughter of E.Govindan Nair, Advocate, Talassery till 1953, told that she had to leave her husband's house when he died premature in 1944. Her husband K.Gopalan Nair was the Village Officer of Muyipboth Amsom, Badagara. This shows that certain practices continued even in recent times, and practised even among educated families as a preventive measure to avoid the wife and children from claiming or using the property of the dead man.

Nair women could accept high caste men as husbands but could never have marital relationship with a low caste man. This is called pratilomam. To maintain a special moral code for Nair woman, a peculiar custom was propagated. This was called Mannapedi, Pulappedi or Parappedi. According to this, any low caste man like pulaya, paraya or mannan could defile a Nair woman if he sees her or hit with a stone or twig after dusk during the months of March - August.

This woman could be excommunicated by her family or captured by the low caste.¹²¹ PEDI means fear. A fear psychosis was created among women not to have any contact with low casteman. It was an annual nightmare for women¹²² and a delight for low castes to seek vengeance on high caste Nairs. But it has to be believed that such a fear was widely published to prevent Nair women from having any relationship with low caste men and could be taken as enforced by a male dominated family set up.¹²³

121.1) Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, op.cit., PP.411-12,- 2.

2) P.P Sudhakaran-Pulapedi-A Reconsideration, paper presented at International Congress on Kerala Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Vol.3, 1994, PP. 32 - 33.

122.Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai- Studies in Kerala History, Trivandrum, P.411-412, K.N.Ganesh, Keralathinte Ennalekal, Trivandrum, 1990, P.227.

123.P.P.Sudhakaran, op.cit., PP-32-33.

The whole issue was on the ground of pollution and purity. The graded levels of caste had corresponding levels of pollution. The intensity of pollution varied according to the social order and the positioning of each caste. But interestingly, for purification after delivery death and for women, vannan women had to clean the clothes and return which is called mattu. Only, when mattu was accepted, they felt purified. These vannans or washermen cleaned the 'polluted' cloth in water of tanks and the water remained the same. In the same way, if a brahmin was polluted by the presence or touch by a low caste, he was to take bath. The pond in which the brahmins of a locality take bath remain the same. Thus the same water is regarded as the purificatory agent and thus the concept of purity is interesting. In such a society, a tank or pond was used for brushing the teeth, bath, washing the clothes and other cleaning purposes. A dip in the same water made them pollution free.¹²⁴

The mobility was also restricted especially for women. Gender distinction was apparent here. Nair women were restricted from crossing the Korapuzha river near Kozhikode or else she

124. Sivananda Paramahansa, Kerala Anacharam, Vadakara - 1955
This text is an attack on caste, concepts of purity. Also see Dr. K. K. N. Kurup "Intellectual Movements in Kerala" in Nationalism and Social change - The Role of Malayalam Literature - Trissur, 1998, pp.30.31.

would forfeit her caste. This kind of territorial restrictions affected the movement from one place to another and so women were confined to their regions. When caste imposed such restrictions, life centred round at home and region. This led to mutual dependence and adjustment among various castes and sub castes within the region.

Nair girls when they mature had to sit for three days without touching any one, dressed up and adorned with jewellery and relatives and friends bring sweets and on the first day, had to take bath in the pond, wear the cloth brought by vannathi and was taken in a procession and a feast was held. This was called Tirandu Kuli.¹²⁵ Nairs took pride in celebrating such events like Talikettykalyanam, Tirandukuli and Pulikudi in a grand manner often ending in vanity. As noted earlier¹²⁶ some celebrations were only for women. Nambudiri antarjanams and Nair women rejoiced by celebrating Tiruvathira, Ganapatipuja, Pujas for Kama. In Kodungallur area, in the malayalam month of Tulam, girls before puberty wear new dress, dress up, perform pujas and feed sweets to the brothers. This was called pujas for Ganapati. Thiruvathira symbolised the blessing of Siva, since it was believed that Siv appeared before Parvathi after

125. Bhaskaranunni, op.ct., P.205

126. For details of these celebrations, See Nambudiri customs

a long prayer. Kama is considered a symbol of romance, attraction and fertility. His image was made out of flowers on the floor of the padinjata and girls or women had to keep flowers and call Kama. women have always been expected to be charming to satisfy her husband and she had to regularly propitiate Gods to have a good marital life.

In some Nair houses, a small room was kept separately as karavan's room. Small stools were arranged in the room in the belief that the dead ancestors reach there and on occasions like Amavasi, all food items are served on leaves and kept in this room as a token of respect and remembrance to the elders.¹²⁷ Usually the room remain closed and opened only to light lamps and women during menstruation were not supposed to go near the room or touch.

This discussion would lead to a number of problems and inferences. The relationship between two prominent communities of the traditional society speaks a lot of contradictions within the community and between them.¹²⁸ The Nambudiri

127. The present writer could see this in some of the old tarawads at Thalassery, Kanhangad etc.

128. Any society has social gradations. In India it is called jati or caste. The census made caste, the primary concern and specific labels allotted with the corresponding occupation.

Brahmins according to every census formed numerically a minority in Malabar but their social status enabled them to acquire a comfortable role in the society. Their relationship with Nairs makes an interesting study. Nambudiris who never permitted pratiloma marriage for their women inspite of the large number of them living as spinsters, maintained sambhandam with lower caste. The Nambudiri father did not touch his own children from the Nair wives since the children were Nairs. The similar aspect of both the communities was that the property remained impartible and without alienation. The right of property for both was a concept. No one could actually enjoy the assets since partition or individual share was not sanctioned by custom.

This discussion cannot carry the impression that all Nambudiri Illoms or Nair Tarawads were wealthy.¹²⁹ Variations of every nature prevailed within the community. those who were prosperous could pride in their wealth, social identity, could

129. Around 1900, Kodoth Tarawad paid Rs.30,000, Echikanam Tarawad paid Rs.16,000/- as land tax for a year.

Nileshwer Raja paid Rs.21,000/- and Tayakhat Mana paid Rs.24,000/- as tax in a year.

This information was provided by K.Madhavan on 22/10/1999

entertain art literature. Traditional art forms like Kathakali was performed in illams for days together. Oral traditions played a prominent part in the belief and customs of the people which were passed from generation to generation.

The male dominance in Nambudiri and Nair families was obvious. Moral and ethical code for men and women was different. Nambudiri women had to observe gosha or purdah and had voice only in the interior. Nair women who had relative freedom had no voice or choice in marriage relationships or divorce or remarriage. Mostly it was the decision of Karanavan Nair women could have hypergamous relationship but their children had only the mother's caste status. Matriliney continued but was not a female dominated set up.

The temple based social formations played the role of formulating the caste order based on occupation. It ensured the services of different hereditary occupational groups and they were mutually dependent. The religious and ritualistic brahmin, Ambalavasis, protectors and tenants like Nairs, peasants, artisans, skilled workers were all indispensable for the functioning of the society. Every caste was linked to a specific skill and each skill was related to social customs and beliefs. But the understanding remained only at the service level. The social relationship remained always unequal but all sections adjusted to this unequal arrangement.

TRADITIONAL TENURIAL PATTERN AND OCCUPATION

Swarna kumari E.K. “Social changes in malabar with special reference to two traditional communities 1881-1933 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2001

Chapter - III

TRADITIONAL TENURIAL PATTERN AND OCCUPATION

Prior to British occupation of Malabar, a peculiar land tenure system existed here. North Malabar, which comprised of Kolathunad, Kottayam, Kurumbranad and Kadathanad had mostly Nair or Samanta Janmis. Nambudiris had concentrated in south Malabar like Eranad, Valluvanad and Ponnani. During the ninth, tenth. and eleventh centuries, the Brahmin village councils received donations of land and gold from different sources like princes and merchants and also villages and forests being the temple authorities.¹ These transactions made the Brahmin uralar the biggest landlords in Kerala atleast in a corporate way. Their scriptual knowledge, ritualistic skill added to the economic power ensured their superior status. The expansion and increase of cultivated land further led to the increase of power.² Above all, the Parasurama legend justified their position as Janmis and dominant caste. According to tradition, Nambudiris got land as janmam. The tenurial pattern of

1. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, op.cit., P.261

R.S.Sarma talks about a general trend that there was a trend of donations during the early medieval period, large scale transfers of land were made to secular and religious elements in the post -Gupta period.

R.S.Sharma Social Changes in Early Medieval India Circa 500-1200 AD 1969, New Delhi, P.6

2. M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, op.cit., P.262

kerala was linked to mutual dependence and customs. Social status was determined on the basis of the holding of land.³ As noted earlier, the Nambudiris as Janmis never participated in actual production. They never engaged in physical labour. At the same time, they were entitled to 1/3 of the produce. Besides this share, they had to be offered gifts on special occasions and festivals like birth, death, Onam and Vishu. Thus the caste status, religious status, customs were all interrelated with Janmi-tenant relationship.

Much before the advent of colonial powers, there were brisk trading centres in Kerala, which had all the general traits of contemporary urban areas. Kerala enjoyed a key position along with other parts of South India in the East-West trade.⁴ The advent of Europeans, their trading activities and colonisation disrupted the socio-economic pattern. Though Kerala was a centre of trade for centuries because of the availability of spices and other articles in demand, the agents of trade and intermediaries were substituted in the course of European trade pattern. The European trading activities since

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3. Kerala's agrarian structure was the result of the mutual relationships of Uralar, Karalar intermediaries, hereditary occupational groups and ryots and their rights on resources of production and commodities See Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal, Kerala Charithram, Sukapuram, 1991, P.280.
 4. Vijayalakshmi.M - "Trade and Trade centres"- 800-1600 AD Ph.D.Thesis, Calicut University, 1998 - P.7

the 15th Century and subsequent colonial rule were gradually affecting Malabar. Expansion of trade led to the growth of new urban centres, and growing importance of cash transactions were steadily affecting the traditional agrarian structure as well as the dominant ideological system.

The British occupation of Malabar had far reaching consequences. This raised a number of challenges to the traditional patterns of life. The colonial understanding and interpretations of the society began a new narrative and discussion about the tradition and culture of this region. Specific demarcation of communities and caste emerged and the beginning of census was a serious step to this endeavour. The new administration formulated an educational system, uniform judiciary, and an infrastructure for revenue and military matters. A region which was familiar with age old traditions, customs and manner based on caste regularities was being introduced to the colonial ideas and this was bound to create a lot of dislocations and changes. Such changes were evident in tenurial pattern. The traditional agrarian structure based on a three-tier system of Janmis, Kanakkar and actual cultivators or verumpattakkar was on a mutual understanding. In the hierarchy of tenants, sub tenants, a close relationship between the agrarian classes and castes could be traced.⁵

5. Beiteille, Andre, Studies in Agrarian Social Structure, Delhi, 1983, P.70.

By 12th C, the Brahmins had emerged as Janmis of the land. The temple lands were exempt from tax. Simultaneous with the emergence of the land owning class was that of intermediaries. This class neither owned the land nor cultivated it but it was to them that the land was leased out by the temple.⁶ This was called Kanam, which means supervision or protection. The Nairs constituted the protectors.⁷ The land was actually cultivated by another set of people who were either the low castes or Nairs who held no Kanam. The produce of the soil was divided in equal shares between the farmers or kanakkaran, the actual cultivators and the janmi.⁸ All these people remained subsequent and loyal to their immediate higher section.

The janmi, kanakkaran and the peasant shared the produce equally, working out a social equation on the basis of mutual dependence and reciprocal interest within the confines of a feudal system of exploitation.⁹ The distribution of land

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6. Kesavan Veluthat, "Role of Temples in Kerala Society", Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol.III, June, 1976 P.193.
 7. William Logan- Malabar Special Commission Report, Report on Malabar Land Tenures, NAI, 1881, Para 27, P.17.
 8. Ibid. Para 48, P.23.
 9. K.N.Panikkar, "Peasant Revolts in Malabar in the 19th and 20th centuries" in A.R.Desai (ed) Peasant Struggles in India Delhi, 1979, P.604. Also See Logan, op.cit., P.23, Para 48.

was effected in accordance with the existing customary practices and land tenures were the product of a long evolution determined by the geographical, economic, social and political conditions and the circumstances of the community in question.¹⁰ The term tenure means the right on land and the social and economic relationship that emerged from that right. The aim of all tenures is cultivation.

The Janmis had vast areas of land in their custody. But inhibitions like caste and religious status, caste rigidity, did not permit them to participate in cultivation directly. Moreover they always maintained that they who were proficient in scriptures and who indulged in intellectual exercise, need not exercise physical labour. They never felt like supervising the cultivation process. Untouchability, distance pollution observed, added to their attitude of being spectators and beneficiaries of the practice. So the duty of supervision and cultivation was assigned to lower castes and as noted earlier, a peculiar system evolved on a reciprocal benefit and advantage. The land was leased out to Nairs who accepted the roles of intermediaries and Nairs included largely the militia or

10. M.T.Narayanan, Agrarian Relations in Late Medieval Malabar Ph.D.Thesis, Calicut University, 1991, P.104.

protectors. This enabled them to climb up to a better status in the social ladder. Naturally the Nair sambandham and matrilineal system of inheritance agreed with the interests of the Janmis who were mostly Nambudiris. The traditional pattern of family organization, the system of marriage and the law of inheritance of the Nair were closely linked with the nature of land relations and the overriding influence of the values and ideology of the Nambudiri.¹¹ Thus the Nairs were close associates of local chieftains and landowning groups, which in turn made them powerful, within the confines of a strong caste system.

Janmam, which is explained as deriving from Jan signifying birth or hereditary grant, was a distinct land tenure of Malabar. Two major interests in land were embodied in Janmam and kanam tenurial rights. The origin of these rights were linked to the control over land established by the Nambudiri Brahmins between 9th and 12th Century.¹² Property right as a social institution was not relevant in the early

11. K.N.Panikkar in "Land Control, Ideology and Marriage Reform- A Study of the Change in Family Organisation and Marriage System in Kerala". The Indian Historical Review, IV, July, 1977. P.30.

12. For details see K.N.Panikkar, Against Lord and State, (Delhi, 1992)

period but it arose at a later stage in the history of social development¹³ and the term used to denote proprietary right was attipper. Janmam was used to express a dignity or stanam, family or hereditary rights. It also meant the right of Janmavazhi, which denotes a high social status. He was also entitled to an equal share mostly 1/3 of the net produce of the soil. In addition to this, he was entitled to various ranks and dignities of sorts. He was sometimes commandant of the militia of the Desom. General superitendant of administration of all affairs of the desom and his permission was required to conduct marriages of public ceremonies.¹⁴ Janmam is also known as Niratti-Peru (water contact birth right). These Janmis succeeded in creating a number of inferior tenures and land was mortgaged or leased. Thus the land was leased to Nairs who were the intermediaries known as kanakkaras meaning those who held the kanam right or tenure. Kanam is believed to have derived from the word kanuka meaning that which is seen¹⁵ or the right

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13. E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Dissenting Note to the Report of Malabar Tenancy Committee, Legislative Department, Madras 1940, P.75.
14. Logan who was the Collector of Malabar in 1880s made an inquiry into the tenurial pattern in his Report of the Malabar Special Commission, was of the opinion that the hereditary rights called Janmam did not invest any absolute right over land. also See K.K.N.Kurup, Kavalappara Papers, Calicut University, 1984, PP. 37 - 39.
15. Gundert, Dictionary, Kottayam, 1962, P.43.

of supervision. It also implies that the Nairs who were the protectors were the people the eye, the hand and the order. This right to supervise or protect all the inhabitants of the particular 'Nad' or country wherein the land lay, had the right to enjoy for this service, a portion of the net produce of the soil.¹⁶ He was entitled to an equal amount enjoyed by the Janmi. The interesting aspect here was that the Kanakkars did not cultivate the land and they in turn subleased the land to Nairs who held no kanam right and to Tiyayas or Mappilas. Although the kanam right looked permanent, a system of renewal did exist.¹⁷ The land was leased by the Janmi after levying a kanappanam, which had to be revised. This was customary and periodical. The whole tenurial system was based on certain regulations, which can be called Janmam kanam -maryada. This customary maryada provided independent rights to all the categories. William Logan who had made a deep study of the tenurial pattern of Malabar believed that the holders of kanam were practically permanent tenants.¹⁸ This permanence of holdings was to hold and practice certain customs regulating the shares of produce.

16. Logan, RMSC, P.51, Para 106

17. K.N.Panikkar, op.cit., P.19

18. Logan- Malabar Manual, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1989, P.608

Another notable aspect is that the Janmi takes advances from his kanakkar and this advance could be deducted during the payment of kanappanam. Kanam right was thus a hereditary, independent right for supervising or protecting the 'Nad' and to enjoy for this service a produce of the soil, equal in amount to that enjoyed by the janmi.¹⁹ The kanakkars had functioned as intermediaries between the high caste Nambudiris and the low caste cultivating people.²⁰ These intermediaries were thus simultaneously a rent receiving, rent paying class.²¹

There existed variations in the nature and pattern of tenure in the northern and southern parts of Malabar. This could be explained as a result of the differences in the nature of settlement pattern, nature of soil, fertility etc. The early Brahmin settlers had preferred fertile fields with assured water supply. The settlements were scattered along the fertile river valleys between the western ghats and the Arabian sea.²²

19. For details, See K.K.N.Kurup, William Logan, A Study in the Agrarian Relations of Malabar, Calicut - 1981, P.30.

20. Thomas Warden, Report on the Land Tenures on Malabar, September 1815, Calicut, 1916, Para 63.

21. K.N.Panikkar, op.cit., P.28.

22. For details see

(1) M.G.S.Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, Calicut, 1996

(2) M.T.Narayanan, op.cit.,

Compared to the north, majority of the early settlements were spread over the southern parts of Malabar where they got lands most suitable for rice cultivation. Again, the main beneficiaries of Kanam tenure were the Nairs in the south and Nambiars in the North.²³

In North Malabar, kanakkars cultivated the land directly but in South Malabar, mostly the land was leased to the tenants. In North Malabar, Kanam was really a usufructory mortgage in its inception. Kanam deeds of this region clearly reveal that the transaction was one between borrower and lender and the land was considered as security for the loan. A kanakkaran had every right of proprietorship excepting that of alienation of the land by sale. He could sublease the land in full or parts to any other subordinate tenure. Thus in a way, it was obvious that, he had independence in dealings. In lands he held, the kanakkar had the control over production, development and extension and sublease.²⁴ Normally, the kanakkars were not

23. T.C.Varghese, Agrarian Change and Economic Consequence- Land Tenures in Kerala, 1850 - 1960, Bombay, 1970, P.15.

24. K.N.Ganesh, "Agrarian Relations in Kerala : an Overview 1100 - 1600", Paper presented at ICHR Seminar at Mangalore University, 1989, P.6.

The Kanam right was also called ulavupattam and otti.

displaced and even if the kanappanam was not paid regularly, there was no eviction. But if the kanakkar tried to usurp the property, then the action to evict was taken, only after paying compensation to the kanakkaran. This compensation was made for the development of the land including construction of buildings. These were specifically known as Chamayam which meant the buildings, house tanks, kuzhikkur which meant planting of fruit bearing trees, shrubs etc. and Vettukanam means tillage or measures adopted to improve the soil of the land.

Generally, the tenant had to pay annual amount of the Janmam, which was called michchavaram. He also had to offer presents during festivals like Onamkazha and utsavakazha.²⁵ It was the acknowledgment of the authority of Janmi by the kanakkaran. Thus in several ways, the kanakkaran remained subservient but in other ways, he had independent transactions with the verumpattakkar. Another tenure called Kuzhikanam was a variation of kanam, which was a reclaiming lease for effecting improvement and plantation on lands, which had remained unproductive. In other words, it meant bringing the wasteland to

25. M.T.Narayanan, op.cit., P.138

use for cultivation. For Kuzhikanam, no advance was paid to Janmi. This might have been an encouraging factor for bringing more lands for cultivation. Among the different types of leases, the simplest was verumpattam or simple lease. Under this, the lease was for one year. The verumpattam tenant was expected to pay to the Janmi, the net produce after deducting the cost of seed and cultivation. Though he was entitled for 1/3 of the produce by custom, the verumpattakkar in effect was no better than a labourer. The variations in a caste reflected in the tenure pattern also. For instance there were janmis, there were kanakkars and verumpattakkars among Nairs. This economic status determined the social status within a caste.

An inter-dependent and tenure system existed with dependent and hereditary rights sanctioned by custom and based on the division and nature of labour. Since a society required different services, a large number of service tenures like carpenter, blacksmith, bronze smith existed within the social framework and heredity.²⁶ The artisan groups including various skilled workers were allotted lands by the uralar of temples for their service.²⁷ This was a perpetual lease called karaima.

26. M.T.Narayanan, op.cit., P.157

27. There were certain occupational groups like the bronze smiths and carpenters respectively, Vijayalakshmi.M, op.cit. P.24.

the revenue pattern of Malabar and their intention was to collect as much as revenue as possible to meet the expenses of the lease.³⁰ The Mysorean contact touched on administrative and economic realms.³¹ The tension created by the Mysorean invasion led to many Brahmins and Nairs flee to Travancore and the Mysorean officials had to make settlements with the kanakkars or cultivators who utilized this opportunity to safeguard and retain their own identity. Tipu's stay was short and Malabar had to be ceded to the British according to the Treaty of Seringapatam 1792.

The real blow to the hereditary customary system was by the advent of the English. The colonial initiative generated new forces, which led to a through shake of the traditional rights, and privileges of different social groups.³² The

30. Logan, the British administrator criticised the Mysorean rates of tax as high and lands excessively assessed, See Logan, Malabar, P.625.

31. Ibrahim Kunju- Mysore-Kerala Relations in the 18th Century, Thiruvananthapuram 1975, P.14.

32. Ainslie.T.Embree Eric Frykenburg (ed).Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, Delhi, 1967, P.35. Almost every British Institution introduced into India in the 19th century had some effect on Indian landholding. There are three closely related ones that call attention

- (1) Institution of property
- (2) Efficient government
- (3) Legal System

Kananm-Janmam-Maryada started disappearing and in its place emerged a new order based on new values and ideas. This was the result of a systematic organizational venture by the British. The Bengal and Bombay joint Commissioners in 1792-93 obtained from a Brahmin named Jiurea, an arrangement made by Arshad Beg Khan, the Governor appointed by Tipu Sultan.³³ According to this, the calculation was made on the measures of seed and the number of fruitful trees. This was found erroneous by British officers like Grame. This was the beginning of a long course of intervention by the British on socio-economic matters of Malabar. A number of officers were assigned to assess the prevalent land tenures. But most of them misunderstood and misinterpreted the customary hereditary tenurial system of Malabar. It was William Logan who carried out an in-depth study of the tenurial structure and he did not agree with the view of earlier administrators like William Farmer, Robert Rickords, Francis Buchanan, Thomas Warden, Gramae and William Thakaray and others.³⁴ The first direct revenue collection was in 1801.³⁵

33. Logan, Malabar, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1989, P.624

34. K.K.N.Kurup, op.cit., P.25, "To them Janmam was the absolute ownership of land". Logan's official initiative ended in the study of socio-economic scenario of Malabar and the result was the noted works like Malabar Manual, 2 Vols. and the Report of the Special Commission, 1881.

35. K.N.Panikkar, op.cit., P.5.

The British did not grasp the situation in the correct way. Most of the officers interpreted that the Janmi possessed the entire right to the soil and is the private property of the Janmi. The East India Company evolved a policy recognizing the Janmis as the absolute owners of the landed properties in Malabar. A conference of Janmis welcomed this in 1805³⁶, when Thomas Warden was the Collector of Malabar. While this policy was an obvious example of political expediency of the British in assuring the support of a landed aristocracy, this had overtones in the political, social and economic scenario of Malabar in the days to come. After defining the Janmam as the birth right of Janmi, the British next touched on the definition of Kanam. Kanam was styled as a lease or mortgage.³⁷ It was considered a customary law. The Courts held that kanam tenure was a lease for 12 years and that the kanakkaran was expected to pay the net profits to the landlord. The landlord had the right to redeem the land, if there was an attempt to usurp the property. Further, if the landlord wanted to raise more advance from the kanakkar and if the kanakkar could not do so, the landlord

36. Innes, C.A., Evans.F (ed) Malabar, Madras, 1951, P.316.

37. Walker (1801), Strange (1849) Herbert Wigram (1882), Strange (1849), revised the Kanam as a lease for a stipulated period. See Logan, op.cit.and Kurup, op.cit.

could lease the property to a third party. The Kanam tenure could be renewed after 12 years only if both parties agreed to it. This was an alien notion, in agreement with the colonial revenue policy. Logan differed from his predecessors about the understanding of the Kanam right. According to him the kanakkaran was attached to his holding as the Janmi and enjoyed a stable right in the land for his service as supervisor or protector.³⁸ Moreover the provision of cancelling the kanam lease after 12 years, if the advance demanded by the Janmi was not agreed to by the kanakkar leading to eviction led to the lease to a third party. This gave the opportunity for the janmi to find a new tenant for higher rate. It led to unhealthy trends of competition and resulted in melcharth or melkanam. Melkanam was an over lease in favour of a stranger to secure higher amount as advance. The Janmis exploited this threat of eviction to extract more money from the kanakkaran or else execute a melcharth. The verumpattam tenure held by cultivators was an annual lease and they were entitled to 1/3 of the produce in theory, but in effect, the cultivators did not enjoy much more than the cost. Logan noted the miserable condition of these verumpattakkars who were at the mercy of the intermediaries who extracted more than their due. Gradually a situation emerged

38. Logan, Malabar Land Tenures, Madras, 1881 P.51, Para - 106.

where the janmis became recognized as landowners in the capitalist sense. Tenants, sub-tenants, serfs ceased to own hereditary, inalienable rights in the produce of the land, they lived in.³⁹ Thus the intervention and reading of land tenures of Malabar by the British created a series of complications and tension, discontent and uncertainty in Malabar. The concept of paramba and purayidham changed. For a Malayali, this included the house and the land surrounding it. Assessment was made on the basis of the yield of coconuts, arecanut, seasonal yield but the land assessment of the British in measuring the whole land affected the conventional possession of land.

18th Century prepared the ground for a new era in Malabar. The British occupation and administration gradually changed the face of Malabar. It was possible for the British to effect changes in tenurial pattern with the support of the judiciary. The British organized a hierarchy of courts obviously for the smooth functioning and revenue advantages.⁴⁰

39. Logan, Malabar Manual, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1989, PP.613-614.

40. Judiciary was created as a part of the whole apparatus of administration by the British to make it smooth for them to govern an alien region. Gradually this judicial set up was to play an integral role in the socio-economic development of Malabar by interfering and solving many of the disputes. A region which was familiar with oral tradition, rules, penal code sought judicial sanctions in the coming years. It was inevitable at the face of the fast changing trends in society and economy.

Supreme Courts were established in Presidency headquarters and Sadr courts in provinces. This experience of a written codified law system as part of the government was new, because till 19th C, the people relied on customs and oral traditions and village councils for justice. The penal code which was not uniform was made uniform. Another significant aspect was the use of English in official matters. A government accounts department was started. Slavery was abolished.⁴¹ Different departments were opened for revenue, public works, medicine, education, accounts, jail, police, excise etc. The Nair militia was no more relevant. The British recruited soldiers from different sections of the society like Nairs, Tiyyas, Mukkuvas, Mappilas to appease all castes and recognize their authority. New industries were established. Railway system was introduced. Growth of trade, trading centres, markets led to a new form of urbanization, establishment of English education - all these even if the intention was growth of colonial interests, led to a new perception of life and a growing trend to appropriate a space in the fast changing scenario.

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41. (1) Logan, op.cit, Slavery was abolished in British Occupied Territories according to Indian Act, No.5, April 1843
- (2) K.K.N.Kurup "Adimagal, Adimagal" in Deseeyathayum Karshaka Samarangalum, Chinta, 1991, P.93.

Plantations, tile factories, coir industry, cashew nut plantations, timber depots began under the initiative of the British.⁴² The pattern of labour and wages changed. Daily wages and monthly salary in these establishments created a new understanding of services. Traditional services were mostly obligatory and payment of cash was discretionary. The concept of purity, pollution, caste could not be relevant in new establishments. Education was given a special emphasis by the British. In 1901, Malabar stood fourth among Madras districts in the literacy of its population.⁴³ The credit for this venture goes to Basel Evangelical Mission and the British.⁴⁴ Efforts were taken to start schools and the indigenous pattern of education was gradually replaced by English education which was characterized by the policy of admission to any child irrespective of caste status. By 1882 - 83 there were 940 schools and 39,327 students.⁴⁵ Attempts were made to co-ordinate the regional language and literature, grammar, dictionary etc.

42. Plantations were under Pierce Leslie, Harrisons and Crossfield, Kannan Devan, Commonwealth Trust, E.M.S.Numbudiripad,,Keralathinte Desheeya Prasnam, Tiruvananthapuram, 1955, P.139.

43. For details see Chapter II

44. Logan, op.cit, 106

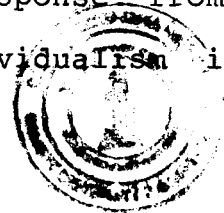
45. Logan, Malabar, Vol.II, New Delhi, 1989, P.XXVII

Dr.Gundert's efforts is relevant to be noted here.⁴⁶ The British learned the Indian languages and established centre for languages, and arts. This enabled them to acquaint themselves of the cultural side of this region.

As discussed earlier, by the end of the 19th century, a number of plantations, which was completely a new venture was started in Malabar. For this, planters obtained large areas for long term. This provided employment to many and in return, wages in cash. The receipt of cash, the realization of importance of cash thoroughly affected the thinking of the people. The colonial notion of economy started percolating to all levels. Malabar also began to produce for the world market. Plantations and cultivation of cash crops expanded. Colonial ideas and perceptions brought forth conspicuous changes. The complete shattering of caste wise occupation was the result of new trends of industry, commerce and plantations. The importance of cash economy gained place here. Education found entry in every corner of Malabar. The actual significance of this was the shattering of the myth that only certain high castes had the right to be educated. The problem remains whether all could turn

46. Gundert, Malayalam Dictionary Kottayam, 1962.

to education, but certainly there was a response from an enterprising section of Nairs and Thiyyas. Individualism is a major contribution of the period.



This does not suggest that a complete transformation was occurring in Malabar. With a growing discernment and aspiration to accept the contemporary trends, at least a small section was emerging to argue for reformulation without losing the social and cultural identity. For instance, the old family ties continued. Malabar was thus crossing a period of confusion. One side, the dominant colonial presence which looked at Indian culture as inferior and on the other the traditional values and ideology set in an area of contradiction. It was difficult to deny both. There remained a section who still held on to the old values but a small section was slowly emerging who in essence was Indian but wanted to adopt new values and benefits of English education which would pave the way for employment in administrative establishments. The Nair community displayed no inhibition in turning to English education. The difficulty was that all could not go for education for the reason of funds for that.

Gradually an erosion of the monopoly of the janmis was taking place.⁴⁷ A group of ryots was becoming the rightful owners of landed property by purchase.⁴⁸ A gradual process was bringing forth at least a few Nairs to the position of landlords. By 19th century, this small section who paid rent to the Janmi and at the same time received rent from cultivators emerged as a socio-economic force since they extracted a higher rent from the actual cultivators than what they paid to Janmi.⁴⁹ Again when Janmis were in need of money they borrowed from kanakkar who collected the share of the produce of the Janmi. Interest was deducted and only the balance went to the Janmi. Sometimes the interest on the sum borrowed was sufficiently large to wipe out the whole of the Janmi's share of the produce.⁵⁰ This growth and advancement of the kanakkar was noticed and viewed seriously by the Janmis who turned to measures, which would harm and eliminate the intermediary class. By the Sadr courts decision, the Janmis had been recognized as the actual proprietor of land with the right of eviction. "The

47. K.N.Panikkar, Land Control, Ideology and Reform, Indian Historical Review - IV, July 1977, P.36.

48. Thomas Warden, op.cit., P.36

49. See Table IV, shows how they managed it.

50. Logan, op.cit., P.608

harsh and oppressive treatment to which the tenants are at present subjected by their landlords of whom Nambudiris form the majority has no parallel that for every frivolous reason, tenants will be punished with ejection'.⁵¹

TABLE - IV

Name of Janmi	Rent received by Janmi	Rent received by Kanakkaran
Zamorin	194 Paras of paddy	5786 paras of paddy
Kavalappara Nair	200 paras	1000 paras
Kizhakke Kovilakam	Rs.16046	Rs.29764
Chirakkal Devaswam	Rs.1450	Rs.9707
Tiruvazhiyad Devaswam	Rs.230	Rs.2410

Source : Sir Vasudeva Raja, A Note on the History of Malabar Tenancy Bill of 1924, Madras, 1925, PP.64-65.

51. Kerala Mithram, 26 February 1881, Madras Native Newspaper Reports (hereinafter referred to as MNNPR), NAI.

Any birth or death in the Janmi's household or any festival or ceremony was an occasion to extract a contribution from the tenant. Any costly litigation of the Janmi affected the tenant who was asked to pay more. Sometimes, disobedience to the manager of the Janmis was punished.⁵² Another measure adopted by the Janmi to harm the kanakkaran was to give over lease or melcharth to a third party on the land which the kanakkaran held. Melcharths gave rise to quarreling, outbreaks, murder and suicide.⁵³ Melcharths increased year by year. Table V illustrates this. This nature of harassment can be considered as a conscious attempt of the Janmis to suppress the growth of kanakkars who they realized were slipping out of their control and loyalty and was utilizing their kanam right and turning to the educational openings. The number of intermediaries was large by the third quarter of the 19th century.⁵⁴

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52. T.K.Gopala Panikkar, Malabar and its Folk, New Delhi, 1900
53. Kerala Sanchari 27 March 1895, MNNPR, See Table V and VII. Evictions and Melcharths increased year by year. The Tenancy Act redressing the grievances of the tenant was passed only in 1929.
54. K.N.Panikkar "Agrarian Legislation and Social Classes in Malabar in the Economic and political weekly, XII, 21-27 May 1978.

TABLE - V
NUMBER OF THE EVICTIONS

1862 - 66	1891
1867 - 71	3483
1872 - 76	6286
1877 - 80	8355

Source - Logan - RMSC 1881 NAI, P. XXXVII

TABLE - VI
STATEMENT SHOWING THE MELCHARTHS EXECUTED FROM 1916 TO 1926

Year	Number of Melcharths executed	Number of karars to lease in form of melcharth executed
1916	3284	38
1917	3366	53
1918	3405	41
1919	3789	45
1920	3520	23
1921	3419	13
1922	3424	99
1923	3496	184
1924	3634	269
1925	3731	285
1926	3653	280

Source : Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee 1927 - 28 Vol.I
Chapter X, P.68, Tamil Nadu Archives.

TABLE - VII
NUMBER OF EVICTIONS FROM 1887 To 1892

1887	2819
1888	2441
1889	2627
1890	4227
1891	4132
1892	4620

Source : Order No.2374,1st October 1894,Judicial Department
 NAI.

The kanam right enabled them to play a dual role as tenants and intermediaries. So complex could land relationships become that one person could be both landlord and tenant to another person. This blurring of distinctions in the relationship of one man to another and of both to the land has remained one of the most perplexing enigmas to students of agrarian India.⁵⁵ Logan had noted that a number of tenants held land through intermediaries.⁵⁶ The weapon of eviction or melcharth was used unscrupulously by the Janmis who could not tolerate the growth of a lower caste or sub caste. There was

55. Frykenberg, op.cit.P.XV

56. Logan, Report of Malabar Special Commission, 1881,NAI,P.55,
 Para - 124

considerable increase of eviction suits. There were 13000 eviction suits during 1891-94.⁵⁷ In 1887, the Malabar Compensation for Tenants' Improvement Act was passed but even the British Officers felt that the rates of compensation was not adequate to the improvements done by the tenant on land. Though this Act⁵⁸ was passed to arrest the growing number of evictions, it was in vain. The number of evictions after 1889 can be seen from Table VII. Since the 1887 Act was not effective, the Malabar Tenancy Act was passed in 1900. These Acts were passed solely in the interests of the Janmi.⁵⁹ The fact remains that the tenants as a class are still in need of protection. They require protection from rack-rents, from exorbitant renewal fees, from miscellaneous exactions and from eviction. The Malabar compensation for Tenants Improvement Act is a half measure and it offers only a partial and ineffective solution to the tenancy problem in Malabar.⁶⁰

57. G.O.No.4114 - Revenue Department dated 25th October, 1894

58. A Committee was appointed to enquire into the problems of tenants and the result was the 1887 Act. Among the members of the Committee, two were Nairs, C.Sankaran Nair and Karunakara Menon.

59. Letter from C.A.Innes, Acting Collector of Malabar to the Secretary to the Commission of Land Revenue and Forests, 26 August 1911, Legislative Department - NAI.

60. Ibid,

solution. Every landlord has two paras, one bigger than the other. The bigger one is used to measure the pattam paid by the tenants who in consequence suffer a loss of 10%.⁶⁵ One significant aspect which emerges from these discussions of bureaucrats was that Nairs had succeeded in making their voice heard and give a thrust to their problems. This was the beginning of a tenancy movement in Malabar, which saw the involvement of many Nairs. Nairs who experienced relative freedom and flexibility in the traditional agrarian order and caste structure were not opposed to the new western education. They had nothing to loose. Their willingness to enter new ventures under the colonial initiative, brought them to the employed sector. The colonial government interfered in all aspects of life here, legitimizing and trying to break the traditional structure but at the same time they tried to retain the power of the authoritative centres and in fact strengthened the hands of Janmis by arming them with the power of eviction. In simple reading, it was a policy of expediency. But such policies in long term affected the relationship between Janmi and tenant. In the 19th Century , the Mappila tenants of Eranad taluk raised revolts, which in turn led to Malabar Rebellion in 1920's.⁶⁶

65. Kerala Chandrika, 15 December 1897, MNNPR

66. K.N.Panikkar,op.cit.P.12,For more details See K.N.Panikkar, Against Lord and State OUP Delhi 1992.

A relatively better material status through tenurial benefits, a better social status through education and employment, a confidence through discernment, a small section of Nairs cherished new aspirations. The aristocratic among Nairs still adamantly clinged on to the old values. The whole engagement was to reformulate a pattern, beneficial to the community. In the same way, in spite of rigid caste and ritual status, an introspection and consciousness created an urge among Nambudiris to organize, themselves and redefine their customs in the wake of modernity. Here also, the initiative was from a small minority against a hard majority.

Disruption in tenurial system and the dominant ideology created new consequences. The main occupation of Malabar was agriculture. In agrarian society, therefore, land is the most important means of wealth and source of production. Land ownership tenure rights, share of the produce in turn fixed the status and prestige of beneficiaries. Such a system if linked to caste and hereditary pattern reveal the importance social situations. In Malabar, it was important because the traditional tenurial pattern was related to family set up, marriage pattern and inheritance system of some of the prominent

castes. This peculiarity explains the elevation of Nairs though they were Sudras to a higher social status and the marital relationship with the high caste. High castes enjoyed high tenurial status and it was a clear gradation of castes occupying different layers. The universal definition of feudalism cannot be applied here. The regional variations are to be noted. The peculiar agrarian system of this region evolved out of the mutual relationships of uralar, Karalar, intermediaries, ryots and their rights on resources of production and produce. Regarding the Nambudiris, the inherent cultural pattern, their rural base of settlements and the nagging conviction that they were the highest caste and the 'pure' who would get polluted, did not permit them to accept anything new so easily. But the strong trends of colonialism shook them in various forms and shapes. National consciousness made some Indians to think and transcend regional, community, caste variations. Colonial apparatus like education, judiciary and revenue and employment opportunities were fast spreading their force even if the colonial aspirations was to create an English speaking middle class. Thus the new sense of middle class among Nambudiris and Nairs resulted in an active discussion for relevant changes.

In the colonial context, British had both constructive and destructive roles. They brought the notion of equal opportunities, which till then was denied by the caste ideology. But even the British could not overcome this and they actually perpetuated the label of caste as the primary concern and caste-wise division was put on record. The caste identity and community identity was constructed.

Erosions in agrarian and tenurial relationships had direct vibratrions in social identity and relationships. Apprehensions about trust and loyalty also led to a distance of these communities.

TOWARDS MODERNITY

Swarna kumari E.K. “Social changes in malabar with special reference to two traditional communities 1881-1933 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2001

Chapter - IV

TOWARDS MODERNITY

19th and early 20th centuries saw values in conflict, between tradition and modernity as the traditional understanding of caste and its skills were being, redefined. The basis of social structure namely caste and social formations received a new meaning by this period. So far the temple oriented social formations assured the services of different skills related to different castes and the dominance of the high caste and subordination of the lower castes. The purity/impurity concept coexisted. Caste system is conceived as a hierarchical structure based on pure/impure and characterized by separation and interdependence of caste.¹ But it was not the situation in Kerala. Each caste remained a distinct group. Each caste has its special skill which a dominant caste required but with which it can serve other castes. But now, the colonial application of engaging any caste for any profession or skill affected the age old convention. A Malayali's concept of a dwelling unit which comprised of a house, a compound around with a fence and a privacy of his own with restricted mobility gradually changed when it came to the level that he could work anywhere and take up any profession or skill. The colonial policy had destroyed the concept of caste wise skill and profession. Any caste could join school or any job. This shattered the conventional

1. See Louis Dumont - Homo Heiarchicus (Oxford, 1989) caste resulted of a slow evolution and caste division has always undergone changes.

myth and behaviour of castes. The import of Western ideas and new education led to a consciousness which is credited to have created social reform movements in various parts of India. Reform was to improve, or rebuild. While the colonial political apparatus was keen to have an English knowing section of India to assist the government at various bureaucratic levels, the new educated section stood for sensible appropriation but protecting one's own culture against the colonial interference and penetration in social values. Even the highly educated and beneficiaries of the education considered only peripheral changes.

The significant aspect to be noted here, is that all these movements were never for rejection of their identity of caste or religion² but only for adoption of some reform within the framework of religion. Again culture cannot remain static, it has to make sensible adaptations. The questions raised were for rejection of superstitions, inhuman customs like Sati, untouchability, social inequality and for education of women. The 19th century witnessed such movements under the initiative of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswara Chandra Vidaysagar in Bengal, Dayananda Saraswathi in Punjab, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement

2. Only Jyothiba Phule in Maharashtra remains distinct by rejecting God, tradition, caste system. He stood for complete equality and rejecting old convention in totality.

in Bengal and Jyothiba Phule in Maharashtra. The movements looked for ideas from west but the new consciousness was to

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study one's own culture and reformulate It was the result of a self perception and realization of the fast changing scenario around. The issues initiated by reforms like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar and others had their impact at regional levels. Brahma Samaj started its work in Malabar in 1898 with branches at Calicut, Palakkad and Talassery. They started a school called Panchama School near Christian College, Calicut. Brahma Samaj questioned untouchability and in Calicut, the force behind this was Dr.Ayyathan Gopalan. The samaj initiated for religious harmony and brotherhood. Ramakrishna Mission started its work at Calicut in 1913 and later developed into an ashram by 1930. Schools for all castes were started and hospitals were established. The Theosophical Society had its beginnings in Malabar, starting work against social evils and inequality. In 1914, Annie Besant organized a group of people called 'stalwarts' for this. The society organized inter-dining of different castes at Annie Hall, Calicut.⁴ The Servants of India Society and Arya Samaj began their activities here with the social motive to eradicate certain evils attached to religion and caste. But Arya

3. Raja Ram Mohan Roy admired the scientific achievement of the west, initiating the attempt to establish new education.

4. P.K.Velayudhan - "Adhunika Matha Prasthanangal in Kerala History Association - Kerala Charithram, Vol.II, Malayalam, Ernakulam, 1974, P.553.

Samaj started a Suddhi or purity movement to bring back Hindu converts to Christianity. There was a trend among low castes to convert to Christianity due to the missionary work and to relieve themselves from the clutches of untouchability, and curse of pollution which they suffered being members of low castes. Schools were started by Servants of India Society at Calicut, Tanur, etc. Thus associations at national level made their mark at regional level creating an impact to a revitalization of thought and practice among, various communities. Added to this were the missions of Sree Narayana Guru, Vaghatananda, Chattamabi Swamikal, Brahmananda Sivayogi and Swami Sivananda Paramahansa. Simultaneous was the assertion of a middle class whose aspirations were often linked with professions and land holding. The new middle class grew with a different social composition and attitude. It implicated upward mobility in socio-economic aspects. English education provided a new ladder to social promotion for small minorities.⁵ Colonial economic exploitations was an attempt to legitimizing its hold on social aspects benefited some Indians at the expense of others but the growing discernment among a minority could be perceived as a preparation to defend their own culture and values with some modifications. The four main contributions of

5. Sumit Sarkar- Popular Movements and Middle Class Leadership in Late Colonial India (Calcutta - 1993), P.28.

the 19th C. middle class to Indian life were religious and social reform, patriotic literature, economic critique of British rule and modern political organization culminating in the Indian National Congress.⁶ The very growth of a patriotic feeling and national consciousness implies that the new enlightened were not for cultural subordination or acceptance of colonial values in totality. It is in this context, that the Nambudiri-Nair initiative for a reformulation has to be discussed.

19th C was significant in political terms also National consciousness led to a movement. In fact, all social reform movements can be studied only with the national movement at the background. The feeling for one's own country made them look into India's past with pride. It could be called a consciousness or self perception leading to discernment as to what has to be formulated in the changing scenario. Political developments gradually were mixed with social aspirations. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded and though gradual, it passed through several stages and in course of time adopted social programmes, Malabar was soon to come into contact with the movement. In 1897, Sir C. Sanakaran Nair presided over the Amaravati Session of Indian National Congress

6. Ibid., P.35

A District Congress Committee was formed in Malabar in 1908. This was the beginning of an exposure since Malabar came to be associated with the strategies of Indian National Congress. But the movement at the early stage remained an upper caste organization.⁷ But the early demands were linked to social issues like admission of all castes to schools, inter-dining, right to enter the approach roads to temples.⁸ Starting of newspapers to popularize the message of Congress is important. In 1923 the Mathrubhumi was started and in 1924, The Al Amin, Both were from Calicut. When political agenda was gaining ground here, simultaneous were the reform and tenancy movements. Interestingly, the pioneers of social reform movements had a spiritual base. They appeared concerned about the social atmosphere here steeped in ignorance, superstitions and inhuman customs. The distinguished were Chattampi Swamikal (1854-1924) Sree Narayana Guru (1856-1928) Vagbhatananda (1885 -1940) Brahmananda Sivayogi (1852-1929) and Swami Sivānanda Paramahansa.⁹ All of them were guided by humanism and rationalism. Chattampi Swamikal (Ayyappan) visualized a casteless society and for this he urged

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7. A.K.Pillai - Congressum Keralavum, Thiruvananthapuram, 1935 PP.92 - 98.
 8. K.P.Kesava Menon- Kazhinja Kalam (Calicut, 1952) P.14.
 9. The followers of Sidhasharam believe that Purvashram or early life of Swami is not to be disclosed and his philosophy is to remain relevant, not the personal details.

the upward elevation of the Nairs and the Ezhavas. His speeches and writings carry the messages of human dignity and social equality and shatters the myth of Brahmin monopoly and supremacy. He set up an example by, living with the Ezhavas.¹⁰ He stressed education as the solution for the liberation of all from superstitions and backwardness. Though Chattampi Swamikal's activities were in Travancore, his efforts to create an awareness reached Malabar also. Sree Narayana Guru, an Ezhava sanyasi revolutionized the social scene by declaring 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for Man'. He was greatly influenced by Chattampi Swamikal. His teachings and messages affected the whole of Kerala in shattering the concept about caste system. At a time when untouchables and lower castes were not permitted to enter temples, Sree Narayana Guru established temples where all castes were allowed. It has to be observed that to mobilize the lower caste, he had to seek the same concept of 'temple' which in Kerala had created so much inequality. The rituals, idol worship, the idea of a temple are to be perceived as borrowal from the traditional ideology which he actually attacked. This initiation to elevate lower castes to a higher level is called

10. N.Gopinathan Nair, Chattampi Swamikal, Kottayam 1983
P.51.

sansritization.¹¹ Still his contributions to social awakening is lasting.¹²

Vagbhatananda, inspired and influenced by Brahma Samaj started Atma Vidya Sangam in 1920 which propagated castelessness and futility of idolatry. He started a school at Karaparamba in Calicut. His original name was Kunhikannan and came to be known as V.K.Gurukkal. But he came to be popularly known as Vagbhatananda. His activities were in Malabar trying to project the uselessness of caste divisions. He initiated a dialogue about social inequality, outdated customs, idol worship, consumption of liquor. He stressed on rationalism and went to the extent of remarking that religions have values which mould a person but the conventions, superstitions, rigid social restrictions practised by the orthodox sections are unhealthy

11. M.N.Sreenivas, Social Changes in Modern India Bombay, 1969

12. (1) Guru Nitya Chaitanya yati - "Ideological Hearsays of Religion and Non committal Philosophy of India paved the way for the destructive course of the Socio-Economic, Politico Religious and Cultural Progress of our own country Keralam, vol.3, Trivandrum, 1994, PP.92 - 94.

(2) N.V.P.Unnithiri- "Contribution of Brahmananda Sivayogi and Vagbhatananda to the Renaissance of Kerala in Keralam, Vol.3, Trivandrum, 1994, PP.95 - 96.

and obstacles to progress.¹³ He tried to make marriage celebrations simple, and said that the ritual pollution or pula after death was unreasonable and prayer was the only necessary requirement after death. He pointed out the vanity behind some of the customs prevalent among the Nairs and the Ezhavas like Tirandukuli and Talikettukalyanam which ruined several families. The Atma Vidyasangham promoted intercaste marriage which was called preetivivaham and interdining as Preetibojanam. Thus under his initiative, the first preetivivaham was celebrated in December 1921, when a Ganaka called Kunhrama married an Ezhava girl. Next was interdining, when all castes sat together and had food in a pleasant atmosphere. Through these gestures Vagbhatananda was breaking the age old myth of caste superiority and concept of purity and impurity involved in the caste institution. Though he belonged to Malabar, his vision was universal brotherhood. He appreciated Guruvayoor Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience Movement. His words reflect the spirit of nationalism. He was presenting a new philosophy based on realism, humanism and rationalism. In spite of a larger vision and superior intellect, he could not obtain a universal name but he was successful in proving the uselessness of caste. No doubt he had a significant role in the growth of Kerala society.¹⁴

13. M.S.Nair, Vagbhatananda Guruvum Samuhika Navothanavum, Thiruvananthapuram - 1998, P.50.

14. E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi, Thiruvandapuram 1947, P.281.

In 1905, Brahmananda Sivayogi started Ananda mutt or Samajam at Alathur. He propagated that man is the creator of hell and heaven and his mind is the most important aspect and soul is God. He worked against untouchability, superstition, caste symbols, idol worship and feudal system. To him, the only God in the world is Ananda or bliss.¹⁵ He considered mankind as a single unit and stressed the importance of education since he believed that only through that people in general and women in particular could know the consequence of social evils like untouchability, caste differences, superstitions, and gender inequality. He observed that women were tortured confining her as if in a cage and realized the potential of women¹⁶ and implied equal opportunities for them..In Sthree Vidya Poshini, first published in 1898, he questioned superstition of denying education to women because awakening of women would lead to an awakening of the whole family.¹⁷ Sivananda Yogi makes his arguments clear when he says that many of the conventions followed by different castes are absurd and it is his intention to shatter them. To him, Hindus have declined due to the superstitions and inequality.

15. Brahmananda Swami Sivayogi- Ananda Matha Parasyam, Alathur, 1967, P.27.

16. Brahmananda Sivayogi- Sthree Vidya Poshini, Alathur, 1963, P.13.

17. Brahmananda Sivayogi- Moksha Pradeepam, Alathur, 1977, P.v.

Swami Sivananda Paramahansa, the founder of Siddha Samajam at Vatagara in Kozhikode district posed a number of questions through his work Keralanacharam. He attacked the hierarchy of caste and superstitions which obstructed the self realization of man. He questioned the concepts of purity/impurity and pollution and rejected the sanctity of water as a purificatory agent. In one way, he was questioning the caste linked skills and professions and the interdependence of various caste for the selfish motives of higher castes. Caste system and the related practices appeared absurd to him. His text Keralanacharam, is a bold attack on social inequality and notes the intricate details of some customs among the Hindus. For instance, he questions the vannathimattu, shaving of hair by the barber and the role of midwife by a malaya woman. The high castes believed that the cloth washed by a vannathi made them pure after ritual pollution at the death of a relative, delivery and menstruation. Thus the cloth called Vannathi mattu was handled by a low caste woman and this was worn by the high caste. The hair and beard of high caste men were shaved by a barber in those days. A barber was a low caste. In the same way, the delivery was attended by a Malaya woman and the child of any caste was first touched by the midwife and the

child was given water by her.¹⁸ Again, the air we breath is the same. It cannot be different for a brahman and otherc castes.¹⁹ He ridiculed the prevalent customs like talikettukalyanam, sambandham and went to the extreme of criticizing the Brahmins and their attitude towards his children through sambandham citing the example of dogs where only the mother looks after the puppies but the father dog does not even notice them. In the Sidha Samajam founded by him at Vadakara and Thiruvananthapuram, members live as a separate group without alingning to any caste or class or custom.

All these reformers had the same intention of eradicating the negative characteristics of Hindu belief and customs. But their strategies varied. While Narayana Guru's efforts had the traits of Sanskritization, it definitely challenged the Brahmin dominance. But while Narayana Guru accommodated temple, idols, rituals, even the punool or the ^{red} second thread worn by Brahmin priests in his philosophic vocabulary, Vaghbatananda was in sharp contrast rejecting idol worship, rituals and beliefs related to religion. Chattampi

18. Swami Sivananda Paramahamsa, Keralanacharam, Vatakara, 1955 PP. 4 - 5, First published in 1922.

19. Ibid, PP.10-11. Also see, Asokam Mundon, "Dimensions of Protest" A Paper in South Indian History Congress, Chennai, 1998.

Swamikal dreamt of a castless society. Narayana Guru has been able to create the awareness which led to the formation of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham which emerged as a platform for the Ezhavas to articulate their problems and strengthen their unity. S.N.D.P. still remains a force. But the strong critics of the period were Brahmananda Sivayogi and Sivananda Paramahansa who vehemently criticized and attacked the prevalent beliefs, customs and practices and rejected temples and idols. One common aspect about all these activists were that all were spiritually oriented but involved themselves in social issues for the betterment of man. They had a protesting role to perform. Social themes became the main dialogue and engagement of a number of leaders.

Malabar was passing through a critical stage and the efforts of all these reforms could bring in an introspection in many communities. By the end of the 19th century, different communities of Malabar were trying to adjust to a new social order, in the context of colonial presence. The efforts of social reformers in creating an awareness about the outdated social customs had another dimension. They were successful in creating a consciousness about the community and social

consciousness could lead to national consciousness. The interrelation of social problems and issues with the national movement is also notable. Social inequality, untouchability relating to all regions was a national problem and all reformers had touched on this problem continuously.²⁰ The manifestation of the social aspirations ended in forming caste associations in the beginning of the 20th century. While all other castes directed their criticism towards the highest caste for many of the unreasonable practices prevalent in the society, there was a slow attempt by themselves to sense their own ills prevalent in the Nambudiri community. It was in 1908 that the Nambudiri Yogakshema sabha was formed with the obvious intention to bring welfare for the members. This was organized by some of the aristocratic Nambudiris to unite the Nambudiri community, to effect some reforms, without discarding the religious and socio economic status. A platform for Nambudiris implied the opportunity for all Nambudiris irrespective of caste and sub-caste status. The Yogakshema sabha thus brought in a sense of unity. This was necessitated by the overall developments and trends in society and due to a realization that their dominant

20. The radical social reformers from Jyotibha Phule and Narayana Guru to Rameswami Naicker fought for the total abolition of the caste system and tried to organize the lower castes to struggle against it for their own social emancipation - Bipan Chandra - Essays on contemporary India, New Delhi, 1993, P.56.

grip was slowly weakening and a new intellectual space was developing. Till then it was their voice which decided the arena of knowledge. The pioneer members of the Sabha had no intention to accept any reforms or discussion which would in any way affect their customs, beliefs and tradition. The Yogakshema till 1920s, remained reactionary under the control of a group of wealthy Nambudiris and janmis.²¹ Kurur Unni Nambudiripad, Chittoor Narayanan Nambudiripad, Edappaly Sankara Raja, Tirunavaya Vaidyan, Cherumukku Vaidikan, Kaplingat Vaidikan, Kanippayur Nambudiripad, Desamangalam Nambudiripad, Poomully Nambudiripad, Azhvancher, Tambrans and Paschiman Raman Nambudiripad were some of the prominent members of the Sabha. Even during this stage, their intention was to preserve the social privileges which they enjoyed so far. But it cannot be denied that they were not ignorant of the fast spreading significance of English education and writing in English. A working level of English is gradually becoming necessary. The revenue settlements, judicial court proceedings and court dealings necessitated the knowledge of English. In short, the interaction with any wing of the political apparatus was possible only with the English language.

21. V.T.Bhattathiripad in an interview with Kesavan Veluthat and K.Gopalankutty said that the initiative for a forum of Nambudiris was for protecting the interests of Janmis. For example, they protested against the order of Raja of Cochin for cutting the teak trees from the compounds of Nambudiris.

The inability to read and write English was identified as a real handicap.²² Therefore the acceptance of English education was included in the agenda of the Sabha. But the conservatives were dead against this move. Nambudiri life was totally associated with temples, rituals, and ideology which alienated them from the mainstream. This ideology and caste status prevented them from realizing the importance of contemporary trends. It was difficult to overcome the age old life pattern.

It took time for yogakshema to be active and articulate the problems of the community. The soft whispers of discontent gradually became loud and distinct. A magazine called the Mangalodayam and a paper called the Yogakshema were started in 1909 at Trissur. When Kurur Unni Nambudiripad raised the issue of English education and that it must be for every Nambudiri, a section condemned it as 'mlechhabasha'. The conservatives with the support of aristocrats opposed the reformists. This led to an argument within the community.²³ A school was started at Edakkunni for Nambudiri boys where all

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22. V.T.Bhattathiripad in his autobiography Kannerum Kinaum, says that he felt ashamed to realize that he could not write even at the age of 18. That was in 1914.
23. V.T.Bhattathiripad - Kannerum Kinavum, V.T.Yude Sampurna Krithikal, Kottayam, 1997, P.190. Also see Madambu Kunikuttan- Abhivadhaye, Trissur, 1989.

regular routines had to be observed like morning bath, prayer, recitation of vedas and learning of English. This curriculum reminded them of their social status and duties. Even at a time when other communities like the Nairs and the Ezhavas were responding to the advantages of English education and employment without reservations, the Nambudiris were opposed to the idea of losing their privileged and distinct status. The lower castes had no such inhibition. Gradually they felt it advisable not to refuse modern educational facilities. Therefore, the early leaders agreed for an adjustment which accommodated the old and the new. The 8th annual meeting of Yogakshema was held at Olappamanna in a grand manner. It was here that the stress for modern education and the issue of education of girls was discussed. Thus the problem of women caught the attention of at least a small section. An immediate effect was the appointment of tutors to teach English in wealthy illams. The middle and poor Nambudiri had to remain hopeless and helpless.²⁴ The importance of the Edakunni school had to be understood in this context. Food and boarding were free there.

24. I.C.P.Nambudiri, a social activist, says that he was fortunate that he got the chance of education and his name came up in a lot. It implies that many others did not get the chance. I.C.P.Nambudiri in an interview in Deshabhimani, Nov. 12 - 19, 1995.

The Yogakshema was gradually acquiring new functions to perform. A School, a reading room, a magazine and a newspapers were no mere achievements. Imparting of knowledge and transmission of news were definitely a symbol of growing awareness. The discussion about Nambudiri movements has to be understood in two ways (1) It was only a minor section who desired reforms and changes and there was dead opposition from the conservatives (2) Unlike other caste associations which criticised and attacked the dominance of the upper caste and the related social disabilities, the Nambudiri activists were targeting their own community to give up outdated beliefs and tradition and accept relevant reforms. The traditional social behaviour of the elite land owning group was exposed to criticism by its own younger generations who promoted nationalist ideology among its members.²⁵ Thus the first step in this direction of social mobility and progress in terms of modernity was the emphasis on education. Education had become a social reality. The movement among the Nambudiris remain distinct because this community struck and revolted against their own privileges and traditional status, enjoyed so far. The pioneers, a small number had to struggle against tradition and the orthodox in adopting certain values agreeable to the contemporary situation. Their culture

25. K.K.N.Kurup - "Tradition Vs Modernity A study of Social Reforms, among the Nambudiri of Kerala", 56th Session of Indian History Congress, Calcutta, 1995.

could not remain, static, it had to adjust to the modern values. They also sensed that other communities were getting alienated from them, due to erosions in socio-economic structure.

Along with the urge for English education, some families took interest in business and factories. The first to accept this was the Desamangalam mana. The enterprises like Shornur tile Factory Cotton Mill at Kozhikode Kalpadrumam Press, Rice ware house, Mangalodayam press were started at their initiative. Chevur Parameshwaran Nambudiripad started timber business in Valluvanad, Malabar²⁶. This was a clear shifting from an attitude that they need not entertain physical labour or such enterprises. Gradually even the daily pattern of a Nambudiri accepted a new order. A new life style was unconsciously entering their life. It was taking bath at 6 o'clock, praying at seven, drinking coffee at eight, reading newspapers at nine, taking meals at ten, reading till three, playing tennis at four, taking oil bath at six, taking dinner at eight, gossiping till ten, and going to sleep at ten. A new time table thus emerged in aristocratic illams. These new habits had to make adjustments in dress. Thus wearing the dhoti in the

26. Unni Nambudiri - Vol.8, No.12-1108 Chingam P.207.
Also see Unni Nambudiri - Vol.5 No.1-1099, Kanni PP.12-13.

typical fashion²⁷ while praying and doing rituals, wearing dhoti and banian during leisure, or trousers and shoes while playing shirt, coat, tie, walking stick during travels entered the behaviour pattern.²⁸ This social and economic process was part of the total culture process by which man transformed his environment and himself.²⁹ It is also notable that while the colonial powers tried to spread their culture, language and knowledge, colonized were alert to issues regarding culture. The question as to whether ideology is culture remains significant.³⁰ Culture is embodied in language and every day practices and an attempt was strong to protect a sphere of indigenous culture from the influence of western modernity. A collective consciousness was organized around community ties. Though new adoptions were made in dress, food hair styles, the inner identity remained the same.

27. See Illustration of Nambudiri dress

28. V.T.Bhattathiripad, op.cit,P.227.But this could be possible only for a rich Nambudiri.

29. Sarah Joseph, "Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Social Theory in Interrogating Culture, Delhi 1998, P.15

30. Gramsci equates ideology with culture, Antonio Gramsci, Selection from the Prison Note Books, translated and edited by Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Novett, New York 1971, P.45.

The Yogakshema Sabha founded in 1908, had three stages in its development and attempt to better the community. During the first stage from 1908 to 1920, it was led by Janmi Nambudiris obvious/y to protect their interests and traditional character of Nambudiris. But during the second stage from 1920, a more active group arose. The Yuvajana Sangham was formed and Unni Nambudiri, a journal was started. This reflected the sentiments of the extremist group within the community. The attitude of the moderates and extremists clashed. Discussions intensified and there was lot of introspection about the existing social realities. The 1920s are important not only in Malabar but also for the entire country. Political agitations were gaining strength and there arose the feeling to defend one's own country and culture. Some of the Yuvajana Sangham members were inclined towards political developments and came to be associated with it during the third stage. Women's question gains attention.

As discussed earlier, in the initial stage, the intention of the Sabha was to organize the Nambudiri Community and had a narrow programme to prevent the disintegration of the traditional social structure. But now, there was a wider perspective to make the Nambudiris realize the fast changing

atmosphere, to educate themselves and accept modern values agreeable to the age. For instance the working knowledge of English for a correspondence, official matters increased, many realized the urgency to learn English. Even there, a group called Noottipandrandukar under the leadership of Paschiman Raman Nambudiri declared that there was no necessity to learn English and untouchability should continue.³¹ This speaks of a conflict within the community to adopt or not to adopt certain relevant reforms. For a ritualistic and socially dominant community, it was not smooth to accept modern values, but could not ignore the socio-economic aspirations of other communities for upward mobility mainly through the opportunities of education. Even if they were not willing to change, the growth of other communities would certainly make a blow at the dominant status of Nambudiri community. It has already been noted that a school at Edakkunni tried to balance between traditional and modern system of education. This was evident from the strict instructions to the students of the school to observe all daily routine like bath, prayer, vedic chanting and the conventional dress but English was taught.

31. Kurumattur Narayanan Nampbudidirpad, a member of Yokashmema, had moderate views about reforms. He told the present writer on 28/6/96 that he has always stood for the spiritual character of the Nambudiri and that girls need not get high education. He was an active member till 1932 and belongs to the prestigious Karumathur illam at Taliparamba.

It was in South Malabar that the Yogakshema Sabha centered its activities. The initial leadership was in the hands of aristocratic Nambudiri janmis like Olappamanna, Karur and Desamangalam.³² These manas initiated a move by starting Cotton Mills, Press, wear houses and Tile factory which was in sharp contrast to the socio-economic perspective of the community. Thus Tiruvannur Cotton Mills, Kalpadruman Press were started. The erosions and developments in the tenurial holdings also should be linked to the new aspirations. Among the members of the sabha, there were moderates and extremists as against conservatives. When the Yuvajanasangham was formed, it was apparent that the youth had started thinking in a different way. While moderates wanted to retain the Nambudiri identity, the Yuvajanasangham was keen to make Nambudiri, a human being. They argued for the speedy implementation of certain reforms and their words reflected their discontent. By 1920s issues like Women's education, Family Regulation Bill, endogamy and Parivedanam came up for discussion in the Yogakshema.³³ On

32. In North Malabar there were 170 illoms but in South Malabar there were 838 illams. In North malabar only 3 or 4 were janmis. A.C. Kannan Nambiar - Munsiff at Badagara 18th November 1921 - Yogakshema.

33. See Yogakshema. 1920, 24 Sept., 1 October, 15 Oct., 19 Nov., 17 Dec., 1921 14 Jan., 31 Jan., 11 Feb., 18 Feb., 25 Feb., 11 March, 18 May, 12 Aug., 18 Nov., 1922, 7 Jan., 8 May, 15 June, 1923, 22 Jan., 5 May, 12 May, 19 May 22 Nov., 1 Oct., 1924 1 Oct., 1925, 4 Feb., 3 June, 6 June, 20 June, 19 Sep., 28 Sept., 30 Sept., 8 Oct., 21 Nov., 1926, 17 Feb., 26 June, 30 June, 8 July, 29 Sept., 23 Oct., 1 Dec., 8 Dec., 1927 5 Feb., 8 Feb., 15 Feb., 22 Feb., 8 March, 22 May, 28 May, 28 July, 2 Aug., 1928, 19 Sept. 22 Sept., 1929, 19 Sept., 22 Septs. 1929, 1 May., 17 July 2 August, 26 Oct., 2 Nov., 14 December.

24 September 1920, the Yogakshema strongly talks about the sambandham of Nambudiris. "We are trying to end the sambandham. But there are still Nambudiris who have this alliance. Such people should be boycotted."³⁴ In the same issue, we find reference to the Yogakshema Company and the Unni Nambudiri bank which indicate the shifting attitude of Nambudiris to start business ventures. Another theme of preoccupation was the Family Regulation Bill which would bring in new developments in property rights. The demand was to permit younger sons of an illam to marry Nambudiri girls which would relieve many families who have daughters aged 30 or 40 remaining spinsters. Only the eldest son had the right of caste marriage and he could have two or three wives and sambandhams. The aphans could have only temporary liaisons called sambandham. This practice virtually led to many Nambudiri women living as spinsters. This precarious situation was due to the aphans having no right of caste marriage. The marriage of youngsters would lessen this problem. If aphans are permitted to marry within the caste, the wife and children would gain the rights of property which remained impartible and was managed in whole by the karanavan of the illam. This economic demand was not entertained by many

34. Kummini Krishnan Nambudiri strongly talks of tactics to arrest this practice- Yogakshema, 24 Sept. 1920.

elders because that would be a blow to the traditional character of an illam. But the trend to bestow self acquired cash or property to wife and children was evident. The Yogakshema³⁵ reported a case where the younger Nambudiri married a Nambudiri girl when his eldest brother had no issues. Ongallur Mullapally aphan Nambudiri married the daughter of Taramallur Divakaran Nambudiri's daughter. But the karanavan did not permit the couple to enter the illam. In spite of consistent efforts by activists, certain convictions remained unchanged even in 1923. The Yogakshema exhorts the aristocrat Nambudiris to give initiative to kanishta vivaham which would end the problem of many families. The situation in an illam besets with internal contradictions and resentment among members. When a Nambudiri had to repay a loan, or repair an illam or give his daughter dowry the old Nambudiri married again. His wives live in a state of competition. Younger Nambudiris enter sambandham, old Nambudiris marry young girls. Only Moosamburi had access to all parts of the illam, only he could wear gold ornaments or good dress while aphans could have only food, oil and limited number of dress. This disparity naturally led to frictions within a household. Nambudiri culture

35. Yogakshema, 8 October, 1923. Yogakshema stuck to reforms like education and Kanishtavivaham. Yuvajanasangham and Unni Nambudiri went a step a head for giving up ghosha and for widow marriage and individual claim of property.

was tied down by rigid rules. Even the way, a Nambudiri took food was determined by unwritten regulations. When food was served to a Moosamburi, a leaf was kept touching his plantain leaf and the second leaf was touched by another leaf and the number of leaves depended on the number of wives he had. The intention was that the the leaves touched one another as if in a chain. Before touching his food, the Moosamburi took little water, chanted slokas drank this. It is called Kudikkuneer . It is repeated after food. Then the first wife takes the leftover food of the husband and puts a share in all the leaves. The first wife had the right to eat on the leaf left behind by the husband. This was observed specially after veli or marriage, birthday, onam, vishu and Thiruvathira.

The Nambudiris had to please their Nair wives with cash and property in a discreet manner. The activists started pointing out the simultaneous movement in the Nair community for endogamy and the rights of the wife and children to claim the property of the husband or father.³⁶ This would mean that even if the husband was a Nambudiri, they could claim the property. This reality of Nambudiri property reaching the Nairs could have

36. 7th September 1921, Yogakshema

been a possible threat to them which convinced them of an imminent change in sambandham and inheritance rights. Moreover monogamy and endogamy were being the rule of the land. A letter to Yogakshema believed to be of an antarjanam points out the miserable condition of girls, given in marriage to old Nambudiris who already had two wives and an equal number of sambandham and appeals to include the clause that a Nambudiri could have the right to marry twice only if the first wife could not bear children or sick or dies. Though it cannot be ascertained whether it was a letter from an antarjanam ³⁷ it shows the increasing awareness of such social problems and publicity through newspapers. Again, questions were raised whether only the boys had the right of education and that too when the expenses were met by the illam. It is appreciable that an antarjanam raises the point that women formed half of the community and as such had the right of property. This was in 1921. This was a significant development regarding the community because it raised a number of issues like identity of women, her marital status, claim of property, inheritance pattern were all involved in this. By 1926, the Yogakshema represented the social aspirations of the community. It was the mouth piece of a community whose number was around 35,000. Of these 700 were members of the sabha and it had nearly 30 branches. It was

37. 18th February, 1921, Yogakshema

presided over by leading Nambudiris like Poomully, Desamangalam, Olappamana, Koodallur, Killimangalath and Cherumukku. Annual Conferences were held in different parts of Kerala.³⁸

A close understanding of Nambudiri problems signifies the interrelation of one to another. Thus the rule of primogeniture, impartibility of the property, sambandham and aivedananam had direct consequence like many women remaining unmarried or becoming sapatins or the wives of an old Nambudiri. It had also led to the despair of aphans having no family of his own, no house or property of his own nor freedom in his own illam. Another issue which came up for discussion and approval was the necessity of new system of education and stressed the need to learn from western culture.³⁹ The consistent efforts and vigorous propaganda by the activists in 1920s to convince that lack of modern education had led to the stagnation of the community and that even the lowest castes were exploiting the situation, was successful to an extent.⁴⁰ The pattern of

38. Muthiringot Bhavathratan Nambudiripad, Yogakshema Sabhayam Samudaya Pradhinidhyavum, 8 September, 1926, Yogakshema.

39. E.M.S.Nambudiripad, 19 Septemner 1928, Yogakshema.

40. 31 Jan. 1921, Yogakshema, 27 May 1921, Yogakshema. 9 Sept. Yogakshema.

education in Kerala has changed Nambudiris and has set up schools at Edakunni and efforts were made in British Malabar also.⁴¹ It went to the extent of remarking that free feeding houses called oottupura for Brahmins should be stopped and the funds diverted for education.⁴² In 1923, the number of Nambudiri Brahmins studying in professional Colleges was 438.⁴³ One significant development was that the Nambudiris who remained aloof socially, started realizing that the social situation was going beyond their control. This is evident from yogakshema and Unni Nambudiri. One instance of an antarjanam filing a case against the Karanavan was a breakthrough. Devaki Antarjanam Vs Sambhu case gave the verdict that the widow of an illam had the right to protect the joint property of the illam from misappropriation and corruption⁴⁴ by the trustee or manager. Another case clearly declared that an antarjanam has claim over the property of the illam to which she is married.⁴⁵ The relevance of the judiciary and its involvement in the social problems came to be accepted. The ideological dominance of the

41. 27 May, 1921, Yogakshema

42. 1 Oct., 1920 Yogakshema

43. 23 May, 1923 Yogakshema

44. Devaki Antarjanam, Vs Sambhu, Travancore law Report, 46, 1888, No.12

45. Savithri Amma Vs Neelakantan Potti, 27, TLR 1912, These verdicts carry heavy loaded messages.

community prevented the members from realizing the social developments by then. But gradually there was a shift to reality. Nambudiri Regulation Bill, women's education and endogamy were accepted in the agenda for discussion and included in the agenda. All the problems of this community centered round women and a dialogue was began within the community to alleviate the problems of women. This period was also the scene of nationalist movement. By 1920s, there was a definite growth of a concept of community and each organization like Yogakshema or Nair Service Society or Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham envisaged the upliftment of one's own community. Thus various caste organizations and their motives made it clear that these movements were intended for one's own community. It was only when some members of these, plunged into nationalist movement, such associations had a wider motive and aspiration. It is important to note that while social reform movements were going strength at a regional level, the nationalist movement with a larger perspective was gathering momentum.

Problems of women became the centre of discussion by 1920s. Some antarjanams started articulating their grievance through Yogakshema and Unni Nambudiri. An active dialogue started within the community on education of women and even the

dressing pattern. Antarjanams had simple dress like a dhoti, they did not cover their breast and had long ear lobes hair was tied to the side and had no habit of wearing gold except on occasions. While going out, they covered their body with a long shawl and used an umbrella. Yuvajanasangam had a major role in influencing the women to dress modestly. Activists like V.T.Bhattathiripad exhorts the antarjanams to have a simple neat dress, through Yogakshema and Unni Nambudiri.⁴⁶ Girls should be educated and for this, man should realize this necessity and he should be an educated person and uneducated people should not be permitted to marry. Yogakshema thus constituted a committee to look into the sole aspect of women's education and Muthiringot Bhavathratan Nambudiripad was the secretary of this.⁴⁷ Besides education of women, other issues which troubled the community were polygamy, sambandham and young widows. Young girls married to old Nambudiris became widows at the prime of their youth and had to lead a pathetic life because a widow was never welcome for any auspicious occasion nor could she mingle with everyone. Her chastity was strictly guarded.⁴⁸ When serious discussions

46. Unni Nambudiri, No.7 Vol.6, 1925, P.454, NO.4 Vol.7, 1926 P.242, No.12, Vol.8, P.680.

47. Unni Nambudiri, No.2, Vol.9, 1928, PP.156-157

48. M.R.Bhattathiripad in his Upanasangal talks about his experience as a young boy to have seen a young girl standing aloof during a marriage ceremony weeping and to his query, his mother told him that she was a widow. This deeply troubled him. His was the first widow marriage in 1937 with Uma.M.R.Bhattathiripad- Upanayasangal, Mathrubhumi Sept 1988 - P.171.

about women were engaged by the activists, they started appealing to Nair women to convince Nambudiris who came for sambandham about the changing values and reject them to help Nambudiri women. Nambudiri should not remain just a Nambudiri he should become a human being. This was the call to fellow beings by leaders. Some argued that caste symbols should be given up leading to a uniformity in appearance. The inhibition of Nambudiris to learn English, to work like other castes, the weakness of the marriage system the reluctance to seek jobs in government service and to undertake agriculture, to recognize the identity of women were discussed at platforms and journals. The publication of 'Bhaskaran Nambudiripad' a novel as a reply to 'Indulekha' is noted and advertised in Unni Nambudiri and Yogakshema.⁴⁹ The main obstacle for a Nambudiri to release himself from the ideological grip was the fear of pollution. Pollution was at two levels (1) Untouchability and (2) Unapprochability. This kept them away from mingling with the other castes. But at the same time, as a natural development, many were influenced by the nationalist and political developments.

49. The advertisement of 'Bhaskaran Nambudiripad', a novel is seen in many issues of Yogakshema and Unni Nambudiri. It is presumed that Vadakkanchery Nambudiri was the author. Indulekha is a novel written by O. Chandu Menon and published in 1889. For details See Chapter VI.

The aristocratic disposition had to compromise and let the trends of change enter their psyche and existence. As noted earlier, a school for boys was opened in 1919 at Edakunni. A girls' school at Panjal was open. The new education differed from the old and recognized the individual's ability and interest. By now, newspapers and magazines became a part of the daily life and thereby a wide world was opened to the reader. Thus the life which centred around an illam and the surroundings, began to contact distant areas, if not physically. The endeavour aimed at influencing Nambudiris to get educated and thus enable themselves to get jobs like others from different communities and also to participate and be a part of local assemblies or legislative assemblies. But this has to be achieved without losing the traditional character.⁵⁰ But Yuvajana Sangham maintained a totally different stand when it argued that all men are equal and there is no difference between a Nambudiri and a Nair. They thought that joint family system should come to an end. Endogamy, individual share, women's education, end of gosha, widow remarriage were the concerns of Yuvajana Sangham. A Nambudiri should be willing to take up any job and corruption and misappropriation of temple funds should be prevented.⁵¹ V.T.Bhattathiripad who was an activist and member

50. V.T.Bhattathiripad- Karmavipakam, Trissur, 1988, P.181.

51. Ibid., P.182

of Yuvajanasangam raised his apprehension about the existence of different caste associations like Nambudiri Yogakshema, Nair Service Society, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham and cast fears about these ending in polarization. This is a vital aspect. While reform movements intensified, consciously or unconsciously this polarization and rift developed.

Added to the influence of newspapers and magazines and education, the writing and staging of some sensational plays went straight to the minds of audience. These were Adukkalayil Ninnun Arangathekku by V.T.Bhattathiripad, Marakkudakkullile Mahanarakam by M.R.Bhattathiripad, Ritumati by M.P.Bhattathiripad or Premji had projected women's issues as the themes. These plays were so realistic and created a storm in the community.⁵² It touched everyone who saw it against the opposition of many including V.T.s' elder brother. It sent vibrations in the minds of Nambudiris whose intellect and consciousness were shaken by V.T. The burning issues of women were in front of them. It was a kind of exposure for the women to realize the contemporary trends in society. Women who so far lived inside the illam could see their images on stage. It was a picture of themselves enacted on stage. They could identify their problems in the characters.

52. The first one was staged in 1929.

It has to be noted that the social activists of the community relied more on plays to project the precarious conditions of the community. Adukkalayil Ninnun Arangathekku was first staged in 1929. The audience sat bewildered to see the reality. Women activists like Arya Pallam, Parvati Nenmenimangalam and Devaki Narikkattiri were directly or indirectly involved in plays for women's welfare.⁵³

In 1931, when the Yuvajana Sangham met at Guruvayur, it was decided to form a women association. Thus the first antarjana samajam was formed at Trissur in 1931. It was the effort of some antarjanams under the initiative of Parvati Nenmenimangalam. This gave a new hope to the activists who were till then unhappy about the lack of response from women. This is also seen as a direct result of the sensation called Adukkalayil Ninnun Arangathekku by V.T. Bhattathiripad.⁵⁴ But instead of believing that a play changed them, it can be perceived as part of a general consciousness of women to come out of isolation and be a part of the movement. By 1934, the number of antarjana samajams rose to 100. Antarjanams formed small groups, started

53. Their involvement is reflected in their own words. See Desabhimani- November 12-18, 1995, Devaki Narikattiri passed away on 13/7/2000.

54. For details of the play, See Chapter VI of this dissertation

locating their problems and find a solution. Some of them cut their long ear lobes and started wearing studs and gold bangles. Some started wearing mundu and blouse.⁵⁵ When talking about the Nambudiri community, the contrast within the family is apparent. Women bore all the misery from the marriage pattern and family regulations. Adhivedanam, Sambandham, joint family system, sapatnis, plight of widows, gosha, gender differences gave them a miserable life.

With the reform movements based on humanism, gradually men had to recognize them and realized that to be a good wife and a good mother, a woman should have education and appear neat and well dressed.⁵⁶ It was a new perspective in the context of nuclear family and modernity. Activists like V.T. Bhattathiripad inspired antarjanams to start an antappura revolt. They observed gosha and so while going out, covered themselves with a puthappu and umbrella. Some of the women felt that this was the worst symbol and boycotted gosha in 1929. Parvathi

55. Premji or M.P. Bhattathiripad "Parvati Nenmenimangalam" in Unni Nambudiri Vol.1, No.2, 1947, P.64. Traditionally the size of their studs signified the status. Bigger the size, bigger the status.

56. V.T. Bhattathiripad in a letter asks the antarjanams to keep the hair neat and clean and also to dress neatly. Nambudiri Penkidangalkku Orezhuthu in V.T. yude Sampoornakrithikal - Kottayam, 1997, PP.556-565.

Manazhi was the first to give up gosha. In 1931, when the antarjana samaj was held at Rasika Sadanam of V.T.Bhattathiripad, Parvati Nenmenimangalam and Arya Pallam removed their gosha and umbrella and led ten antarjanams to come out. They then marched to the venue of the sabha meeting, shocking and exciting the participants. It is said that even V.T.Bhattathiripad stood shocked to see this.⁵⁷ Those who initiated this, inspired many to do it and there was no looking back. Women had found their identity. In their own words, "we don't want to hide under an umbrella. Our identity will not melt in front of anyone or burn in the heat."⁵⁸ This break with tradition was a significant development of Nambudiri movement and was an expression of inner strength of the antarjanams and the clear illustration that culture of any community could make a reformulation relevant to the age and that it could not remain static. This event opened up an active dialogue about women in newspapers, magazines and sabha meetings.

The Nambudiri property was impartible and it was managed by the eldest son of the family. No one had an individual share. Even the aphans had no right to property. When

57. Premji or M.P.Bhattathiripad, op.cit. P.66

58. Ibid.

the demand for partition and endogamy gained ground, it was evident that all would get an individual share of the property and the aphans could marry Nambudiri women, they could also gain the right of property. The property right for all would give them importance, recognition and identity. It also dawned on them that women should be self-reliant and discover her own potential and do any work. The play Tozhilkendrathilekku signifies this.⁵⁹ For this awareness, discovery of one's own ability, rejection of superstitions and unhealthy customs, women should be educated. Till then her education reached up to the level of reading some puranic slokas with difficulty or a formal reading ability tutored by an ezhuthachan at home. Women were never regarded as a companion or partner in marital life inspite of her role as the protector of family dignity, morality and values. The projection of women as able and defender of ahimsa and the symbol of patience, love, toleration by Gandhiji did influence the minds of young activists. Gandhiji saw marriage as a relationship of love and co-operation and adjustment.⁶⁰ The final decade of the century saw the intensity of the national movement. The effect of the movement was felt at

59. Oru Sanhgam Antarjanangal - Tozhilkendrathilekku, Lakkiti-1948. The play was written, directed and acted by Nambudiri women. Also see T.K.Anandi - Adhaythe Stree Paksha Natakam in Bhashaposhini - September 2000.

60. Tendulkar (ed), collected works of Mahatma Gandhi - Vol.XXVI- Publication Division - 1960, P.285,

every region. A new philosophy was developing. Some of the women activists were Arya Pallam, Parvati Nenmenimangalam, Parvati Manazhi and Devaki Narikkattiri. These antarjanams asserted and emerged as the spirit and force for others to realize the needs of the time and the need of education. A monthly magazine was started called 'Sreedevi' to project the problems of Nambudiri women.⁶¹ At the Karalmana annual meeting, many antarjanams appeared without gosha. Nearly 20 antarjanams met at kaplingatmana in February 1930 and decided to modify their dress, to join Yuvajana Sangam and to join public schools along with other castes.⁶² This assertion and discernment of the antarjanams and their symbols of protest by discarding gosha and umbrella appears the significant turning point in the movement. Women conventionally treated as relatively inferior and submissive projected their hidden discontent and the growing awareness of the contemporary situation. It is all the more prominent, when we understand that those who broke convention had to meet dire social consequences.

61. (1) V.T.Bhattathiripad - Karmavipakam, Trissur, 1988, P.341

(2) Unni Nambudiri - 2nd August 1930 - Sreedevi antarjanam, Mrs. Bh. vathratan Nambudiripad, Devaki Narikkattiri, Mrs. Pallam, Mrs. P.S. Bhattathiripad were the force behind 'Sreedevi'.

62. 15 February 1930 - Yogakshema

The husbands of all these pioneer women were activists of the movement. Regarding the status of women, in a patriarchal set up of illam, women were under the strict surveillance of father or brother. She could not even talk loudly for she was made to believe that a girl's voice should not reach the roof. The negative character of upbringing made them to stick to an inner world making them ignorant of contemporary developments. Even in late 1920s and 1930s girls remained uneducated.⁶³ In the notable illam called Ittiyamparamba which was the illam of activists like ICP Nambudiri, and I.S.Nambudiri, their sisters Sreedevi, Uma and Devaki had not seen schools. They were taught by an ezhuthachan. Only Priyadatta, their youngest sister was educated formally at Trissur, Calicut and later was employed at KDC Bank, Calicut. Sreedevi married V.T.Bhattathiripad, an aphan who already had a sambandham and two children. There was opposition for this marriage because aphan were not permitted to have a caste marriage. Uma, a widow married M.R.Bhattathiripad which was the sensational first widow marriage in 1937. But Sreedevi antarjanam recollects that the youngsters of her illam were happy at this marriage.⁶⁴ Devaki married Narayanan,

63. Muthiringot Bhavathralen Nambudiripad points out that out of 35000 Nambudiris, only 35 were studying at Edakkunni school and it is high time that Nambudiri girls are sent to school.

64. Unni Nambudiri - 1925 - Vol.6 No. 8 PP.450-452.
Sreedevi Antarjanam - Malayala Manorama 8/3/92. The first widow marriage was attended by Nalappat Narayana Menon, Mannath Padmanabhan, Joseph, K.Ayyappan, Nilambur Valiya Raja, Kuttikrishna Marar, E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Parvati Ayyapan, Parvathi Nenmenimangalam gave the tali for the bride.

V.T.Bhattathiripad's brother who was an aphan. All these marriages were a challenge to tradition. Later in 1947, M.P.Bhattathiripad or Premji married Arya, a widow and in 1952, Priyadatta married Kallat Krishnan, an ezhava. All these marriages were conscious attempts aware of the threat of brishtu or ostracism. The family had to bear consequences. Priyadatta recollects that the family which came under ostracism faces the non-co-operation of the community. For Nambudiris, functions like naming of a child, Srardha or the death anniversary, it was necessary that Nambudiris should perform some rituals to end the ritual pollution after birth or death. The members of the ostracised family were not permitted to touch any relative of the parental illam and Priyadatta remembers that when she stayed at her mother's illam after Uma's marriage, her relatives refused to touch her⁶⁵ It was also compulsory that the vessels used should be cleaned and kept upside down. The only consolation was that they could enter the temples. For a Nambudiri, ritualistic as they were in their daily life pattern such ostracism had direct effects. In 1940 V.T.Bhattathiripad's sister Parvathi married Raghava Panicker and niece Tankam was married to Sivan, a goldsmith. But inter-caste marriage like these did not gain encouragement. This idea slowed down in the coming years.

65. In an interview on 26/7/2000, Priyadatta Kallat recollected the trends of 1930s and 1940s.

The initiative by an active group of Nambudiris to create an awareness about the stagnation of Nambudiri culture, met with contempt and criticism by section who opposed any change in tradition. V.T.Bhattathripad's endeavours were strongly attacked. For instance Kurumattur Narayanan Nambudiripad who belongs to an aristocratic illam at Taliparamba, was a member of of Yogakshema but remained a moderate throughout. He took his B.A.degree in 1930. He believes that education was to an extent necessary but felt that the play called Adukkalayil Ninum Arangathekku had gone to the extreme of ridiculing the Nambudiris and projecting the negative aspects of the community.⁶⁶ T.S.Nambudiri remained a harsh critic of V.T and believes that V.T. and others had ignored the great traditions of Nambudiris, their knowledge and cultural contributions to Indian culture. He criticized V.T's attempts of inter dining and intercaste marriage resorted to by the activists. He along with Kanippayoor Sankaran Nambudiripad, Palolli Vasudevan Nambudiri, Kurumapally Kesavan Nambudiri started publication of Pathaka to project their stand.⁶⁷ But a function held at Kerala Kalamandalam, the institution founded by Vallathol Narayana Menon at Cheruthuruthy for teaching Kathakali and other traditional art

66. He told the present writer on 28/6/96 he believed in retaining the identity of the Nambudiri

67. Deshabhimani, Nov.12/19/1995

forms⁶⁸, V.T.suggested that the vedic school at Trissur and Brahamaswam madam be made a part of Kalamandalam so that these also receive equal patronage and development. This speaks of his understanding of culture and what has to be retained and developed. But his arguments were often misunderstood by the conservative section of the community that V.T. was trying to plunge the community to doom. They failed to note that his attack was on some unscrupulous behaviour patterns of Nambudiris.

The movement of this nature could not advance smoothly. In the Nambudiri community, there were three sections with different dispositions. The conservative, the moderates and the extremists. Every progressive step was hindered by the conservative section to pull back and demoralize the activists. V.T. Battathiripad, while he was a student, attended the Ahmedabad session of congress and when he came back, he was refused admission in school. This was because of his mingling with other castes and the fear of pollution. Later when his activities broadened, at every step, he had to face threats. When his play was staged at his illam, his brother engaged people to harass the troupe which staged the play and his brother went to the

68. Kerala Kalamandalam has grown to the level of a deemed university

extent of stopping rice and other necessities to him and those who supported him. This attitude eventually led to the partition and V.T.Bhattathiripad had to leave his illam without any property. His bold statements like to burn temples created a lot of hatred among his opponents and the Cochin Raja prohibited him from entering Cochin. Sreedevi Bhattathiripad recollects that they had to drag with financial difficulties during the movement.⁶⁹ The same experience of financial problems and harassment meted out to M.R.Bhattathiripad and Uma is recollected by Uma Bhattathiripad.⁷⁰ Above all ostracism, from the community was an emotional harassment.

Nationalist movement affected Malabar and some of the strategies engaged at various stages of the movement were adopted by the activists in social problem. For instance, picketing of adivedananam to prevent such marriages and boycott of certain caste symbols were on this line. While women gave up gosha and started wearing blouse and mundu, Nambudiri youngsters removed the thread or punool, and tuft, the symbols of caste. Men started wearing mundu and shirt. By late 1930's a

69. See Malayala Manorama -8/3/92 -Interview of Sreedevi Bhattathiripad.

70. Deshabhimani Weekly, Nov.12-19, 1995.

uniformity in dress irrespective of castes could be seen. The Gandhian technique of organized march could be detected in the yachanayatra initiated by V.T. He with 20 activists started a journey on 6th April 1930, the day Dandi March came to an end, to collect funds for the students of Nambudiri Schools.⁷¹ They wore white dhoti, shirt and Gandhi cap. The yatra covered Cheramangalam, Kiraloor, Pathramangalam, Marathangkad, Chathanur, Lakkiti, Thiruvillamala, Vadakkurissi, Pulamanthol, Eranad, Kozhikode, Kannur, Taliparamba, Payyannur, Nileswaram covering nearly 800 kms. The intention was to touch the conscience of the people, to see different regions and collect funds. V.T. mentioned that at several places, he was touched by the gestures of affection and co-operation. At several places, women donated their bangles and possessions whole heartedly even against the attitude of orthodox elders.⁷² The Yachanayatra had a social dimension inspired by the national movement.

71. V.T.yude Sampurna Krithikal, Kottayam, 1997, P.583
 V.T.Bhattathiripad, Vasudevan Nambudiri, M.R.Bhattathiripad
 P.S.Kesavan Nambudiri, Perumangot Damodaran Nambudiri,
 Narikkattiri brothers, Muthiringot Bhavathrattan Nambudiri,
 Mithran Nambudiri, Pillanezhi Narayanan Nambudiri,
 participated.

72. Ibid

Kurumathoor Narayanan Nambudiripad, remembers his father donating cash at this occasion when Yachanayatra reached Taliparamba.

Another strategy applied by him was the Gandhian idea of a casteless shelter, when he set up Rasikasadanam at Aloor on 31st October 1931. It was a direct challenge to untouchability and clearly inspired by nationalist movement. Any caste could stay and work there. Kasthurba, Devadas Gandhi, C.Rajagopalachari, T.Prakasam, K.Kelappan, N.P.Damodaran, Konda Venkatappa had come and stayed there.⁷³ In 1935, V.T.acquired 25 acres for Udbudha Keralam near Pattambi, a commune for all castes to stay and work. The stress was on self-reliance. Later such communes were opened at Calicut. These novel attempts did not survive for a long time because of financial constraints but the ideological inclination for such initiative implies the influence of the national consciousness.

By 1935, the movement acquires a passive character due to the fulfillment of the specific demands by the community through the Madras Nambudiri Act 1933. Simultaneously, the Travancore and Cochin Acts were passed. The demand for kanishta vivaham had strong implications. As discussed earlier, the aphans, were not permitted to have caste marriage but now the Nambudiri wives of the aphans could gain the rights of the property. This socio-economic right would lead to a status and identity in the

73. V.T.Vasudevan - V.T.yude Sampurna Krithikal, Kottayam 1997, P.7.

family. Along with this, should be read the stress of education for girls and the argument for self-reliance. The next step was the demand for individual partition of the illam property. This turned out to be the greatest blow to the imparitble illom and joint family structure. The very concept of a strong illam was getting shattered. The obvious shift was to a nuclear family with the father, mother and children as the members and the emerging new terrain for women in household.

It is here that the presence of the judiciary has to be noted. The complex character of different regions necessitated the establishment of a uniform judiciary, revenue and other administrative sections to run the political apparatus. India with a variety of languages, dialects, customs, caste variations, tenure patterns, penal codes compelled the colonial government to introduce a uniform judiciary with a common penal code and common language for the execution of policies and decisions. This involved the help of local agents to solve any legal problem. To an alien, it was difficult to comprehend the native system and oral tradition. To overcome the difficulty, English was introduced as the court language. This had a social message. For official transaction and employment opportunities, English had to be learnt. The demand for English education by

various communities has to be read in this context. One significant effect was the large number of petitions filed in different courts for judicial intervention like recognition of marriages, right of inheritance or tenure problems. Thus the growth of an efficient judicial infrastructure upset the traditional unwritten codes and anyone irrespective of social or economic status could be questioned and interrogated. Another important effect was the colonial attempt to understand the various traditional social process, customs, tenurial pattern and inheritance system of different communities because this could be the only way, they could interpret the customary pattern and give verdict on a variety of appeals filed in courts. This led to a detailed and long dialogue within the judicial community and the involvement of British judges and Indian vakils. The flooding of legal suits on social and tenurial issues thus resulted in detailed discussion and all these were recorded and preserved. The tenurial committees, Malabar Marriage Commission, several bills related to reform movements produced lengthy and detailed reports of the respective issues and these were interpreted by the judiciary. The development of English as the official language and medium of instruction in schools and colleges

produced a number of persons who were integrated into the ideology of the colonizing power. This shift is significant since it reflected in the shifting of social priorities and identity. The colonial government in its multiple roles

legitimized their stand through such interventions. This is an example of state intervening in marriage and inheritance.

The law of Nambudiris was considered different from Hindu law. The self-acquired property of members of illam lapse to the illam and not to the heirs of the deceased as under the ordinary Hindu law.⁷⁴ The self acquired property could be enjoyed during his life-time and at his death, form part of the family property. Regarding the right and authority of karanavan, alienations could be made for the benefit of the joint family. But the property was not vested in the manager alone, but in all the members of the family. In the eye of the law, their ownership is as good as that of karanavan.⁷⁵ Equality before law was not

74. Vasudevan Vs Secretary of State for India, ILR, XI, II Madras, 157.

75. (1) Varankot Vs Varankot, 1881, ILR, Madras

(2) Vasudevan Vs Sankaran 1896, ILR 20 Madras

uniform in reality because individual share and partition were not possible under the existing law. The intricate details of family obligations, rights of each member, rights of women married to an illam came up for discussion. The Nambudiri women on her marriage takes her husband's gotram and passes into his family from that of her father. It was kanyadanam. Perpetual widowhood and incapacity to remarry on the husband's death give her the same status. On the contrary, those Nambudiri women who do not marry remain attached to the family of their birth till death. The rule of primogeniture did not permit the younger Nambudiri to have a caste marriage. Even in 1873, a Nair sub-judge of Malabar held that the marriage of a junior member or an aphan of an illam was invalid in law⁷⁶ as it stood against long standing custom of the caste and his wife had no legal rights. In 1876, Mr. Wigram gave a similar decree.⁷⁷ Parivedanam was permitted by custom when the eldest Nambudiri fails to have children. In a case called Pappi antarjanam Vs Teyyan Nair, the point was taken up and decreed that junior members were entitled to marry.⁷⁸ Again the court held that males and females were

76. Sundara Aiyar.P.R. Malabar and Aliyasantana Law, Madras 1922, P.210.

77. A.S.562 of 1876, District Court Calicut

78. The Madras Law Journal, 214, 1903.

under the protection of karanavan and his authority was fully recognized by court. It also held that individual members were recognised as having any right except for maintenance. The law of non-partition remained. Another point raised was when the family consisted of both sons and other members, the rule of the son's liability to pay the father's debt would be inapplicable. The sons had no partition or saleable right.⁷⁹ There was a special form of marriage among Nambudiris known as "Sarvaswadanam" marriage. The intention was to retain the membership of the bride in her family of birth so that her sons should remain in her own paternal family. Such marriage was conducted when there was no son in the family and son-in-law was adopted with certain customary, rituals. Their son would be treated as the son of the bride's father and it was known as putrikaputra⁸⁰.

There were three kinds of adoptions. The first two were regular adoptions with ceremonies and the third without ceremonies.⁸¹.

79. Kunhikutti Amma Vs Kesavan Nambudiri, 1913, ILR 38 Madras, 527

80. See Sreedhara Varier - Marumakkathayam and Allied system of Law - Madras - 1969, PP.174 - 175.

81. Sekhara Varier Vs Kesavan Mooosad, 1920. MLR -

Dissensions increased within an illam and the traditional values came to be questioned in the modern context of judiciary. The Madras Nambudiri Act 1932 - Act XX of 1933 came as the judicial answer to this question. It was the consequence of a long judicial dialogue. A Family Regulation Bill was presented in the Cochin Assembly by Kaplingat Sankaran Nambudiri but due to a opposition from a conservative section of Nambudiris, the bill was dismissed. Later in 1932, the bill presented by P.S.Kesavan Nambudiri was passed.⁸² Yuvajanasangham made wide propoanganda for the bill. In Malabar, K.P.Madhusudhanan Thangal presented the Malabar Nambudiri Bill. The voice of antarjanams could be seen in Parvathi Nenmenimangalam who was a member of the select committee of Legislative Assembly. She could succeed in making other members favour the bill. Two demands which were given specific thrust were to enable all Nambudiri men to marry from the same community and also the claim of every member for the property. It has to be noted that simultaneous demands were made by Nair community to bestow legal recognition to sambandham and thereby claim the father's property. This would mean basic changes in the inheritance pattern of Nambudiris. Both communities reached the realization of endogamy to avoid

82. P.S.Kesavan Nambudiri -Desabhimani Weekly November 12-18, He was the first law graduate in the Nambudiri community who became an advocate, Munsiff, Judge and had participated in the yachanayatra. He was responsible for shaping the Nambudiri Family Regulation Bill.

distintegration of family property and thereby leading to the flow of Brahmin's property to Nairs. When every member gains the right of property and the importance of nuclear family developed, the status of women naturally improved. She has to be noted and her identity had to be recognized.

When the Madras Nambudiri Act 1933 came into force, it implemented monogamy, caste marriage for all and individual share of the family and women acquiring the right of property of her husband. This act redefined property rights. Yogakshema after 1935 becomes a passive forum because of the 1933 Act. In Travancore and Cochin also, the bills were passed bringing a uniformity in the much debated social issues. Later in 1942, when Nambudiri Yogakshema met for the 34th annual meeting at Ongallur, E.M.S.Nambudiripad made a lengthy and detailed presidential speech to alert and remind the community about the lagging conditions of a majority of Nambudiris who were plunged in superstitions and ignorance.⁸³ He calls for a revolt for the

83. Presidential speech by E.M.S.Nambudiripad at 34th Annual Meeting of Yogakshema at Ongallur-Collections of Sardar Chandroth. The speech throws light on the fact that only a minority had accepted education and employment, PP.1-49. He pointed out that inspite of consistent efforts, antarjanams' problems have not been solved. He noted that in Trissur and Irinjalakkuda gramas, these were spinsters numbering 7 and 32 respectively, above the age of 30 and girls were being sold to Sirsi and Sidhapur in Karnataka. Such problems lingered due to dowry, sambandham, the inhibition to educate girls like boys and also the reluctance of unemploye Nambudiri youths to marry Nambudiri women for fear of economic problems to maintain a family and sambandham had no such fear of maintainence of wife and children.

betterment of the community. He encouraged them to think of education, widow remarriage, employment for both men and women. Look at the issues raised by E.M.S.Nambudiripad.

1. Antarjanams should be allowed to marry other castes. Inter caste marriages should be promoted.
2. Nambudiri community should realize that all Nambudiris are not janmis.
3. Nambudiris should turn to agriculture, business and industries.
4. Education is necessary for all and through that employment.
5. Nambudiri should work in unity and co-operation with other organizations like Nair Service Society, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham, Pulaya Mahajana Sabha, etc.

There was an attempt to revive yogakshema. In the next year, he submitted a report on employment in which he remarked that the sabha should initiate the move to change the attitude of Nambudiris to employment. For this he put forward, four

specific proposals (1) to start technical school at Trissur or nearby place to impart training for antarjanams to make handicrafts (2) To teach charkha work to antarjanams, (3) To seek help from All India Manufacturers organization to advise those who could invest capital for industries (4) To be in touch with factory owners for availing opportunities for Nambudiris and antarjanams to work in factories.⁸⁴ A school was opened for training antarjanams and girls.⁸⁵

The Kerala Nambudiri Act 1958 applied to all Nambudiris in the state. Earlier the Madras Nambudiri Act 1933 had exempted Nambudiris of Payyannur who followed matrilineal pattern. Again the Kerala Nambudiri Act 1958 repeals the Travancore and Cochin Act. This Act deals with the management of the illam property.⁸⁶ The important provisions were, a Nambudiri female changes her illam on marriage. The eldest male member becomes the karanavan. All members of the illam have equal proprietary right over the properties. Karanavan has to keep a true and correct account of the income and expenditure. Junior

84. Report of the Annual meeting of Yogakshema 35th Annual Meeting 1944, Private papers of Sardar Chandroth.

85. E.M.S.Nambudiripad- Keralacharithram Marxist Veekshnathil Trivandrum Oct.1990, P.186.

86. K.Sreedhara Varier- Marumakkathayam and Allied Systems of Law, Madras, 1969, P.180.

members can ask for accounts, Karanavan can sell, mortgage or lease the property only with the written consent of the major members. Every member is entitled to maintenance consistent with the income. Females have a right to their marriage expenses and dowry. A right to claim individual partition had been granted by the Act and that property becomes the separate property of that member. The claim of an individual for separate property brought in the ideas of nuclear family setting and the gradual disappearance of joint family.

Yogakshema still remains a sentimental platform for Nambudiris. The development of a movement among them speaks of a gradual shift from tradition to modernity, without losing the distinct character. Most of the activists envisaged a life where Nambudiris live like others but the cultural identity of the Nambudiri still remains. The samskaras are performed. Upanayanm, samavartnanam, ritualistic marriage though made simple, continue even today. The highly ritualistic community with rigid rules shaping the daily life of Nambudiris had leaders with a humanitarian outlook. While other communities criticized and attacked Nambudiris for sambandham, distance pollution, isolated stand, the activists from Nambudiri community looked into their own problems, had an introspection to accept certain reformulations in keeping with time. This spiritually oriented

community was made to realize the relationships with other communities and the necessity to have interaction with others. The activists repeated the need to deny and reject the unscrupulous customs which went to the extent of harassing their own women. Sambandham, sapatnis, young girls given in marriage to old men, spinsters, aivedanam, primogeniture all these directly affected women. To add to it, hardwork and physical labour were regarded taboo for Nambudiri men. The daily routine gradually was modified. After bath and vedic chanting, prayers time was adjusted for new education. Slowly new food items were introduced into the menu. For instance coffee, tea, breakfast evening tea become familiar routine in the day to day life pattern. Regarding dress and appearance, women started wearing mundu and blouse and wearing small studs and gold bangles. They became conscious of neatness and a dress code. Men started wearing mundu and shirt and removed their tuft. But giving up punool was a temporary move. Nambudiris still perform upanayanam and wear the thread called punool which is a caste symbol. One notable aspect is the intercaste marital relationship called sambandham which was vehemently criticised by the activists but there arose a strong demand among extremists for the right of antarjanams to marry men of other caste. Both sound

intercaste relationship⁸⁷. But there was the question of difference of legality.

The peculiar marital relationship of Nambudiris who formed around 2% of the population, with Nairs remains an interesting topic. The distinct tenurial pattern and ideology well propagated with caste status justifying it played decisive role in this. But along with the growth of national consciousness leading to national movement and a political awareness for freedom and a political reality or liberation from foreign rule, a social and economic concept of freedom was evolving through the social movements based on humanitarian ideas. The aim and direction was on this line. The caste-wise movements has to an extent led to sub caste fusion and the emergence of a concept of a community, Untouchability, Unapportchability has ceased. Education has become universal. The importance of employment is recognized. It is no longer a small confined world for men and women. The cultural making of the educated, and salaried is different from the conventional thinking. But in spite of such progress and development, it can

87. Presidential Address of E.M.S.Nambudiripad at the 34th General Meeting of Nambudiri Yogakshema Sabha, 1944 - PP.36 - 37. He noted.

- 1) Every Nambudiri youth should be discouraged from sambandham
- 2) Intercaste marriage of Nambudiri women be encouraged

be noted that 'caste' has acquired a new political connotation. While other communities have their political interests, Yogakshema which still exist has not shown an affiliation but it has to be observed that in spite of a uniform dress code and life pattern, the ritualistic character of the community still remains. Sambandham, Aivedanam have come to an end but intercaste marriages as envisaged by the activists are not common. The earlier intercaste marriages with Nairs came to an end. Equality is an eluding concept. It cannot be given a uniform definition. Equality could not be traced in a society consisting of several castes and sub castes within. But in the context of reform movements, there has been a sub caste fusion to an extent in the community. But gender inequality continues with a patriarchal ideology. Social equality, if perceived in a total perspective, remains a distant reality. A close examination of this community provides interesting variants and diversity within it in the traditional sphere, but a movement of the nature discussed in this chapter presents a gradual picture of organization and unity to a great extent.

COLONIAL EXPERIMENTS

Swarna kumari E.K. “Social changes in malabar with special reference to two traditional communities 1881-1933 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2001

Chapter - V

COLONIAL EXPERIMENTS

The first specific colonial experiment in the social realm was initiated by William Logan who was the Collector of Malabar in 1880s, was deputed to make a detailed study on the tenurial pattern of Malabar. This led to the Report of Malabar Special Commission in 1881.¹ Logan attempted an understanding in this aspect and its link with the social behaviour of some castes like Nambudiris and Nairs. Though he had the restriction of being a government officer, he recommended that it is necessary that the colonial government make endeavours to an active dialogue about traditional social structure, the distinct nature, of each community, their customs and pattern of inheritance.² The ground for a discourse and introspection about the existing usages in social and moral realms and a reformation, was being prepared by personalities like Sree Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal, Vaghatananda, Sivananda Paramahansa, Sivananda Yogi at the regional level. The beginning of the 20th C, experienced a discernment among various communities encouraged by the presence of judiciary, colonial

1. Logan, Report of the Malabar Special Commission, 1881, Legislative Department, National Archives of India. Hereinafter referred to as RMSC.

2. For details, See RMSC.

apparatus forces of nationalism and encouragement by the spiritual leaders. In the last chapter, an attempt is made to understand the discernment of the Nambudiri community to appropriate certain relevant changes for the community.

It can be observed that social changes are slow and gradual and that it cannot be smooth for the very reason that it is difficult to overcome an old ideology or system. Nairs too initiated a process of introspection to assess their own status in the society and the emerging terrain of new scope and progress. The period saw the active involvement of contemporary newspapers which carried on a vigorous propaganda to discuss the relevant issue and create an introspection of tradition and awareness of modernity. The characteristics of newspapers is that it reaches distant areas and distant people projecting relevant issues. The social and cultural identity of the Nair community has already been discussed. The attempt and direction here is, for a detailed analysis of the movement led by Nairs for legality in certain issues and changing the conceptual share of property to a realistic share. This can be illustrated by a discussion about the movement among Nairs in the context of colonialism.

Nairs who were matrilineal and who remained a **d**istinct group, had for centuries adjusted to a peculiar marital relationship with Nambudiyis. The concept of purity/pollution, tenurial relationships and the caste linked professions have already been discussed in the second chapter. Nairs lived and remained in a large joint family house called tarawad. The nature of a tarawad was to protect and maintain every member under the patriarchal umbrella of a karanavan. A karanavan was the symbol of power, authority, efficiency and organisation of a large number of members within the tarawad. This was more in large aristocratic tarawad which possessed large estates of property, cultivation family kavus or shrines. The case of Koodali, Kalliat, Echikanam, Kodoth tarawads are examples of this.³ But not all tarawads were wealthy. The great majority of karanavans probably 9/10 were small tenant farmers, cultivating a few acres on a precarious tenure, at a rack rent and law which required such a man from the produce of his farm to feed and provide for all the descendents of all his female relatives from birth to death, whether they work or not is one of those laws.⁴ It was not binding that they should work but had

3. K.K.N.Kurup, Koodali Granthavari, Calicut University, 1995, K.Madhavan, the youngest volunteer of Salt Satyagraha later a social activist at Kanhangad told this writer that certain tarawads possessed immense property and marital relationships were entered into between such families to protect property.

. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, 1891, Legislative Department, National Archives of India, New Delhi, P. 2 Hereinafter referred to as MMCR.

claim of maintenance. Moreover, there were a number of sub castes, around 130 in the community and the life pattern varied according to skills and profession based on sub caste status. Even the customs were adhered to strictly by the upper layer. "It may be the aristocracy of a community adhere to an ancient usage more tenaciously than the middle and lower classes, but it is probable that the institution of the marriage originally existed among the latter whilst it did not exist among the former."⁵ But the all pervading sentimental concept was a tarawad and a karanavan dealt with all aspects of administration, in an impartial way because the needs and requirements of the members were few like clothing, food and oil. But at the wake of modernisation and colonisation, nature of life started changing. There were new trends in dress. Nairs who had to dress as per the ideology of Brahmins could wear only mundu and a melthorth or towel over the shoulders started wearing mundu and shirt.⁶ If he had to show respect to a Brahmin, he had to remove his towel and stand in respect. Now women started wearing blouse and students wore shirts, while going to schools. Even food pattern changed. Morning tea or coffee,

5. MMCR President's Memorandum - MMCR, Para 44, P.24

6. See illustration given in appendix. Men and Women started covering the upper part of the body by the beginning of the 20th C.

break fast, lunch, evening tea, were accommodated in the daily routine. Nairs were among the first to accept modern education quickly and emerged as the English educated. This has to be related to the political expediency of the government for enlisting the highest educated youngsters for their administrative work in various wings of the political apparatus. Cash salary was another attraction. So far in the traditional family set up, cash was dealt only by the heads of families and that too for buying necessary items for the tarawad. The expectation of a fixed monthly salary, regular employment gave them a new perspective. This community which had all along adjusted to many peculiarities had to make an appraisal of their functioning before and decide the future. The caste hierarchy, loyalty, subordination sambandham were examined by the young educated Nairs and they decided to create their own strategy to grasp this problem. The role of press in projecting the social evils of caste, caste distinctions in the schools initiated by the government can be understood from the reports of the Native Newspapers of the 19th C.⁷ In Malabar, there were 714 schools and 22,000 students which had a population of 2 1/4 lakhs.⁸ The beginning of

7. Madras Native Newspaper Reports. Hereinafter referred to as MNNPR. Paschima Tharaka and Kerala Patrika of 1st September 1877 report that a school was opened for all caste and was to be under a British Officer called Mr. Sealy

8. Paschima Tharaka and Kerala Patrika, MNNPR, 1st August, 1877 NAI.

introspection is reflected in the columns of papers. It is pointed out that repudiations of wives by their husband and husbands by their wives are so reprehensibly practised with impunity among Sudras, who are not bound by any ties of matrimony, that the necessity of some legislation on the subject in the present improved state of society.⁹ It was believed that continuance of the existing condition of things would undoubtedly work the down fall of sudras,¹⁰ and imminent ruin of tarawads,¹¹ and so stressed the necessity of reforms¹² The attempts for legality of some customs and regulations of marriage through legislation bills like Madras Marriage Bill of 1886 is commended but the aspiration of the community goes a step forward to recommend the introduction of a law delcaring Malayalis competent to bequeath by will their self acquired property. An imporatant observation during the period was that Nairs who were mostly the kanakkars were also government officials and their growing rights over land will ruin the Janmis and verumpattakar.¹³ It is significant to note that eagerness of Nairs to turn to modern edcuation and

9. Kerala Patrika 11 March, 1882.

10. Kerala Mithram 7th February 1885, MNNPR

11. Kerala Patrika, 8th March, 1885, MNNPR

12. Kerala Patrika, 8th February 1886 MNNPR

13. Ibid

thereby entering many professions and government service and they were mostly kanakkars also. The erosions in land tenure patterns and the emergence of a new self reliant kanakkar has been noted in the second chapter. But there were stumbling blocks to overcome to achieve the aspirations. The scene inside a family was itself a complicated one. Any tarawad dragged with internal contradictions. For instance, the authority of karanavvan was invariably strong. He acted as the custodian, head of the matrilineal family taking all decisions. The marriages of all members of the tarawad were decided by him, there was no option for girls nor the right to question him. If the husband of any sister, niece or granddaughter created the ill will of karanavan, the marriage relationship was cancelled without discussing this with the wife. The problem of rearing the children was not a concern because every child of a tarawad had the right of maintenance. Nairs had two important patterns of marriage (1) Pudamuri and the other sambandham. Pudamuri was a marriage fulfilling all the requirements of a marriage and the symbol of knot was presenting a pudava from which the term pudamuri emerged. It means that the bridgeroom had to gift cloth to her and this was regarded the real marriage of Nairs. Nairs had no man galasutra or tali tying and marriages were not ritualistic. Sambandham has been very widely applied to Nairs but it is doubtful whether

it was very common because the Nambudiris along with other brahmins formed only around 2% of the population and it was very less practiced in North Malabar. The ideological dominance of Nambudiris might have compelled certain regions and families of social status to accept this. According to Malabar Marriage Commission, in North Malabar, it was a general practice to conduct pudamuri, take his wife to his own tarawad.¹⁴ The variations in customs and patterns have to be borne here. In such families, it was natural to develop the trend of bequeathing at least one's own self acquired property to wife and children. But the possibility of cash income and self acquired property was comparatively a new phenomenon with the employment opportunities. Earlier, the anantaravans sat idle, without doing any work, assured of maintenance from tarawad. This idle dependence of many on tarawad was against the spirit of modern system and atmosphere. Even the karanavans now appropriated portions of joint family income and started bequeathing to his wife and children. Some started bringing his wife and children to the tarawad, creating a separate portion of the house for his wife and children. Karanavan's power, authority along with his desire¹⁵ to enrich his own children and wife gradually led to dissension in the tarawad. Day by day,

14. MMCR, op.cit., P.32

15. Kerala Patrika 15 May 1885 MNNPR

this increased. Karanavars were questioned and challenged.¹⁶

Not a single day passed without some fight or other. The karanavars and anantaravans in all the important taravads are in a state of hatred and dissension. Karanavan treated the joint property as if it was his own property. He wanted to benefit his own wife and children."¹⁷ Sometimes, an old man becomes the karanavan and his age and health made it difficult for him to expedite matters smoothly and sometimes he becomes a tool in the hands of one tavazhi to the anger of another. It was also difficult for him to educate all the nephews of a tarawad. "It was difficult enough for a father to educate half a dozen or so of sons but what is the karanavan to do whose family may number two or three score of boys? The tendency is to educate none of them, on the plea that he cannot make invidious distinctions."¹⁸ "A house divided against itself cannot stand, and most tarawads in Malabar are in this condition."¹⁹ One result of the impartibility of tarawad property was that it was mortgaged, remortgaged and there are not fifty tarawads in the whole district that are not heavily involved in debt.²⁰

16. Madras Law Journals are full of details of suits filed against karanavan by the younger members. Details are in Madras Law Journals and Indian Law Journals of the period.

17. MMCR, op.cit., P.30

18. Ibid., P.29

19. Ibid., P.31

20. Chappan Menon, Deputy Collector of Malabar giving his comments to Malabar Marriage Commission, Appendix IV, P.32.

Nair tarawad which was a socio-economic unit possessed large number of members within catering to the common interests of every member with the patriarchal karanavan governing it. Prosperous tarawads possessed large areas of property and all were governed by custom, tradition, and ideology in day to day matters and relationships. The British when they occupied Malabar had to apprehend a variety of issues like the caste variations, customs, traditions. They could contact only the head of the family, the karanavan who was responsible to pay tax. Karanavan has recognised as the temporal and spiritual head of the tarawad and as the authority of this corporate unit. It was his right and duty to manage the property of the tarawad, to take care of it, to invest it in his own name either on loans on kanam or other security and to receive the rent of the lands.²¹ He represented all family matters. He commanded all juniors tenants and women²² His status as guardian granted by tradition was continued by the British and they did not try to reduce his authority or power. The British courts permitted his discretion to find ways to increase income of tarawad for maintenance of all members.²³ But a karanavan could be

21. Madras Law Journal - 1904 - Vol.I, P.45

22. Father Puthenkulam op.cit., P.142

23. Kalyani Vs Narayanan - Indian Law Report - Madras - 1886 IX P.266.

removed on the ground of lunacy, blindness, committing crime or extreme old age, long absence or debts.²⁴ The policy of expediency in recognising karanavan who was the tax payee by the British, had also the intention of not harming a traditional edifice called tarawad. It was felt that karanavan was integral to the stability of the tarawad.

In spite of this favourable attitude of the government and judiciary, internal forces were eroding the strength and stability of tarawad, challenging the status of karanavan. The line of disintegration was from tarawad to tavazhi and gradually to individual units. It is here that the role of junior members has to be noted. At the wake of new educational openings there was a demand of education of youngsters. Earlier, all were provided formal coaching to read and write by tutors which did not involve much expenses. But the new education necessitated sending children to schools which increased expenses. Karanavan could not make any distinction, or else created discontent of the neglected members. The anantaravans had no specific responsibility or financial power. They had no inspiration or inducement to work hard, since they had no profits or returns or voice in the

24. Sundara Iyer - op.cit., P.10

house. The tarawad property remained impartible and ineffective for any sort of investment for trade or plantation. New enterprises could be taken up only with the consent of all. The habit of an idle life could not be overcome quickly by juniors. Only the newly educated ventured out to find jobs and placements. They could break tradition, move out of tarawads, villages bring up their children in a new way. They were reluctant to share their fixed income with the tarawad members.

Impartibility of the tarawad property remained a stumbling block in the way of resources for new investments. The changes in agricultural production, importance of cash crops, labour system, cash salary had its effect on the tarawad. Waste lands were used to cultivate coconut, pepper, cashenuts, cinnamon, tea and coffee estates and spices were produced which necessitated recruitment of labourers.²⁵ A new working culture and concept emerged. Vast space of land was required for cash crops. Thus a new another about land, different from the traditional tenurial pattern arose. Thus commercial agriculture, a new sense of money economy, wage pattern, new social responsibilities affected the stability of tarawads.

25. Kathleen Gough - op.cit P.316.

The period saw the growth of a social and national consciousness. The anantaravans, some of whom were educated and employed were attracted towards the nationalistic movement, were evidently against imperialism and socially against the tarawad which did not encourage individual enterprise or growth. Karanavars were generally old in age and stuck to their power centre and authority called tarawad and favoured the colonial government. The changing environment and legal sanctions to tavazhi partition fell a blow to their age old monopoly and authority. The dream of a new society was emerging in the minds of educated and progressive section.

The new aspirations of the younger generation were directed against the colonial government and the orthodox, reluctant old section of the society who were against any change or reform and who continued the social and economic exploitation. The period saw the active role of press and literature reflecting the sentiments of an ideological and socio economic change. The anantaravans directed their discontent by challenging the authority of karanavans, who failed to execute the duty impartially.

There were suits filed against karanavan for expenses of English education.²⁶ Nairs in large numbers in spite of many disabilities, turned to English education at the end of the 19th C, the number of graduates, undergraduates and matriculates in the district was about 1000, and the number of officials drawing a salary of more than Rs.10,20 and 50 a month was 1063, 245 and 90 respectively and the majority of whom were Nairs.²⁷ Most of the Village officials, Adhikaris and Menon appointed after the reorganisation of the village administration in 1822 were Nairs. They were in charge of revenue assessment, settlement and collection and used these positions to great advantage.²⁸ This exposure came as a break for Nairs and in the colonial administrative set up, there was no obligation or, subordination on caste lines. From the traditional order to the colonial order, it was a tremendous leap for Nairs.

While internal contradictions within the family troubled the community, there were challenges from Janmis whether they were brahmins or Nairs in the form of melcharths or over lease. The harassment meted out to tenants is reflected

26. Kerala Patrika, 5 December 1885, MNNPR

27. President's Memorandum, MMCR, P.9

28. K.N.Panikkar.- Culture, Ideology and Hegemony, Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India, New Delhi, 1995, P.187.

in the native newspapers. It was argued, that the fixity of tenure should be implemented to escape from the oppressive action like melcharth.²⁹ Owing to the insecurity of tenure, the tenants were greatly disheartened and take no interest in developing the land.³⁰ The Janmis also interfered in the social and domestic matters of tenants. Some of the Janmis did not issue receipts for rent received and tenants did not dare to ask for receipts for fear of incurring displeasure. and misunderstanding, files a suit for rents already paid and recovering the same again.³¹ Repeated instances of harassment of Nair tenants are pointed out.³² If there was a festival in the house of a janmi or in a temple, the tenants were obliged to contribute in cash or kind. "The harsh and oppressive treatment to which the tenants are at present subjected to by their landlords of whom Nambudiris form the majority has no

29. Melcharths give rise to quarelling, murder and suicide.

1) Kerala Sanchari, 31 March 1895 , MNNPR

2) Kerala Sobhini 1 July 1896 - MNNPR

30. Kerala Patrika, 12 December 1896, MNNPR

31. Bharata Kesari, 30 November 1903, 190, MNNPR

32. Kerala Sobhini 15 November 1905, 15 Dec., 30 Feb, 1906, MNNPR.

Nasrani Deepika 30th December 1906, MNNPR

parallel, that for every frivolous reason. or for every supposed act of disrespect, tenants will be punished with ejection that this discourages the lessees of land from improving their holdings, property seeing the chances of being allowed to engage the fruits of their labour are always uncertain."³³ It implied the urgency of legislation by taking the attention of the government to the problems of tenants and their welfare. This problem was linked to the social and moral issues affecting Nair marriage patterns, inheritance and legislation in this regard. The socio-economic characteristic and behaviour of each community was based on religion, caste, ideology which created the dominant or superior section and on the other side, the subordinate lower castes who were considered inferior. Traditional society had always perpetuated this difference by maintaining the gulf between high caste and low caste and this corresponded with tenurial pattern also. While the dominant monopolised several privileges, the subordinates were subjected to anti-humane atrocities. Thus untouchability, distance pollution, existed between the high caste and low caste. Tradition deprived them several socio-economic rights on the ground of being a low caste. As noted earlier, political

33. Kerala Patrika ,26 Feb.1886, The problems of Kanakkars are raised in several issues of native newspapers for example see 26 Feb. 1881, 21 March,1881, Kerala Mithram, MNNPR

consciousness in India, had usually absorbed social programmes also. "In India it had taken multi-faceted dimensions in its anti-colonial movement. Two such dimensions were anti-caste and anti-feudal and they were assimilated to the main stream of anti-imperialist struggle led by all sections and classes of Indian Society .³⁴

A new perspective was emerging. New notions like social progress, equality, family were articulated. At the same time, they were reminded of the clear demarcation of castes in a specific framework through colonial attempts like census and this urged them to move forward and acquire a new found status without losing the cultural identity. This, they realised was possible through western education, new employment opportunities. Education was projected as leading to progress or material welfare. They realised that sambandhams be stopped and endogamy should prevail. Some of the traditional customs like tirandukuli, talikettukalyanam, pulikudi and sambandham were interrogated by themselves and reformers. Sophistication in dress, behaviour were sought. The emerging concepts, of a nuclear family of a father, mother, children was appropriated.

34. K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalist and Social Change - The Role of Malayalam Literature ,1998 Trissur P.XV

Along with this, a young Nair who was educated and employed or having a profession like a vakil dressed up in a new form, of shirt, coat, mundu desired that his wife be educated, dress neatly and be a real partner and also be able to guide their children. So far, the wife and children lived in her tarawad and it was not the responsibility of the father to look after his children. But the shifting perceptions of a separate house, family bounded them in a new way. The latter part of the 19th and early half of the 20th century prepared the ground for a self criticism and a new perception by the distinguished reformers like Chattampi Swamikal, Sree Narayana Guru, Vagbhatananda Sivananda Paramahansa and Brhmananda Sivayogi. Though of a spiritual disposition, they intervened in social issues, arguing for a correction of certain usages and insisted on social equality. They attacked the decadent caste structure and outdated customs which retained social inequality. For instance, distance pollution, purity/impurity concept, tirandukuli, talikettykalyanam, sambandham were criticized.³⁵ Sree Narayana Guru on hearing that preparations were made for a talikettuka/yanam at Neyyattinkara by an Izhava, went to the spot and declared that the function should be stopped and

35. For details, See Chapter III

hereinafter, it should not be conducted.³⁶ In 1904, in a mass meeting, Sree Narayanan Guru declared that Talikettukalyanam, Pulikudi, Tirandukuli should be stopped and marriage should be simple function of the bride and bridegroom garlanding each other in the midst of relatives.³⁷ He intended the overall development of man. The efforts of Sree Narayanan Guru succeeded in eradicating Tirandukuli, Pulikudi, Talikettu among the Ezhavas. Nairs tried the same effort on the line influenced by this. Sree Narayana Guru, realised the problems and situation of women in general and advised her to be a good partner and to be chaste.³⁸ A wife he says, is a good partner only if she is ideal for a family and spends according to the income and that she should protect her own chastity. Though Sree Narayana Guru is perceived as the spokesman for the Ezhava community, many issues which he dealt with and discussed were concerning the whole society.

36. K.R. Bhaskaran- Sree Narayana Guru Swami, Pudukkad, 1975, P.70

P.K. Gopalakrishnan- Sree Narayana Guru, Viswamanavikathayude Pravachakan, Trivandrum, 1972, P.69.

37. Ibid.

38. T. Bhaskaran, Sree Narayana Guruvinte Sampurna Krithikal, Kozhikode, 1985, P.501.

Like Sree Narayana Guru Vagbhatananda, Sivananda Paramahansa, Brahmananda Sivayogi vehemently attacked these contemporary customs which steeped them in blind superstitions and practices. For Nairs, Mannath Padmanabhan emerged as a leader who organized the community and formed Nair Service Society on 31st October 1914 at Perunna. But before that Nair Britya Jana Sangham had been formed.³⁹ Simultaneous was the beginning of Uthara Keraleeya Nair Samajam formed by Rairu Nambiar in Malabar and Keraleeya Nair Samajam by C.Krishna Pillai in Trivandrum in 1904. A magazine called 'Nair' was started by Kainikkara Govinda Pillai and 'Subhashini' by P.K.Govinda Pillai. But in Malabar and Kochi the initiative to have a strong Nair organization was weak due to the conviction that such community organizations were detrimental to the interests of nationalism and one should not confine the activities to one's own community. In Malabar there was no active effort by Nairs to work in this direction even when Sri C.Sankaran Nair, M.Krishnan Nair, K.P.Raman Menon, Kozhikode Krishnan Menon, K.T.Chandu Nambiar, Karothodi Madhavana Nair, Ammu Swaminathan and Kuttimalu Amma had

39. The members were K.Kelappan, Mannath Padmanabhan, Panangot Kesavan Panicker, N.C.Trivikrama Kaimal, Kakknattu Narayana Panicker, Panankattu Parameswara Kurup, P.Krishna Pillai, Nagavallil Kochukrishna Kurup, Taliyil Madhavan Pillai Valparambil Velayudhan Pillai, Paduvatath Padmanabha Pillai, Kottamattil Padmanabha Pillai, Pallipurath Narayanan Pillai, Kandur Krishna Pillai.

the opportunity to preside over the Travancore Nair meetings.⁴⁰ Mannath Padmanabhan was concerned about the humiliation and Subordination of Nairs and took objection of addressing them as Malayala Sudras. Many NSS activists decided to suffix nair to their name but, Mannath Padmanabhan actually dropped his surname Pillai.⁴¹ The direction of the Nair Service Society was to create an identity among Nairs of all regions rejecting the sub-caste variations. Marital ties and interdining were not permitted among Nairs of different sub-caste status earlier. Mannath Padmanabhan strongly resented to the customs like Tirandukuli, Talikettukalyanam, Sambandham.⁴² Claim of father's property and tarawad partition was raised. The necessity of an identity was regarded essential by activists like Mannath Padmanabhan, Sree Narayana Guru or V.T.Bhattathiripad for organising each community and work for their welfare. Mannath Padmanabhan admits that 'if any one blames me for working for my community's upliftment, I accept it because my intention is to improve my community and serving my community means serving humanity.'⁴³ Mannath Padmanabhan

40. Mannath Padmanabhan- Ente Jeevitha Samaranakal, Vol.I, Trivandrum 1964, PP.193-194.

41. Ibid.

42. Shatabhisheka Upaharam, Souvenir presented to Mannath Padmanabhan, 1960, Pandalam, PP.20-22.

43. Ibid., P.19.

along with his social work participated in Vaikom Satyagraha, Guruvayur Satyagraha and was the President of the Guruvayur Satyagraha Committee. While he involved himself in national questions like untouchability, he repeatedly stressed the need for Nairs coming together and blamed the people of Malabar for not realising the necessity of organizing Nairs.⁴⁴ The stress on such identity is reflected in verses written by K. Velu Pillai. It goes like this 'Jayikka Jayikka ni, Nayar Vyjayanthike! Jayikka Jayikka ni, Dharma Suprasathike!'⁴⁵ Nair Service Society gradually entered the field of education and set up a number of educational institutions.

The colonial administrators had already initiated interference in the socio-economic aspects of Nair marriage and inheritance patterns. To them, the traditional character of this society was complicated and traditional notions of family, inheritance, customs were alien and difficult to comprehend. But as noted earlier, the first attempt was made by William Logan, when he presented the Report of Malabar Special Commission, in 1881. While Logan appreciated the corporate ownership of property in Malabar, any individual enterprises blocked by the corporate management of land could not be ignored.

44. Mannath Padmanabhan, op.cit., PP.193-194

45. Ibid., P.283.

During the last quarter of the 19th C, Malabar also began to produce for world market. Large scale plantations and cultivation of cash crops was the development of the period. Land has to be made available for individual planters and companies.⁴⁶ Logan's intention was to make thorough changes in the tenurial and inheritance pattern. He stated that the members of joint families or tarawad had no motives or stimulus to exert or participate in the wealth producing activities, on account of the corporate control over land, labour and capital, naturally it adversely affected the productivity. Such a situation was fatal to individual industry.⁴⁷ Logan's intention was camouflaged by his recommendations for a better treatment to the people. The Colonial administrators utilised this opportunity to intervene in tenancy issues and social issues by recommending legislation in favour of individuals. But a drastic step could not be implemented for fear of affecting the interest of the Janmi. There was a conflict of interests and in 1887, The Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvement Act was passed which provided that every tenant who was ejected from his holding should be entitled to be compensated for improvements made by him or predecessors on the land. The

46. K.K.N.Kurup - William Logan, A Study in the Agrarian Relations of Malabar, 1981, P.42.

47. Ibid.P.40

colonial policy was at the same time, constructive and destructive, for the colonial attitude stood for individual enterprises, which would bebenefit them but destructive for they facilitated the disintegration of tarawad structure, corporate ownership and family ties. The colonial intervention through judiciary made necessary legislation inevitable and the principles of law based upon individualism influenced young Nairs. Thus an attempt was made to legalise customary marriage and to provide for the succession of children tothe father's property.⁴⁸ The nationalist movements which was gaining intensity could not be ignored.Government had to take attention of this.In 1891,A committtee was appointed invloving some of the educated employed native officers to study and recommend appropriate measures to legalise the marriage system of Malabar. This Committee consisted of Muthuswami Iyer as President, Judge of High court, H.M.Winterbothem, Collector of Malabar,Rama Varma Tamburan of Parappanangad Kovilakam, C.Sankaran Nair, High Court Vakil, O.Chandu Menon, District Munsiff and Mundappa Bangara, District Munsiff as members. The Committee submitted a Report called Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission in 1891 looking into various aspects of Nair problems. The first sentence said that the proposal was to

48. C.Sankaran Nair - Autobiography, Ottapalam 1996, P.17. He introduced the Malabar Marriage Bill in 1891, which provided for the father's property, if the marriage was registered.

provide a form of marriage for Hindus following marumakkathalam law.⁴⁹

In general, marumakkathayam term denotes that a man and a woman are joined together in a manner socially approved is sambandham. Sambandham means connection and it was generally viewed as a loose marital relationship which could be broken without any notice or reason. But Nairs regarded this as a virtual marriage. Only where the Nambudiris enter as husband, there arose lack of a consistent relationship. Moreover, the Nambudiris who formed only 2% of the population, could not be the husbands for the numerically stronger Nair women. What did not exist was the absence of a legality to claim father's property. Nair family structure followed the matrilineal character. Their life pattern was linked to this. Tarawad consisted of a number of Tayvazhis which was shortened and called ta vazhi. This structure provided significant status to male members. The respect and affection towards uncle is notable here.⁵⁰ The sister-brother, uncle-niece or nephew concepts were strong in a Nair family. Malayali's matrilineal concept has penetrated their religious concept also. The large number of kavus with Bhagavathi as the diety protecting the tarawads was a perennial influence on Nairs. Girls before marriage offer a gift or tali to the diety of the tarawad

49. See MMCR

50. Raghava Varier, Amma Vazhi Keralam in Malayalam 19/2/1999

kavus⁵¹ imploring blessing and protection. This all pervading myth and concept was shaken by colonial ideology and modernity. Matriliney was perceived as outdated and patriarchy the correct cultural form. In patriarchy, man is more important. This discernment of father as the most important and as the symbol of culture put the Nairs in trouble and confusion. Tradition was challenged. The consequence was the internal contradictions within a tarawad between men and women, karavanans and anantaravans, between tavazhi and tavazhi. Cash dealings increased, requirements increased and karavanan found it difficult to divide the income in equal way among the large number of members and most of the property, if at all a tarawad had, were of immovable nature and the cost of education for junior members emerged as the biggest problem. All had to be satisfied because the income from a tarawad was the common property. But karavanan could not educate all for the very reason of a substantial amount and if some were educated, this led to dissatisfaction, discontent and grievance of the tavazhis.

51. Many tarawads had kavus. For example in Panthalayani Kollam, the Pisharikavu Bhagavathi temple is the family kavu of eight old tarawads of Ravari Nairs. The girls belonging to the tarawads wherever they reside, pray at the temple and offer a tali to the deity in expectation of protecting them, Many tarawads like Koodali, Kalliat had kavus.

See SWARNA KUMARI.E.K Talikettukalyanam- a Relevance a paper presented at 59th session of IHC, Calicut, 1999.

Thus the institution passed through a period of stress and strain and in such a context, a father's natural inclination was to use his self-acquired income for his own children and also for an attempt to legalise the marriage and to have a social standing.

The tarawad, the large family umbrella which remained a protective and sentimental shelter for all members and an unwritten legal protection, started eroding at the wake of colonial and legal intrusions. The tarawad was seen as an outdated concept by the educated Nairs and preference for nuclear set up slowly emerged. The colonial perception of matriliney as an irrelevant institution led to their initiative to interfere and a native was viewed as the subject of the British who had to be modernized.⁵² When tarawads became unwieldy, tavazhi partition was permitted by custom and tradition but now the aspiration of an individual share emerged. Karanavan, gradually nurtured an interest in his wife and children and appropriating property for his own family of wife and children to the extent of destroying one's tavazhi by

52. M.S.A.Rao - Social Change in Malabar, Bombay, June 1975, P.31.

executing melcharths or evictions, The middle class educated younger generation on the other hand attracted by western style and influenced by western education undermined the family ties, bonds of affection which characterised the Nair tarawad. To them, new aspirations emerged in place of the old social institution and usage and the corporate interest led to individual interest and enterprises. Logan noted "Things are changed now that a Nair usually marries one wife, lives apart with her in their own home and rears his children as his own. There is a very strong and laudable desire for some legal mode of conveying to his children and to their mother, all his self acquired property."⁵³ This irritating disability had to be overcome. Logan intervened to argue for a necessary change to confer on all adults male or female, the power to regulate by will the succession, to their self-acquired property.⁵⁴ He elaborated his argument for disposal of self acquired property by will and if a man dies intestate, his children should get 1/3 of his separate estate and these should receive legal recognition.⁵⁵ Logan's attempt opened up a long dialogue and

53. William Logan- Report of the Malabar Special Commission, 1881 NAI-P.218, para 483.

K.Madhavan's father A.C.Raman Nair of Echikananm tarawad of Nileschwaram married Unanga of Kodoth tarawad and brought her to his tarawad - Madhavan is aged 84 now.

54. Logan op.cit, P.219

55. Ibid.P.212.

wide propoganda on the topic through newspapers. Two issues, which occupied space in the discussion were registration of marriage and right of a will in respect of self acquired property.⁵⁶ In the Nair community, there were three sections who were inclined to change but of different dimensions. The first felt for a revitalisation of matriliney, the second argued for a socio economic change to modernise the community but the third stood for marumakkathayam. There was natural opposition from Janmis and when Malabar Marriage Commission met at different places, Nair tenants were reluctant to give evidence⁵⁷ for their landlords threatened them with eviction and ~~mar~~charths. Moreover, most tarawads were poor and according to an estimate, 9/10 of all karanavans were small farmers struggling with their high responsibility of providing for all the tarawad members.⁵⁸ It has to be noted that in Malabar, even before legality, there was the growing trend of channelising the self-acquired property to the children. The beginning of makkathayam was imminent.

56. In a case called Kalliati Kunju Menon Vs Palat Eracha Menon 1864-MLR. The court held that the self-acquired property of a male member of a Malabar tarawad which he had not disposed of during his life time lapsed in to the tarawad on his death and formed part of the tarawad properties.

57. Kerala Patrika 23 May 1891, 31 March Kerala Sanchari 31 March 1895 MNNPR.

58. MMCR, op.cit., P.32.

Formerly wealth acquired from any source by either the males or the females of a tarawad was considered as the joint family property but in those days, property derived from a father or from anantharavans or karananvans or even property obtained by women from their husbands is found to be considered private property. Endeavour is also made to have a separate house.⁵⁹

The growth of individual enterprise and its related aspirations acquires a hold here. Nairs who all along had a corporate family unit and even self acquisitions merging in the family property now was forced to develop individual initiative in the competitive society and be self-reliant. Thus the socio-economic desires acquire a new dimension. Education, employment, status of profession, cash salary, new life style according to a working culture, new dress code, new food items

59. Kerala Patrika 15 May, 1893, MNNPR, See Vijaya Kumar Menon, Marumakkathayam, Makkathayam in Mathrubhumi Weekly, Feb 1-7, 1998. Vijaya Kumar Menon evaluates the famous painting "There Comes papa" a painting by Raja Ravi Varma in 1893. This painting is given in appendix. The mother holds the child and has a gesture indicating the arrival of someone. According to the title, there is a strong indication of the closeness, affection and family tie with the husband or father which is a characteristic of a makkathayam family. The gradual shift to makkathayam is implied here. The social trend is reflected in a painting.

were all fascinations and they had nothing to loose like a caste based ritual status, they were gaining a better status and so worked out a strategy to occupy a place in the modern society.

When the report of the commission was forwarded to the Secretary of State, it was argued that owing to the changes of the times or to the progress of education any how, it is now the makkathayam system that is obtaining among the people. Endeavour is made to have if possible, a separate house and when this endeavour succeeds instead of additions being made to the tarawad property, opportunity is taken to get all that can be got from it. This causes splits, litigation and quarrels in the tarawad which are thereby ruined.⁶⁰ Along with the legality of marriage and tarawad partition, the problem of tenants was also highlighted by the media. Thus the demands, of the community was not one but many touching on marriage, tarawad, inheritance, fixity of tenure and were inter-related.⁶¹ Nair demand goes against

60. Ibid.

61. 28 Dec. 1895, Kerala Patrika, MNNPR
 31 Jan. 1896 Kerala Patrika, MNNPR
 15 Feb. 1896, Kerala Patrika, MNNPR
 29 Feb. 1899 Kerala Patrika, MNNPR
 17 Apr. 1896, Kerala Patrika, MNNPR
 30 June.1896 Kerala Patrika, MNNPR

Nambudiris when they are asked to marry only Nambduiri women. Their strong feelings are articulated in a paper in 1896 against the provision in the Malabar Marriage Bill that parties having a personal law of marriage of their own cannot validly contract a marriage under Malabar Marriage Act. It argues to remove this restriction so that Nair women married by Nambudiris could register such marriages.⁶²

The Commission noted that so strongly has the natural feeling in favour of wife and children become developed in North Malabar that one objection to a marriage law was that the people did not want, what they had already got. According to North Malabar witnesses, "the rule is that the Union of man and woman lasts for life. Divorces are almost unheard of, or are extremely rare. Respectable people set their faces against polygamy. The father is the de facto guardian of his wife and children and educates the latter. Thus according to all the evidence given before us, a marriage law in Malabar and throughout the greater part of South Malabar would merely legalize what is already the prevailing custom."⁶³ Chandu

62. 15 March 1896 Kerala Patrika MNNPR. Much before Yogakshema was formed (it was formed in 1908) arguments against Nambudiri -Nair relationships emerge.

63. MMCR, op.cit., PP.36-37

Menon, a member defended the existing usage and held that the Marumakkathayam people already had a perfectly good system of marriage.⁶⁴ It was noted that minority which desired legislation was numerically small, about one in one hundred and fifty. It consisted of in the main of the educated and the official classes and of those who come within the sphere of their personal influence.⁶⁵ But the real crux of the whole issue was the right of inheriting the property of the father. The majority of the people raised objections due to their reluctance to accept interference in caste and customary practices especially to be weakening of tarawad if self-acquisitions of a member go to his children and not to the tarawad violating the law of inheritance.

The Malabar Marriage Commission did a detailed analysis of the social, economic, moral characteristics of the marriage pattern of Nairs and recommended legalising the existing form of marriage and intending monogamy. It also noted that the minority that desired legislation though small, was

64. MMCR -See the dissenting note of Chandu Menon given in appendix.

65. Ibid., P.8

growing and educated group and would grow in numbers.⁶⁶ But O.Chandu Menon, member of the Commission made a dissenting note ⁶⁷, while the other four members stood for legislation. Chandu Menon argued that 'each nation valued its own custom in respect of its marriage and other social and religious institutions independently of what other people think of them and to a certain extent, each nation has got its own code of morality in respect of such institutions.'⁶⁸ He stressed his argument by saying that the word Sambandham in its peculiar sense conveys the same idea as the word marriage etymologically conveys in the English language, viz., the union of man and woman as husband and wife. Sambandham is the principal Malayalam word for marriage as vivaham in Sanskrit. The Nairs have a system of marriage recognised by custom.⁶⁹ More interesting was the four petitions received by the President of the Commission, three signed by 245 ladies for legislation and the fourth by 387 ladies objecting to any changes in the existing usage.⁷⁰ These petitions and the

66. MMCR, P.24

67. See Appendix

68. Memorandum of Chandu Menon, MMCR, Chandu Menon is the author of Indulekha published in 1889, reflecting the sentiments of Nairs to reject 'Sambandham'.

69. Ibid.,

70. Ibid.P.10. The President remarked that it was not in their power to express their opinions, than through their karananvans or husbands and it was difficult to ascertain their genuine feeling.

dissent note by Chandu Menon implies the different perspectives and apprehensions of the Community.⁷¹

From this, it was obvious that a section was strongly desirous of legislation and the basic intention of the effort was to make the marriage legal and thereby acquire the right to inherit the father's property. Most of the memorials which came up during the procedure were from Brahmins who naturally were against the legislation and in favour of traditional system to continue. The change would deprive them

71. Legislative Department Proceedings, Feb. 1894, Nos. 47-58, Part B, NAI, N. Delhi.

The Malabar Marriage Commission had its first sitting at Calicut on 8th May 1891 and its last at the same place on 27th June 1891. Between these dates, the Commission sat for the purpose of recording evidence at Kannur, Talassery, Calicut, Shornur and Palakkad. On the whole 121 witnesses were examined orally. Interrogatories were sent to 474 persons, of whom 322 forwarded replies. The commission further received and considered representations from the Travancore Malayali Association and from 12 meetings held in various parts of Malabar and 38 petitions signed by 4,854 persons. Out of the 121 witnesses examined, only ten are content with the existing law under which self-acquisitions lapse to the tarawad in case of intestacy.³¹ think that self acquisitions should be divided between the tarawad and the children.³³ would cut out the tarawad altogether. Out of the 322 persons who sent in answers to interrogatories 178 are in favour of marriage legislation, and not less than 105 would desire that the whole of a man's intestate self-acquisitions should go to his widow and children.

of an age old carefree life and impose restrictions on their social behaviour because they regarded these connections not in the light of marriages⁷² It would also mean, marriage if registered, entitled the child to have the property of father. The crucial aspect about the whole issue was the right to inherit the property of father. In the absence of testamentary power, men when they have the means, invariably made the provision for the wives and children by gifts and if they were to die before having made such provisions, their tarawads would be forced by public opinion to make widows and orphans an adequate allowance.⁷³ This economic aspect weighed more in the younger generation than just a recognition of sambandham, a social aspect. The Malabar Marriage Act was passed in June 1896 as a permissive law.⁷⁴ Those who were following marumakkathayam and Aliyasantana law could register their marriages and the right to inherit half of the self-acquired property of father

72. Malabar Marriage Act, June 1896, Legislative Department Proceedings, Nos. 1-27, Appendix 8, NAI, New Delhi.

73. Revised Marriage Bill Appendix A, 1896 Leg. Department Proceedings, NAI, P.5

74. Malabar Marriage Act of 1896, Legislation Department Proceedings, June 1896 Nos.1-27, NAI. The term Aliyasantana is used in Kannada speaking areas indicating the inheritantce pattern whereby nieces and nephews inherited the property.

was provided. Children meant sons and daughters of parents whose sambandham had been registered and the parents should belong to one community. The wife and children had the right to be maintained by the husband or father and also the right to be maintained by the tarawad. A husband and wife could present a petition for dissolution of marriage in the Court of the District Munsiff within the local limits. When a man following the marumakkathayam or Aliayasantana system die intestate, in respect of his self acquired or separate property, one half or such property or in the event of no member of his tarawad surviving him, the whole of such property devolve on his widow and children.⁷⁵

The Malabar Marriage Committee which was formed to provide legal recommendations approached this social issue with caution and the President remarked that it was only when the question was brought forward by one of the people themselves that the measure was allowed to proceed on the understanding that it would not interfere with the religious habits and usage of a the people⁷⁶, In spite of all the initiative taken, only 36

75. Ibid.

76. Proceedings of a meeting of the council of Governor of the Council of Fort St. George assembled for the purpose of making laws and regulations under the provisions of the Act of Parliament. The Council met on 11th March 1896. Revised Marriage Bill Legislative Department Proceedings 1896, Appendix V, P.11, NAI.

marriages were registered within one year.⁷⁷ The new legality enabled two systems of inheritance at work (1) Makkathayam and Marumakkathayam. Though the Act was hailed as a great step⁷⁸ by some, it was not a full realization for the people who demanded testamentary powers. It can only be considered as a first instalment of measures introduced by the colonial government. To the section who urged for reforms, the Act was a complete disappointment because it neither leagalized sambandham altogether nor touched on the partition problem. This was obvious from the number of marriages registered after the Act.⁷⁹ The demand continued leading to a continous struggle for testamentary and partition rights. The legal provision for sambandham was not satisfactory. Thus an Act called the Malabar Wills Act 1898 was passed by the Government to provide rules for the execution of Wills to persons governed by the Marumakkathayam and Aliyasantana laws of inheritance.⁸⁰ It said. "Every person of sound mind and not a minor and may by will dispose of property which he could legally alienate by gift."⁸¹

77. 30 September 1897 Kerala Patrika, MNNPR

78. 22 June 1896, Karnataka Prakasika, MNNPR

79. Partition demand was common. See 26, February, 3 March 7 April 1910, West Coast Reformer, 29 April 1910, Swadeshabhimani, MNNPR.

80. Madras Wills Act, 1898, Legislative Department Proceedings Nos.1-21, NAI.

81. Ibid.

It facilitated the holder of private property or self acquired property to confer it to persons of his choice, who were mostly his wife and children. The Wills Act was used extensively.⁸²

82. See table No. VIII indicates the steady rise in the Wills executed by marumakkathayam people after the Act. Out of 1445 Wills executed by persons who are governed by Marumakkathayam or Aliyasantana law during the 14 years ending with 1909, 981 were in favour of wife and children, 260 in favour of anantaravans, 162 in favour of other relatives and 42 in favour of strangers, the percentage being 67.96, 17.48 and 11.65 and 2.91 respectively. The total number of Wills presented by all classes of persons during the 14 years from 1896 to 1909 was 2,475 while the same during the 14 years prior to 1896 was only 603, the increase during the former period being 1854 or 75.57% and out of 2,475 wills presented, 1445 were executed by marumakkathaya or Aliysanatana people.

TABLE

Statement showing the number of Wills registered in Malabar by persons governed by the marumakkthayam law as compared with the number of wills registered in this district by all other classes generally

Year	South Malabar		North Malabar		Total of 1 + 3	Total of 2 + 4
	No. of Wills registered by Marumakkathayam	No. of Wills by others	No. of Wills registered by Marumakkathayam	No. of Wills by others		
	1	2	3	4		
1898-1899	45	56	16	17	61	73
1899-1900	55	39	65	18	120	57
1900-1901	54	60	98	21	152	81
1901-1902	75	74	129	13	204	87
1902	81	61	140	7	221	68
1903	115	79	186	19	301	98
1904	81	67	234	20	315	87
1905	1119	89	192	22	311	111
1906	151	99	256	30	407	129
1907	201	103	517	37	718	140
1908	207	99	554	44	761	143
1909	174	94	293	29	467	123

76. Sources : Malabar Inheritance Bill, 1910, Legislative Department Proceedings, May 1912, No.s 30 - 33, P.3, Appendix R - NAI.

Efforts continued to pressurize the government for the right of partition. The internal contradictions in each tarawad, dissensions, partiality of karavans, the shifting trends to set up small family, above all, the variations of individual status of Nairs made them look forward to the share of the property. In 1910, Krishnan Nair, presented the Malabar Succession and Partition Bill in the Madras Legislative Council in 1910. It attempted to get the provision of a tavazhi to claim the partition of a tarawad and to restructure the authority of karavan. It was remarked that a great majority of the marumakkathayam people are for the bill and something more than that.⁸³ According to the bill, a tavazhi, a group of persons consisting of a female and her issues in the female line, may claim an outright partition of all properties common to all the members of tarawad of which that tavazhi forms a part. The division in all cases be per capita among all the living members. The managers of tarawads and tavazhi shall have all the powers and be subject to all liabilities and keep true and correct accounts of their income and expenditure.⁸⁴ Though the right of partition was sought, it was only for a tavazhi

83. March 1910, West Coast Reformer, MNNPR.

84. Malabar Succession and partition Bill 1910, Appendix-T, Legislative Department Proceedings P.10 Nos.30-33 NAI.

and not individual partition. Another demand gradually recognised was the curtailment of karanavan's powers and authority because the dominance, partiality and discretionary powers had led to dissension and the large number of suits filed in the law courts of Malabar. The contemporary papers took up the propaganda to the demand of partition.⁸⁵

Several bills were introduced with the intention of getting the right of partition. Sir. Vasudeva Raja of Kollangode had presented a bill in 1908 when he was a member of the Madras Legislative Council. His bill dealt with the question of the succession of the tarawad to the self-acquired property of the deceased individual member.⁸⁶ It has to be noted that the desire that a partition of the self acquired property should go to the wife and children of the acquirer was widely felt. If a man died suddenly, without writing a will to his wife and children, they could not claim his self-acquired property. In 1913, K.P.Raman menon introduced two bills with the same intention of regulating partition and succession in Malabar

85. See MNNPR of the period. See 26 Feb. 1910, West Coast Spectator. 12 March 1910, West Coast Reformer. 27 April 1910, Swadeshabimani, 30 Sept. 1910 Swadeshabhimani, 14 Oct. 1910, Swadeshabhimani.

86. 2 May 1912, West Coast Reformer, MNNPR

joint families.⁸⁷ Raman Menon's bill demanded partition but tarawads desirous of remaining impartible could be given the right of registration as impartible tarawads. For partition, 2/3 of the major members should give their support. A person's wife and children were to be declared the heir to his property acquired by partition. Husband had to be made the legal guardian. Karanavan had to maintain correct account of income and expenditure and junior members could ask for accounts and every member had the right of maintenance and only with the consent of all members, karanavan could alienate property.⁸⁸ The thrust so far, had been the claim to the father's or husband's self-acquired property but gradually the inclination was to divide the tarawad property, which was not in tune with tradition and custom. The partition of the joint property would lead to disappearance of an age old concept and reality of a huge structure called tarawad. So, the bills were favoured by many and opposed by many. Kerala Patrika of 27 Sept. 1913 observed that the bills if passed into law would be highly injurious to the community.⁸⁹ However bad, the tarawad system was, it at least provided an asylum for destitute members. The system as a whole should not be destroyed. Social legislation

87. 4 June 1913, Satyadipika, MNNPR.

88. No.150, 5 Sep.1913, Legislative Department, Section 22, NAI

89. See MNNPR of 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913

should be undertaken only when it improved the status of all members constituting a society.⁹⁰ This appeared to be the inclination of the government also because in spite of incessant efforts and pressure from the Nair community, the government dragged in taking a recourse to touch the huge, age old edifice called tarawad. It would mean that the distinct character of Nairs will disappear. Opinion was divided regarding partition since it would automatically disintegrate a tarawad. One section argued that if the head of the family managed the property satisfactorily and looked after the wants of the junior members properly, partition was not necessary on the other hand, if the manager misappropriated the income for the benefit of wife and children or indulged in wasteful expenditure, then the property had better be divided among the members of the family.

While legislation was delayed, two nagging problems troubled the Nair community - partition and authoritarian nature of karanavan. The courts maintained that no one could claim division as a matter of right but any one could resist it. Anyway once the Nairs realised that a shift was imminent, the

90. 27 September 1913, Kerala Patrika, MNNPR.

efforts were intensified. Prabhakaran Tamban, a member of the Madras Legislative Council introduced a bill with the same intention called the Tarawad Management Bill in 1924. This was almost on the line of Raman Menon's bill seeking to define, regulate and limit the powers of karanavan and to instruct him to keep correct account and prevent him from sale, mortgage or alienation of the tarawad property and even the right to remove karanavan if he was physically or mentally incapable of disposing duties.⁹¹ But this bill was regarded as falling short of Nair goal of individual partition and condemns the bill as inadequate, unsatisfactory and mischievous. K.Madhavan Nair, presented a bill in this direction, when he became the member of Legislative Council in 1927. It was not followed up. Lastly Messers. Nambiar and Pala'ts bill were considered for the Madras Marumakkathayam Act.⁹² By this time, the efforts from 1890 and judicial experiments in native usage had come a long way and it was remarked that even illiterate Malayalis were convinced of the necessity of reforming the Marumakkathayam

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91. No.371, 19 Sept. 1924 Legislative Department, Madras, Section II, NAI. Courts held that no karanavan could alienate property whether acquired by himself or otherwise without obtaining the consent of anantaravans. See P.V.Balakrishan Nair - Matrilineal system in Malabar, Ph.D.Thesis, Calicut University, 1975, P.159.
92. Madras Legislative Council Proceedings, Vol.LVVII, P.864, 30 Oct to 14 Nov. 1933, NAI, New Delhi.

System and that the various public meetings and conferences held in various parts of Malabar law proclaim the necessity of legislation.⁹³ The keenness to legalise marriages as an alternative to traditional inheritance pattern and right of partition and property culminated in the Madras Marumakkathayam Act 1933.⁹⁴ The pressure from the community is reflected in the observations of the council which recommended the sanction of the bill. "The Communities governed by Marumakkathayam and Aliyasantana system have been asking for the legal recognition of the customary marital union prevailing among them. The Malabar marriage Act of 1896 was passed in response to this demand. But that legislation is a very imperfect measure and has failed to meet the requirements of the people concerned. It does not legalize sambandham but provided for the optional registration of marriage. Progressive ideas have gained ground everywhere. The social system alone remains unchanged. The tarawad is no longer the centre and focus of marumakkathayam life. Apart from marriage and inheritance, the needs for a law providing for partition has long been felt. The tarawads have expanded beyond all natural limits and ended up in ruinous litigation. There is hardly a family in Malabar that is not in courts".⁹⁵

93. 20 January 1932, Mathrubhumi

94 Madras Marumakkathayam Act No.XII- 1933, Legislative Department Madras, Publication - NAI

95. No.126/33. Publication Division, Madras Legislative Council, 1933, NAI.

The Madras Marumakkathayam Act 1933 repealed the Malabar Marriage Act 1896. The important provisions of the Act were, the union of a marumakkathayam female with a man of the same community or not was recognised as a legal marriage. A husband or wife could present a petition for dissolution of marriage. The wife and minor children were to be maintained by husband or father. On the death of a male who die intestate, the whole of the property would belong to the child or children, his mother, widow but in the absence of the mother, widow or child, the whole of the property would belong to such lineal descendent or descendants. The karanavan was to keep true and correct accounts of the income and expenditure of the tarawad. Even the sale of movable property was to be transacted with the written consent of majority members. Any tavazhi represented by the majority of its major members could claim to take its share of all the properties of the tarawad. Tarawads which wish to remain impartible had to register as impartible.⁹⁶ It is relevant to note that the colonial government tried to prevent the partition of tarawad as far as they could and even the 1933 Act provided only for tavazhi partition. Another notable aspect

96. List of tarawads which registered to remain impartible is given in Appendix, The Madras Marumakkathayam Act got the assent of the Viceroy on 12th April 1933 Madras Act No. XII of 1933, Legislative Department NAI.

was, in spite of complaints, litigations against karanavan, karanavan was recognised as the head of the tarawad and his status was keenly recognised because he was the authority to pay tax.

Tarawad which had remained a strong, protective shelter to all the members of a large family, could not withstand the erosion of family relationships and the tides of modern historical forces. This family unit, a distinct characteristic of this region, when in contact with the outside world, started shaking. The affection, obligation, family ties integral to such a structure gradually acquired a new character in the wake of colonialism. Individual enterprise which was absent in such a corporate family unit began to develop. Industrialisation, urbanisation, employment, education, cash salary, aspects of modern life appeared as blows to the traditional edifice. By the end of the 19th C, plantations and factories which was a commercial deviation from trade, were established by the British and this necessitated huge investments as well as recruitment of labourers. A new trend was developing in Indian industrial sector. Equally important was the presence of a uniform net work of judicial courts. As noted earlier, tarawads became scene of dissensions and conflicting values and Malabar

Courts were flooded with litigations.⁹⁷ A tarawad with so many members having varied dispositions, could function smoothly only with maximum adjustment and understanding and impartiality of the head of the family. But Karanavan's authoritative nature, partiality led to suits filed in Courts. Suits filed by junior members to set aside alienation by the karanavans and to recover possession of the property alienated for the benefits of the tarawad were many in number.⁹⁸ In another case, suits was filed by junior members of a tarawad against karanavan who had been living away from the tarawad with his wife and children neglecting to maintain the members of the tarawad.⁹⁹ Suits were filed against karanavan in alienating property to his son and son-in-law.¹⁰⁰ In one case, karanavan's executing a promissory note in his name and not as karanavan, in another a karanavan executing a melcharth before the expiry

97. (1) Sundara Aiyar-Malabar and Aliyasantana Law, Madras, 1922

(2) K.Sreedhara Varier- Marumakkathayam and Allied Systems of Law, Madras, 1969.

(3) Kaleeshwaram Raj and Suchithra-Commentaries on Marumakkathayam Law, Payyannur, 1995.

98. (1) Vasudevan Vs Sankaran, 1896, ILR, Madras

(2) Suit No.225 of 1922, Munsiff Court Kasargod ILR-Madras 1922.

99. Suit No.632 of 1922, Kasargod ILR

100. Suit No.180 of 1916, No.202 of 1929 ILR

of a kanam without any benefit to the tarawad and suits to remove karanavan abounded in Malabar Courts. The law journals like Madras Law Journals and Indian Law Journals illustrate this. Though an exhaustive list of suits is not feasible here, there are indications to the misbehaviour and authoritarian style of functioning of karanavan which was detrimental to the corporate interests of the tarawad. It also indicates the growing awareness and articulation of their problems and seeking a judicial answer to these.¹⁰¹ But karanavan's power and authority was protected even at the complaint of misappropriation or negligence.¹⁰²

Simultaneous with the Nair movement was the Nambudiri movement for legality and alternatives in the marriage and inheritance systems. In 1933, the Nambudiri Act was passed in this direction. Along with the social problem was the projection of the inter related tenancy problem . The tenural

101. See Madras Law Reports of 1910, 1911, 1912, 1914, 1926, 1927, 1931

102. October 1917, vol. XXXIII - MLJ, Justice Holloway remarked that a Malabar family speaks through its head. Except where the karanavan was improperly alienated or dealt with family properties or submitting to the infringement of the family right or has so far delayed in assenting family rights, the junior members cannot maintain a suit.

pattern has been discussed in the second chapter. Some of the unscrupulous measures adopted by Janmis to harm the tenants had been exposed by media. In 1815, Kerala Sanchari reported that the cordial feeling formerly existing between the landlords and tenants is now entirely a thing of the past. The system of letting lands on melcharth or over lease by the landlords give rise to various evils. Melcharths give rise to quarreling, outbreaks, murder and suicide.¹⁰³ The same paper refers to the Madras Land Estates Bill which was under the consideration of a Select Committee remarked that it was necessary in the interests of both the landlords and tenants, and the tenancy law should be enacted.¹⁰⁴ "If any festival or any ceremony in temples was conducted, the tenants were asked to contribute money and other things. The Nambudiri janmis regard with great displeasure any tenant who may build good houses or wear neat, and fine clothes. In Palakkad, a tenant incurred the displeasure of the Janmi, when he tiled roof of his house. Again a janmi celebrated his daughter's marriage in an extravagant manner by making his tenants contribute to the expenditure."¹⁰⁵ This along

103. 31 March 1895, Kerala Sanchari, MNNPR.

104. 10 May 1905, Kerala Sanchari - MNNPR.

105. 30 November 1912, Kerala Patrika, MNNPR

with the demands of partition and succession to property, tenancy problems were highlighted by the Nairs because these issues were interrelated and had a direct bearing on their social identity. The manipulations of the janmis were creating complications in the position of kanakkars. As M. Krishnan Nair, a member of legislative council said "The Kanankkar has to live in perpetual fear of the Janmi. He has always to humble himself and stand before the Janmi suppressing his self-respect. He cannot in any way afford to offend the janmi lest he may be turned out of his residential house. A janmi demands at the time of renewal, large sums of money as renewal fees and presents from the kanakkars."¹⁰⁶ It may be noted that Nairs were mostly the kanakkars and in the traditional society, Nairs had to stand in respect to Nambudiris and take away the towel kept on his shoulder as a gesture of respect and subordination. Even when the name of the Nairs was called by a Nambudiri, the Nair has to respond 'ran' as a mark of respect in the reply. But now, in a fast changing modern society, Nairs had started taking pride by education and employment and need not stagnate in humility or in the restricted space of his birth but could move away with a job,

106. M. Krishnan Nair's observations - The Malabar Tenancy Bill 1927, No.7 of 1927. File No.70 (General) Madras Legislature Council Proceedings - NAI, P.6

he started developing his self respect and dignity and the old ideology had started to wear off. The confidence of Nambudiris as inheritors of vedic knowledge and high castes could now be competed with the moral confidence imbibed out of new education questioning caste inequality. Logan, the Collector of Malabar in 1880s and the first to point out the socio-economic factors which required changes said that while he was the Special Commissioner, many tenants used to stop him on his way and used to tell him, long tales of oppression but were reluctant to put these on record for fear of desavirodham and swajanavirodham, if they incurred the displeasure of Nambudiris.¹⁰⁷ Krishnan Nair pointed out the stagnant situation of tenurial pattern. The Janmis formed only a small number and they were monopolists of land. The land thus was not distributed and impartibility of land among the Nairs and Nambudiris was another serious concern. "It is practically impossible for the cultivating classes to obtain land with any security. it is also extremely difficult for anyone, whether he be an agricultural

107. Ibid.P.8

The participation of Nairs in the national movement in large numbers gave them a moral confidence. It was an exposure to them. Of the 450 arrested for civil disobedience by December 1930, over 30% were Nairs which led them to regard themselves as leaders of lower sections.

Dilip Menon, Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India 1900 - 1949, Cambridge, 1994. P.106.

agricultural labourer, an artisan or a public servant or a professional to obtain permanent sites for dwelling houses".¹⁰⁸ The bill thus reflected the sentiments of the Nairs for fixity of tenure, partition and distribution of land.

During the years between 1800 and 1900, the only legislation enacted in respect of Malabar land tenures was the Act of 1887, which provided for compensation for improvements effected by tenants, followed by an amending act in 1900.¹⁰⁹ The formation of Malabar Kudiyan Sangham in 1922 was a turning point in this direction. They demanded fixity of occupancy, fair rent and abolition of melcharths.¹⁰⁰ local units of the Sangham were formed within 8 years by G.Sankaran Nair, an active member.¹¹⁰ But all along, the government maintained and sympathised with the janmis by evading legislation for fixity of tenure. This, a policy of political expediency did not demoralise the kanakkars and the pressure was increased. Nairs by this time, had created a place in the newly emerged situation whether in politics or

100. M.Krishnan Nair, *op.cit.*, P.1

109. See V.V.Kunhikrishnan, Tenancy Legislation in Malabar 1880 - 1970, Calicut University, Ph.D.Thesis, 1985, P.100

110. *Ibid.* P.106.

professional status. In 1930, the Malabar Tenancy Act was passed providing permanent tenure rights and stopped eviction. Melcharth was also abolished. The remedial fee was fixed.¹¹¹ The long awaited legislation brought a new identity for kanakkars who were struggling to come out of subordination materially and morally.

The realization of certain aspirations and legality of certain aspects could not completely put the Nairs in a prosperous situation. The very character of a tarawad had assured maintenance for every member but now when tavazhi partition took place, the members of the tavazhi who were either not educated or employed found it difficult to carry on their day to day affairs. Most of the Nairs who were kanakkar had not developed the habit of direct cultivation or inherit a large tract of land. This put many members in a difficult situation, trapped by his own plans for partition. Most of them were not familiar with management of the family or land. The individual enterprise was not the character of a tarawad. All the tarawads were not rich or prosperous.

111. GO, Madras No.4976 Law Act XIV of 1930

The next major act was the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 in this line. The context is different since this comes into force in independent India. The Act came into force on 17/6/1956 and was applicable to all Hindus in India whatever be the system which they followed till then. It wiped away all traditional systems including marumakkathayam legally.¹¹² Under this, rule of notional partition was recognized instead of the rule of survivorship. Capacity of testamentary disposition was conferred for undivided share. The share on per capita basis was allotted to the member who dies after the Marumakkathayam Act of 1933. Marumakkathayam marriage solemnised after the Act has to be attended with the ceremonies prevailing in the community. Customs vary from place to place and also from community to community. For instance, the Hindu Marriage Act 1955¹¹³ clearly said that a Hindu marriage has to be solemnized with the customary rites and ceremonies including the saptapadi, the seven steps taken by the bride. But this does not apply to a marumakkathayam bride for the reason that she does not change her tarawad on marriage. Nair custom included

112. Kaleeshwaram Raj and Suchithra, op.cit., PP.106-113.

113. Sreedhara Varier, op.cit., P.159

presentation of a pudava to the bride by the bridegroom before a lighted lamp in the presence of witness. Tali or garland or rings is a development of modern times.

In 1958, Kerala Legislature passed the Marumakkathayam Amendment Act,¹¹⁴ enabling any member of a Malabar tarawad to claim individual partition and the consent of the common ancestress was dispensed with. The last in the series of significant legislation on the Marumakkathaym system was the Kerala Joint Hindu Family system (Abolition) Act dated 1/12/1976. It abolished the joint family system, community of interests, right by birth and rule of survivorship. It cancelled the right to claim property on the basis of birth in a family. Each member can hold his or her share separately. Descent through female line came to an end and property on death develops upon the personal heirs. The provisions of the Act are clear that it does not envisage the emergence or continuance of a marumakkathayam tavazhi or tarawad after its date. The system, came to an end in principle. The sentimental lingering of belonging to a tarawad remains. The concept exists but there is no existent reality today.

114. Madras Marumakkathayam Act, Amendment Act 26 of 1958 Kerala. For details see Kaleeshwar Raj and Suchithra, op.cit.

Marumakkathayam devolved through women. Thus Nair women, unlike her counterparts in other communities are believed to have enjoyed great freedom and importance. But in effect, Nair women had a role of subordination in a patriarchal family set up, where all affairs were managed and decided by male members. This impression of freedom of Nair women arises from a wrong equation of matriliney with matriarchy. Though the descent was through the mother, the head, trustee or custodian was always a man, usually the oldest male member of a large joint family. In rare occasions, when there were no male members, a karavathi or the oldest female managed the family matters. Even the modern judiciary permitted this by declaring that the marumakkathayam usage does not preclude a female member from becoming karavathi of a tarawad when there is no male member of that family capable of managing.¹¹⁵ Nair women did not practise purdah or seclusion. Nair women according to her status could wear ornaments and Nairs had peculiar jewellery like gold girdles called aranjanam, or silver girdles, Palakkamothiram, Nagapatathali, Poothali, big studs called Takka or Thoda, and Pulinagamothiram. They exhibited the status within the community by wearing studs as big as possible. Both men and women pierced

115. (1) Subramanian Vs Gopalan, 1886, ILR 10 Madras.

(2) Ayyappan Vs Govindan 21 TLR 1881

(3) Lakshmi Vs Parameswar 22 TLR 1882

their earlobes to wear studs. Malayali women had no habit of wearing blouse or covering their chest. But the quality of freedom engaged by her was with reservations. Nair women could be given in marriage to Brahmins with the expectation of the progeny to be of a higher caste, even without any rights of claiming the affection of father or his property or caste. She was strictly prevented from having any liaison with the lower caste. Pulappedi, Mannappedi has to be read in this context. She had no choice in marriage and if a woman changed her husband, it could be the result of an authoritative karanavan, who cancelled the relationship of the niece, if her husband incurred his displeasure in any way. Though seclusion was not practised, her mobility, was restricted. The voice of a girl should not reach the roof was a common reminder to girls. Even the tenurial pattern and role and subordination of kanakkar who were mostly Nairs, made them submit to the desires of the higher caste janmi, where they could not deny the girl asked for sambandham.

The women question occupied a central place during the reformatory movement. This was due to the issues relating to women taken up by most of the reformers. Men started talking about women's needs and how to better their status. Most of the Indian reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Ranade and Dayananda Sarawsathi believed that women were better placed in

the past and it was a 'golden age' and the present 'dark age' had to be overcome.¹¹⁶ At the local horizon, reformers like Sree Narayana Guru, Vaghatananda, Chattampi Swamikal insisted on improving women's status, ending customs relating to their suffering and humiliation. In fact, most of the issues taken up during reformatory movement were to end sambandham, child marriage and for right of education, monogamy, widow remarriage and individual share. All these had to be solved within the confines of family without affecting close family relationships. Women should be educated and their status improved with legislation. But interestingly, at the early stage of these attempts, women had not emerged as partners of discussion or articulated their desires or needs. The reformers' stand was supported by the colonial administrators depicting women's position pitiable and projected an impression that Indian women were always in subjugation and harassment. They were not treated with dignity and subjected to all sorts of humiliation. This was utilised by them for intervention in social matters and legitimation.

116. See Geraldine Forbes- Women in Modern India, Cambridge 1996, P.156.

Female education was felt necessary by Indian reformers and colonial administration. The associations like the Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj and Theosophical Society supported this. In 1854, there were 256 girls' schools in Madras Presidency.¹¹⁷ But schools for girls could not be a smooth action. Many families still were under the conviction that women, if educated had to suffer widowhood.¹¹⁸ Such beliefs along with practical hindrances like the requirement of lady teachers to teach girls, seclusion in some communities, gender distinctions and the question whether matured girls could be sent to schools remained irritant hurdles. It was because of these inhibitions that, we find the families who could afford education, engaging tutors at home to teach girls. The caste-community segregation also remained as a social problem. The British had always perceived the cause of Indian women as requiring change since they believed that women were ignored. Therefore they argued that these women should be educated and education was the sign of progress. Indian society to them was decadent and one of the reasons was the neglect of women. When they initiated the inclusion of educated Indians in service, they expected their wives to be sophisticated, capable of maintaining the family matters and moulding a progressive next

117. Y.B.Mathur - Women's Education in India, Bombay,1973
P.26.

118. Geraldine Forbes, op.cit, P.32

generation. The modern attitude was shared by educated Indians, for they aspired to have educated companions as wives especially in the context of nuclear family units. Their professions gave them a moral confidence and future aspirations to educate the children for an upward mobility in social sphere.

It was gradually that women started articulating their needs and interest and problems. National movement with Gandhiji as the central figure, opened up a new world to the women. Gandhiji invoked the names of Sita, Savithri to point out their immense strength and potential to survive with dignity. The participation in national movement by many from Malabar, brought in details of the movement, where women had started to involve themselves. A new world was emerging for them. The repeated stress on education as the path to progress and development leading to material welfare, created the consciousness. The cultural and moral backwardness of India was pointed out by projecting the secondary role and subordination of women. Equality of the west had to be learnt. But the values imbibed from another culture cannot solve the problems of another region. In spite of an appreciation or awareness of western culture, the Indian experiment had to be different. The interpretation of Indian customs and usage as backward can be

seen in various colonial assessments. The colonial reading of culture or the definition of cultural progress has to be approached with reservations because western progress could never offer the same meaning to Indian progress. The situation was totally different in this region.

If the situation in the traditional society was of subordination, even at the wake of modernity, variations in perceptions towards women exist. On one side, it was felt that women did not require any identity and should be under the shadow of men and in effect, she had no practical share of property. On another level, men started looking towards a female partner and companion who had some education and felt that women should be treated properly and with dignity. Here also, she had not come to the level of claiming her share of property. It was only the conceptual share. It was later that women started talking about themselves, their needs, family, aspirations and the right to claim her property and education. Her identity was to be recognised. Her role in the family undergoes a better change, with the emergence of nuclear family units. Even in 1890s, Malabar Marriage Commission remarked that "in Marumakkathayam law, a tarawad estate is held in trust for the support of the females and of their descendants in female line.

The theory of the system supposes that the females should live together and husbands visit them".¹¹⁹ The female virtue is not recognised here and this attitude did not warrant a healthy, normal family life. Women were to be protected and this 'protection' was inherent in the traditional making of the society and tradition determined her status. "The creative activity of women is pitted against patriarchal restrictions."¹²⁰ The situation in a family speaks of gender inequality where women are seen just as mothers and wives with particular social roles and responsibilities. There was no rejection of their traditional role of wife and mother but now she was made to be conscious about the importance of these roles and accommodated the interest to know the world beyond that.

In 1910, Sarala Devi, Choudhrani founded the Bharat Stree Mahamandal.¹²¹ Between 1910 and 1920, number of social organisation for women grew rapidly. In 1917, women of Madras

119. MMCR, P.32.

120. Kumkum Sangari "Consent, Agency and Rhetoric of Incitement" in Region, Religion, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India, Satyamurthy (ed) OUP, 1996, P.464.

121. M.S.A. Rao (ed), Social Movements in India, New Delhi, 1979 II, P.49

formed the Women's Indian Association. By 1932, the National Women's Organization could claim a joint membership of over, 10,000 women.¹²² The intention was to create an awareness among women about their identity, potential, duties and aspirations. Only when women were able to make a discernment about their strength, men would recognize them. It was an attempt to enlarge her social role to understand the larger world and combine with the role of mother and wife.

Nair women and their status also were determined by tradition. she was the media through inheritance ran. But that exceptional status ended there itself. Like her counterparts in other communities, Nair men start talking about women's needs and what has to be bestowed to her. Though strong activists like Parvati Manazhi, of the Nambudiri Community did not emerge here, there were women who started articulating their problems and contending an identity of their own by writing their views in magazines and through literature.¹²³ The 'sambandham' relationship of Nair women was taken up seriously, though most of the Nair women who had the sambandham with brahmins were the

122. Ibid., P.150

123. See Mahila, Mahila Ratnam, Managalodaya, from 1915

aristocratic among Nairs.¹²⁴ The variations within the family and community had always existed with its symbols like dress, jewellery and size of the house.

It can be seen that by the beginning of 20th century women started discussing about child care and education of girls.¹²⁵ Ekkavamma, Kunjulakshmi Ketttilamma, Mrs.Kannan Menon, B.Kalliani Amma, T.K.Kalliani Kutty Amma, Chinnamma were some of the early women who came to the front and initiated attempts to educate women of the community about the emerging social needs and roles.¹²⁶ They pointed out that *sambandham is entered in to without the will or permission of women. It is not known

124. MOCR, P.116

125. Ekkavamma in - Mahila Ratnam, 1915, Book I, PP.9-13.

126. From 1887 to 1975, there were more than 20 women magazines in Kerala. Short story, poems, articles, discussions, book review, biographies, reports and news about women occupied the space of these magazines. Some of these were Keraleeya Sugamabodhini, Sarada, Lakshmi Bai, Mahila Ratnam, Mahila, Mangalodayam etc. Sarada was the first woman's magazine started under the initiative of women. T.C.Kalliani Amma of Ernakulam, B.Kalliani Amma of Trivandrum, T.Ammukutty Amma of Ernakulam were the spirit behind this. These magazines contained issues like women's education, life history of famous women, life styles of women of other regions, necessary reforms for Malayalis, duties of women and went to the extent of discussing whether "Sheelavathi was an ideal woman". T.V.Suneetha, Enganeyum Undayirunnu, in kalakaumudi, 5 October 1997.

whether the man who marries, is of a good character or not. Women have desires and ideas about a husband.¹²⁷

In the next issue, K.C.Meenakshi Amma writes, "Before the marriage is fixed, the desire of the girl should be taken because the husband should share all sorrows and happiness of the girl. It is not the karanavar or father who should decide the bridegroom. Wives are not the slaves of husband.¹²⁸ The shift in the attitude is notable and there is boldness in these lines and aspiration for a permanent marriage relationship, not sambandham. Magazines like Mahila Ratnam, Mahila Mandiram, Mahila were efficiently managed by women like Chinnamma, Bhagirathi Amma and others. The issues they engaged for a discourse were the evils of sambandham, education and identity of women, child care, etc.¹²⁹ They involved women from other communities like Parvati Nenmenimanglam, an antarjanam who boycotted gosha and remained an activist throughout. She presided over the Cochin Stree Samajam Annual Conference in 1932 and projected the suffering of antarjanams.¹³⁰ It is relevant to

127. Mrs. Kannan Menon- Adunika Vanitha Ratnangalum Avarude Bharthakkanmarum in Mahila Ratnam, Dhanu, 1901, PP.26-28.

128. Meenakshi Amma- Mahila Ratnam, Kumbham, 1091, PP.36-38.

129. See Mahila Ratnam, 1091, Kanni, Dhanu
Mahila Mandiram, 1103, 1104, Vol.2
Mahila 1922 Vol.1, No.7, 1923, Vol.3 No.1, 1924, Vol.4 No.1,
1932, Vol II, No.7 1937, Vol.17 and 18

130. Mahila, 1932, Vol.II, P.321.

note that women started assessing their identity and roles but these were within the confines of a patriarchal ideology. "The historical role of modernization movement was that of recasting women for companionate marital relationship and attendant familial duties as well as of enabling middle class women to enter the professions and participate in political movements in a limited way".¹³¹ Women from the protective umbrella of patriarchy or matriliney shifted to the protection of husband.¹³² The question of equality was not in the agenda. It remained at the level of protection. Even in social programmes like abolition of Sati, Widow remarriage, the implication was the protection of women. Colonial attempts were to point out the pitiable condition of women and the need for protection. Any way, women became a critical, issue, thus paving the way for an active dialogue, to correct the disadvantages meted out to her.

Women's associations increased during this period, and a new perspective emerged among them. The common debate was about education of women. But some women started thinking deeply about their identity and what men expected from them. In an

131. Kumkum Sangari and Suedesh Void (Ed) "Recasting Women" in Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi, 1989.P.20

132. Brenda Cossman and Ratna Kapur, Women, Familial Ideology and the Constitution on Familial Terrains in Legal Dominions- Ratna Kapur (ed) Kali for Women, Delhi 1996,P.65.

article in Mahila Ratnam, a writer called Sarojini critically evaluated the expected attributes and physical charms a woman should have, her moral duties and the ideal roles of Sita, Savithri, Sheelavathi. She attacks the age old ideological grip over women by men and asks whether all ugly women should commit suicide.¹³³ This assertion was a beginning of articulation of her own problems and her inner conflicts as to why she was not treated in equal terms with that of a man. But men were not ready to prepare her to that extent. No legal step treated her equal but she had to be protected. This contradiction of opening up a new world for men and denying this to women remained.¹³⁴ Even Sree Narayana Guru urged women to be practical but she should protect her chastity. Thus in the modern context also, women are expected to be chaste by guarding herself.

Legalisation of marriage, remarriage of widows, right of education, right of property were the prime issues which gained intensity gradually. Thus the question of security acquired attention. Though education of girls was given a stress, women taking up jobs was not generally discussed or

133. (1) Mahila Ratnam, 1091, Dhanu

(2) N.K.Ravindran- Keralathile Stree Vimochana Rashtreeyam - Charithraparamaya Anneshanam in Sachidanandan (ed)

Sree Padanangal
Kozhikode, 1990, PP.66-70.

134. Sachidanandan (ed) Stree Padanangal, Kozhikode, 1990, P.42

raised as a future programme. But in 1935, in the women's magazine called 'Mahila', the Junior Maharani of Travancore wrote. 'The solution of women's problems depends on securing for them in marriage and out of it economic independence. There must be freedom to work out side the home and economic partnership at home.'¹³⁵ This gesture was a new beginning.

The discussion in this chapter provides a picture of a society in transition and colonial experiments for legality in social customs. Though a minor section agitated for legality of marriage and inheritance pattern, the Nair community as a whole could not remain with their distinct characteristics like matriline and sambandham. It was not only regional factors which were behind the social consciousness, but the entire nation was experiencing an awareness and discernment. The spirit of freedom launched and inspired different regions and people. Nairs by 1930s had to adopt alternative patterns but the sentiments of belonging to a tarawad still remains. Most of the Nairs retain the tarawad name as a prefix to their names. The consequence of community wise movements created an identity of each community even at a time when national consciousness affected the whole nation. It is interesting to note that Nairs who participated in nationalist movement in large numbers, simultaneously had a

135. Mahila, 1937, Vol.17 and 18, PP.130-131.

different disposition regarding their own community. Leaders like Mannath Padmanabhan had clearly said that he took pride in organizing his community, bringing in unity among them. Many of the social practices of Nairs have disappeared. For instance, Tirandukuli, Talikettukalyanam, Sambandham and Pulikudi. The dress code has changed. The old appearance and dressing style of not covering the upper portion of the body by men and women has changed to a uniform dressing style for all castes. A Nair need not remove the cloth on his shoulder in front of brahmin. He cannot create distance pollution. There is complete endogamy. Sub caste fusion is another consequence. Nairs were not ritualistic like Nambudiris but some uniform pattern have been adopted for Nair marriage. Today, a bridegroom ties a tali on the bride, exchange rings, garland each other in front of witnesses. But reminiscent of the old custom, the bridegroom presents pudava to the bride. There has been complete shift from joint family to nuclear family with the husband, wife and children forming the unit. In the traditional usage, the nephews had to perform the funeral rites of karanavan but today, the son is supposed to observe this.

Tarawad still remains a strong conceptual bearing on the Nair psyche. The pride of belonging to tarawad is expressed even today. The birth of a girl as the carrier of tavazhi and

tarawad legacy still holds relevance for a Nair. It is apparent at this stage, that traditional culture and colonial culture had to come to terms because it was not a thorough change that the community urged but a reformulation. Today, it is the individualist identity which matters and the functional unit is a nuclear family.

SOCIAL CHANGES IN LITERATURE

Swarna kumari E.K. “Social changes in malabar with special reference to two traditional communities 1881-1933 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2001

SOCIAL CHANGES IN LITERATURE

"Culture is embodied in language and everyday practices. Language serves both as a reservoir of fossils of life and civilization."¹ To understand culture, it is important to know, the contemporary articulations in language and literature, which reflect ideas, aesthetic expressions and representations of social trends and behaviour. Socio, economic and cultural process of any period of transition are bound to reflect in the literary manifestation of the contemporary period. Literature carry social assumptions and illumine the emerging social consciousness. This is more relevant when the society was exposed to a new language and culture, thus creating an alertness to reformulate but protecting the indigenous culture and identity.

The 19th and 20th centuries were a period of transition for the society of Malabar. By the end of the 19th century, several new trends had emerged in political, social, economic and literary fields of Malabar. A new middle class had developed by then. National consciousness and a new identity for an Indian nation was leading to an introspection about social practices and behaviour. The English educated and

1. Antonio Gramsci- Selection from Prison Note Books translated, edited by Quinton House and Geoffery Nowell Smith, New York, 1971, P.450.

employed with a nationalist outlook were on the other side keen to prepare their community to face the modern trends, protecting its identity. The Indian National Congress, a platform for like minded Indians was founded in 1885. Whatever was its nature and disposition then, this was a forum of Indians with a new perspective. A discernment and sensibility developed regarding social issues and relationships. It was also a period of awakening in literary field. The problems had to be solved in an indigenous way.

The previous chapters have shown how two communities adjusted to the colonial culture, accepting a new way of education and language while retaining one's own language and culture. This chapter seeks to discuss the new trends in Malayalam literature in the 19th and 20th centuries, by projecting two writers and their works, as representing the contemporary trends in social and literary values. The two writers are O.Chandu Menon, author of two novels, Indulekha and Sarada,² and V.T.Bhattathiripad, author of the play Adukkalayil Ninum Arangathekku published and staged in 1929.

A literary text becomes relevant only when it is contextualised. 'Indulekha', 'Sarada', 'Adukkalayil Ninum

2. Indulekha was published in 1889 and Sarada in 1892.

Arangathekku' were creations of a particular socio-economic situation, wherein we find erosions in the traditional set up and the realisation for a reformulation. Tradition was not to be ignored or negated but outdated practices had to be rejected and a broader vision to appropriate modern values was the message of the day. These authors represent two particular communities namely Nair and Nambudiri, who had experienced the social rigours of the time.

Though the present state of Keralam did not exist as a single political unit prior to independence, Malabar, Cochin and Travancore had a unifying force namely the language - Malayalam. Malayalam represented the authentic and indigenous culture for the people of this area, while English, though it was accepted, remained the alien. English education was sought but the cultural milieu and socio-economic aspirations were projected better through one's own language and literature. The acceptance of a western literary form - the novel to talk about the social reality and trends of transition was the answer of the educated middle class to colonialism. It was the cultural answer of the educated to the colonizing power that they were were competent to write on the same lines of western

literature. According to Sivarama Padikkal, we should see the Indian novel as an entirely new genre, arising from the historical movement, when the English educated middle class was attempting to imagine a modern nation.³

Literature is the creation of social consciousness and social vibrations. The writers consciously or unconsciously portray the dominant trends of society and as such this is the reflection of social changes, aspirations and identity crisis of the period. "As a creative process, fiction is an expression of the most intimate awareness of the society in which it is born and it evolves."⁴ The social commitment of the writer, leads to a realistic development of the theme.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw new developments in different sectors of life. New educational facility, trade, plantations, judiciary, administration brought in a new concept of education, employment, profession and importance of cash

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3. Shivarama Padikkal. "Inventing Modernity. The emergence of Novel in India "In Interrogating Modernity - Culture and Colonialism in India. Ed. By Tejeswari, et.al, Calcutta, 1993, P.12.
 4. K.Venkata Reddy and Bayappa Reddy (ed) The Indian Novel With a Social Purpose, New Delhi, 1979, P.10. Also see Sankaran Raveendran, Early South Indian Novels, Calicut University, 2001.

salary. Socio-economic trends were evident in cultural aspects also. New concepts of modesty, dress, jewellery emerged. Printing, publications, newspapers enlarged the mental horizon and education was perceived as opening up of new areas of knowledge. The first newspaper Kerala Mithram was published on 1st January 1881.⁵ By the end of the 19th century, there were 17 printing press in Kerala.⁶ In 1884 Chengalath Kunhiramam Menon published Kerala Patrika from Calicut⁷ which was the first newspaper from Malabar. These newspapers had no objective of improving the language or style, but it had a higher frequency and range of impact and brought in a new mental climate.⁸

The educated middle class found in reading an entirely different way of spending the leisure.⁹ This habit of reading during leisure time provided information and knowledge and formed strong habits of reading literary works. Thus a new cultural priority gradually emerged to know more about distant

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5. G.Priyadarsan - Malayala Patra Pravarthana Prarambam, Trissur , 1982, P.38.
 6. K.M.Govi- Malayala Grantasoochi, Vol.I, Trissur, 1973,P.21
 7. G.Priyadarsan, op.cit., P.159
 8. Krishna Chaithanya- A History of Malayalam Literature, Delhi, 1971, P.61.
 9. K.N.Panikkar- Culture, Ideology, Hegemony, Intellectual and Social Consciousness in Colonial India, New Delhi, 1995, P.12

land and developments. The ideology of English education justified colonial rule. Through education, the awareness about social justice and social disabilities entered the minds of people. Traditional ideology and culture, not characterised by rationalism or democratic idea came into conflict with modern values, rational understanding and democratic spirit. This combined with the love for one's own country prepared the ground for an era of transition including literature and new literary forms occurred possible. The projection of indigenous culture through these works has to be noted.

Novel was a western literary form adopted here but these had emerged from its own peculiar socio-cultural situation and indigenous identity. The space of a novel enables the writer to spread his canvas leisurely and project the situation widely. This creation of Indian novel was due to the concept of a nation despite linguistic variations in the country. The growth of national consciousness and growth of different languages in new directions were complementary. The identity of each language and literature did not hinder the way of growth of nationalism. "The creation of linguistic identities as well as national identity emerged as complementary notions."¹⁰

10. Sivarama Padikkal, op.cit, P.226

The first novel in Malayalam "Kundalatha" written by Appu Nedungadi was published in 1887.¹¹ The first socially relevant novel was Indulekha by O.Chandu Menon in 1889. Indulekha is a social novel, realistic of the social situation of the period from which it was written. Oyyarath Chandu Menon was born on 9th January 1847 at Talassery in North Malabar as the son of Edappady Chandu Nair and Kodungallor Chित्तेzath Par vathi Amma. His father was Amin Magistrate in British service. His father was determined to educate the son with the intention of getting an employment. Thus he was admitted at B.E.M.School¹² at Talassery, he passed the unconvenant Civil Service in 1863. In 1864, he entered service as a writer at Talassery court. It was during this time, that Logan became the Sub-Collector of Talassery and soon Chandu Menon was taken as writer in Logan's section. Gradually he became Munsiff and later Sub-Judge in 1892 and was awarded the title Rao Bahadur. He was a member of Malabar Marriage Commission instituted in 1891, to study the marriage pattern of Nairs and to recommend reform and legislation.¹³

11. The theme, characters, events and social situation did not relate to reality of Malayali life and thus the first realistic novel is Indulekha.

12. Basel Evangelical Mission School

13. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, 1891, Leg, Dept. Madras, NAI

He passed away on 7th September 1899 after an eventful career. His interests lay in writing, reading, enjoying Kathakali and had a realistic approach in writing. His experiences and interest can be seen in his novels. It is worth mentioning that W.Dumuguerque, the Collector of Malabar, translated 'Indulekha' from Malayalam to English. It was an honour for a native from an Englishman. Menon says in the preface that he attempted the writing of a novel due to the affectionate nagging of his friends and that he started writing the novel in June and completed it in August. He reminisces that he was very much attracted to English novels and had the habit of telling these stories to his friends.¹⁴ The time factor is relevant here and a social novel of this kind did not intend a complete transformation of society but appropriation of certain reforms. Though Indian National Congress was formed by then, political ideas or literature never implied a challenge to British dominance or colonial rule. Community, religion and administration should be free from superstitions and outdated customs and unscrupulous attitude of higher castes were targeted, For this, the writers stressed the need of modern education. Traditional values had to go hand in hand with modernity.

14. O.Chandu Menon, Indulekha, Calicut, first published in 1889, reprint 1993, pp.8-9.

Novel has some specific characteristics.¹⁵ It has the capacity to reflect the inner and outer feelings and behaviour of man. The theme can be smoothly developed in size and in the socio-cultural milieu of the period can be situated the events, characters and, the language adopted can reflect the contemporary social scene effectively. The novelist, Chandu Menon, was fortunate to benefit from English education thereby entering the professional field in the midst of educated Indian and British. Being a member of judicial set up, associating with administrators, he was familiar with the trends of transition whether it was social problems like the relevance of sambandham and matriliney or economic problem like tenurial question.

It is often said that O.Chandu Menon was influenced by *Henrietta Temple*, a novel by Earl of Beacons field published in 1837.¹⁶ But Menon was convinced that a translation of an English novel was not appropriate but a Malayalam novel with a social purpose was the need of the day.¹⁷ Menon had the intellect of observing the emerging trends of national

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15. George Irumbayam, Malayala Novel Pathompatham Noottandil Trissur, 1987.
16. P.K.Parameswaran Nair, History of Malayalam Literature, Translated by E.M.J.Venniyoor, Delhi, 1967, P.123.
17. George Irumbayam, op.cit., PP. 70-71.

consciousness, and the search for answers for a number of questions surrounding Malabar life and the need to empower the community and society at the crucial stage of tradition vs modernity. Even the family bonds, social relationships had to be redefined. He stressed the need of English education, showing how educated people behave. His vision and perspective is fully projected through his works. New questions emerge only when cultural values of two factions come into contact. Our society was tradition bound till it was exposed to the colonial culture. Instead of submitting to the colonial ideology, it was expedient to strengthen one's own with a confidence imbibed through modern education, employment and self reliance. This is the philosophy projected by Menon.

The story of 'Indulekha' revolves round a Nair matrilineal tarawad in South Malabar.¹⁸ The karanavan is Panchu Menon, a tradition bound personality, who is authoritative but confused at the developments in the family because of educating the young members. The hero, Madhavan is the son of his niece and Indulekha, the heroine is his granddaughter. Both Madhavan and Indulekha are educated in the

18. The characteristics of a Nair tarawad are discussed in Chapter II

English way. Madhavan and Indulekha are portrayed as perfect hero and heroine with a number of attributes. Madhavan has a remarkable academic career, he passes B.L. examination with a first class. He is handsome and dignified. His knowledge is deep and varied. Indulekha is a damsel who knows English, Sanskrit, plays piano, fiddle and knows stitching. she is the favourite of the family. Every one approaches her with apprehension because she is assertive and has an independent nature. This is due to English education according to elder members of the family. In a society, where girls were not educated like boys or where girls were reminded not to talk loudly or had no choice of marriage and husband, Indulekha appears with a distinct personality. This according to the author was "to show the advantages of a sound English education to Nair women of south Malabar."¹⁹ The author glorifies Western culture and admires western education for its benefit, relate these to the regional level. He projects Indulekha as a role model of a heroine who is shifted from reality. Though this prepares her for nothing, for instance for a job or a separate identity, she is part of joint family and desires to be the wife of an educated and employed man. But she is strong enough to assert and articulate and to carve out a space for herself.

19. W.Dumuguergue Translated, Indulekha, Calicut, 1965, PP.xvi-xvii.

Though a living example of Indulekha was a high aspiration then, this portrayal of a Nair girls evolving out of a traditional marumakkathayam family was naturally the result of a new education. Education was perceived as a liberating force from irrelevant customs leading to an individual assertion and discernment of what one should have. Throughout the novel, the author indicates distinction between educated and uneducated.

Madhavan and Indulekha who are cousins were attracted to each other and most of the members of the tarawad had approved of their marriage. But situation takes a turn when Madhavan argues about the need to educate the younger members of the family. While this was taken up by karanavan as an open challenge and questioning his authority, Madhavan repeatedly declaring that he would take a cousin Chinnan to Madras to educate and emphasising that 'I will take him' irritates the karanavan. Till then, no younger member had displayed such defiance because it was the karanavan who decided all the matters of the joint family. Unless a family was rich, the karanavan could never think of educating all the nephews and neices. Madhavan says "I am not asking for a single paise which our uncle has acquired through hard work. I am just asking for

the ancestral property which can be used for our welfare. Kummini Amma and children are not servants. They are not given education. why should he get angry, when I am talking justice."²⁰ The tarawads of the period had karanavans as the central figure, unquestioned and unchallenged. Obedience and loyalty were considered the virtue. Madhavan's announcement that "I will educate him" disturbs the family atmosphere. Karanavan now takes a vow that he would never allow the marriage of Indulekha and Madhavan. The traditional pattern of behaviour was questioned by Madhavan who displays individuality, assertion and reason. Here enters Suri Nambudiripad who was ceremoniously invited by Panchu Menon to his tarawad for sambandham with Indulekha.²¹ Suri belonged to a famous illam and is rich. But there was concern in the mind of karanavan about the English educated niece.²² "There is nothing foolish like educating the children in English. If Indulekha was not

20. O.Chandu Menon, op.cit., PP.19-20. The gradual friction in the relationship of uncle and nephew has to be noted. See chapter "Colonial Experiments" of this dissertation.

21. As noted earlier, Nambudiris entered into marital relationships with Nair Women but they were not taken to the illam. This relationship did not bear any obligation to wife or children. Menon makes a mistake when he says that Suri Nambudiri plans to take Indulekha to the Illam after sambandham. In North Malabar, Smabandhams were comparatively rare.

22. O.Chandu Menon, Indulekha, Calicut, 1993, PP.93-94.

educated, she would have been a better girl.²³ When the karanavan says this, the implication of the author was just the opposite. Through his hero and heroine, he was admiring the advantages of new education. Karanavan tells Indulekha that according to tradition, there is no need to inform her about her sambandham.²⁴ This was well illustrated when suri decided to have sambandham with Kallianikutty. Suri Nambudiripad entered the bed room and the women of the house pushed Kallianikutty to the room like a pig was pushed into a cage.²⁵ The reference here implies the assertion of an educated Indulekha who rejected Suri Nambudiripad who came for sambandham. Such rejection till then was unheard of by a Nair girl and Kallianikutty, a cousin of Indulekha, not educated submits to the decision of elders and did not have a choice. Indulekha questions this and enquires whether Kallianikutty was informed about her sambandham.²⁶ The general concept of freedom of Nair women is to be questioned here. Most of the sambandhams were performed without the knowledge or permission of the girl. Such relationships were broken many times, if the karanavan, disliked the alliance later.

23. Ibid., P.65

24. Ibid., P.72

25. Ibid., P.177

26. Ibid., P.174

Suri Nambudiripad is portrayed both as a villain and comedian, obviously to shatter the age old concept of a desire of Nambudiri alliance. Suri Nambudiripad reaches the tarawad on the invitation of Panchu Menon. He at first sight itself, falls in love and becomes crazy about Indulekha. His meetings with Indulekha reverse the age old status position of Nambudiris. Nair women had prided themselves to be the consort of Nambudiris but here, Indulekha represents the changing aspiration of Nair women to reject such temporary liason with Nambudiris. Suri's words speak of his ignorance, about many of the contemporary developments in the society. Nambudiris were the custodians of knowledge but the English knowing Indulekha, proficient in Sanskrit also, expose the hollowness of the superior status of Nambudiris. She is stubborn and refuses to entertain the rich Nambudiri who comes to marry her. Though Indulekha and Madhavan are to a great extent, idealised by the author, these characters raise a number of questions to the contemporary society about the irrelevance of sambandham, authoritarian nature of karanavan and the advantages of English education.

Suri Nambudiripad felt insulted at the refusal by Indulekha, compromises to marry Kallianikutty but spreads the rumour that he had married Indulekha. Madhavan on his return

from Madras, hears this and terribly disappointed goes on a tour to Calcutta and Bombay. It was possible for Madhavan to reject everything and leave his place and tarawad for he had the confidence of being self reliant. He was educated and had passed the Civil Service examination. But if a member of the tarawad was not educated and employed, he was a dependent on the tarawad and could never think of a choice but stay back. Govinda Panicker goes in search of Madhavan and finds him in Bombay. They return home to see the karanavan changing his mind and deciding to do penance for his vow. Thus Indulekha and Madhavan are married and Madhavan is appointed in Civil Service.

The world inside a Nair tarawad is revealed in the novel. Indulekha, a Nair girl of that period, decides that she would marry only the man she loves. But she does not hesitate to argue with Madhavan, when he speaks ill about Nair women in general.²⁷ Look at the conversation between Indulekha and Madhavan. Madhavan says: "In Malabar, women do not practise the virtue of fidelity so strictly as do the women of other countries. why in Malabar, a woman may take a husband and cast

27. Dumuguergue, op.PP.40-41

him off as she pleases." But Indulekha counters his opinion by saying "what did you say the Malayali women are not chaste ? To say that a woman makes light of the marriage tie is tantamount to saying that she is immoral. Did you mean that all or most of women in the land of palms are immoral. Look at Europe and America, where women share equally with men the advantages of education and enlightenment and liberty. Are these women all immoral".²⁸ Indulekha's argument shows the views of Menon but the character is shown in such a way that a girl should be aware of what was happening beyond the local space in which she lives. This conversation has a direct hint at alleged Nair polyandry. It throws questions against men who create such situations, if at all for women.

Suri Nambudiriad who was crazy about Kathakali asks Indulekha whether she has kalibranthu.²⁹ He falls for Indulekha, then in her mother and later in her servant and talks about the beauty of Indulekha, her mother Lakshmikutty to the karanavan. It shows his ignorance or lack of sensibility as to what to talk and to whom. At the same time, Nair characters are shown more sensible. Suri Nambudiripad considers women only

27. Dumugeurgue, op.PP.40-41

28. Ibid.

29 Ibid., P.157, Kalibranthu means craze for kathakali

as sexual objects and nothing more than that. The qualitative change necessary in man-woman relationship, not perceiving woman just as a sexual partner is stressed here. Marriage has to possess finer feelings of love and attachment. Suri Nambudiripad who represents the Nambudiri community with whom Nairs had sambandham relationship for centuries, is at this turning point, looked down because sambandham for various reasons does not warrant a permanent husband-wife relationship or father-children relationship. Nair women should emerge rejecting such visiting husband.

During conversation, when Indulekha uses 'I' he is shocked because he still lingers in the age old hallucination that a Nambudiri remains high and has the right to gain his whim and fancy. His references to Meghadantan Sayip and his refusal to accept judicial decisions carry the message that he has not come to the reality of a society in transition. Menon portrays him as a person ignorant, even of traditional learning like kathakali or Sanskrit but projects Indulekha and Madhavan who could recite Sanskrit slokas fluently. Suri Nambudiripad is presented from the shifting perspective of Nairs about Nambudiris. Many Nambudiris had excellence in vedas, mathematics, astronomy, logic etc. but their inhibition to accept new education made them remain back in the changing

period whereas Nairs gradually had emerged successful in education and employment, thus acquiring a new cultural taste and disposition. To Menon, such a portrayal was felt a necessity to discourage Nairs having any sambandham relationship with Nambudiris. This ridicule of Nambudiri created a retaliation when a novel called Bhaskaran Nambudiripad was published³⁰ which is believed to have been written by Vadakkanchery Nambudiri and was advertised in Yogakshema and Unni Nambudiri. The message is clear to the extent that he exhorted his community to stop entertaining the Nambudiris for sambandham. The inherent ideology had to be destroyed. He was indicating the contradiction in the intellectual attainment of a Nambudiri and a Nair girl. This was the benefit derived from colonial rule through education. The question of incompatibility of a Nambudiri -Nair relationship and the observation of the growing trend of endogamy among Nairs are projected here.

Another issue which come up in the novel is the erosion in the matrilineal tarawad and the relationship among the members. A tarawad was the terrain of collective enterprise with only the karanavan having the authority to take decisions. He could be partial or impartial but that had to be obeyed. The

30. See Chapter IV of this dissertation

first chapter of the novel starts with the protesting voice of Madhavan declaring that he could bear the problems of educating a cousin called Chinnan.³¹ It was a direct challenge to the karanavan. Madhavan raised the issue of partiality of karanavan and touches on the difference of self-acquired property of karanavan and ancestral property. Madhavan questions karanavan and Indulekha does not in any way appreciate the move of karanavan to have Suri Nambudiripad for sambandham. The authority of karanavan starts shaking and in the end, he submits to the wishes of anantaravans. In this context, it is relevant to note that, many younger members of tarawad had filed suits against karanavans for their partiality, alienation of tarawad property and melcharths.³² Dissensions, internal fighting, quarrels were the nature of tarawads by the end of the 19th century. Nairs who were educated and employed created a space for themselves and wanted to escape from the restrictive pressure of joint family system. The economic benefit of employment created disparities among the members of tarawad i.e., those who had a job and those who had nothing. Those who were employed, did not prefer to share their profits with others who did nothing. The growing sense of individualism, the aspiration for a nuclear family provoked conflict with the

31. O.Chandu Menon - Op.cit.,

32. See Chapter V, Colonial Experiments of this dissertation

conservative section. "The progressive ferment in a traditional and long stagnating society is transparently clear between the surface of the episodic stream of the story."³³ Apart from the main characters, there are important characters in this novel who strengthened the development of the theme. Though the focus is on the domestic interior, a large milieu is visible here. For instance, Indulekha's mother, Lakshmikutty Amma, Madhavan's father Govindankutty Menon, Karuthadem Kesavan Nambudiri, are all important characters. The dialogue between, Karuthadem and Lakshmikutty provide insights to the scientific developments of the period. Kesavan Nambudiri tells his wife about the thread factory and says that the whole product is made by a wheel run by a smoke. He suspects some foul trick by the English which they keep as secret.³⁴ But she replies that it is the steam which runs the machines and trains. She possesses a keen curiosity to know the new developments whereas Kesavan Nambudiri sticks to his superstition and accuses the British of witchcraft. Lakshmikutty Amma appreciates the knowledge and confidence of the youngsters who were educated and admits that they have contempt towards the elders because of the reluctance of the old to grasp things in the proper way. Govinda Panicker

33. Krishna Chaitanya 'Novel and short Story', in History of Malayalam Literature, Delhi 1971, P.260.

34. Indulekha, PP.75-77.

appreciates the educated youth, enters into a long discussion with his son Madhavan about religion, God, science, human relationships, tradition.³⁵ By the 16th chapter, the novel takes a new turn with the travel of Madhavan to metropolitan cities like Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. All these three cities have their own significance. Madras is indicated as the centre of education, nearest to Malabar and so Madhavan, Govindankutty Menon, Chinnan are all educated there. All the three cities have universities. Bombay being a labour city, had its own prominence. Calcutta was one of the first industrial centres and till 1911 was the capital of British empire. This points out the growth of certain urban centres being developed by the British in different areas. The author has full appreciation and praise for the colonial culture, education and the concept of an employment which provide an individuality and self respect. Kutti Krishna Menon who was the Dewan Peshcar with a salary of Rs.800, Madhavan who was educated and a favourite of his English associates, Indulekha who stands out a 'role model' due to her education are examples who retain the best of tradition and modernity. This growth was imperative, when an alternative was necessary. When caste status was being questioned, another status based on education and employment was becoming visible. Menon admits that this book was written in Malayalam, in the way he spoke at home and to cater to the

35. See 16th, 17th and 18th Chapters of the novel.

ordinary men. "Such stories, if written beautifully, will entertain the ordinary men and will help to develop their knowledge."³⁶

The author being a part of the judicial set up, was well aware of the developments in an all India context. In 1885, Indian National Congress was formed, though it remained a forum of a few educated Indians with polite aspirations. But it had a nationalist perspective and social reforms was integral to the development of a nation in totality. He tries to fix the Nair community which should march with the passage of time and "progress". The nationalism of the period admired English and colonial culture as superior to traditional culture and language. This reflected even in the concept of dress, food and way of life.³⁷ This admiration and social attitude is reflected in the characters.

Nairs with all their sub-caste variations had willingly accepted English education, prided themselves in working with English masters, or professions like vakils. This exposure had created new ideas of behaviour, dress, food and above all, a feeling of shame and inferiority to continue

36. O.Chandu Menon op.cit, P.10

37. See illustrations

sambandham relationships. Marital relationship acquired a new connotation and meaning. Temporary marital bonds had to be looked down. Now it was the fascination for English education and colonial culture. They were coming closer to centres of power. But the desire of a section to reasonably adjust to a new order could find contentment through Madhavan and Indulekha.

Madhavan dresses up according to occasion. There are references to ear stud worn by Madhavan and to his long tuft.³⁸ Both were traditional cultural symbols of Nair. During travel, he wears pants and other English type dress, carries pistols. Indulekha wears big thodas or ear studs, wear the typical dress of Nairs like mundu and covers her breast with a shawl. Nair women had no habit of covering the upper part of the body. The changing concept of modesty can be noted here.³⁹

In "Indulekha" references are made about the integration of the country through railways and it is noted that even a travel to Europe was possible then.⁴⁰ Menon's canvas does not confine to Malabar or Malayalam speaking regions, but he takes the readers from a Nair tarawad of Malabar

38. O.Chandu Menon, Op.cit, P.191.

39. Ibid., PP.24-25

40. Ibid., PP.187-189

to urban centres like Madras, Bombay and Calcutta and even Europe was not distant according to him. This was projected while the traditional belief restricted a Nair of Malabar crossing Korapuzha river near Kozhikode. Madhavan, goes on a tour in India and Govindankutty Menon tells Indulekha that they could go to England and that ships are available.

The 18th chapter of this novel⁴¹ reveals the conflict of tradition and modernity. Madhavan's father Govinda panicker raises the argument that though English education has brought benefits of knowledge, there are disadvantages like bold assertion, rejection of old values, like affection, loyalty, obedience etc. English education has to a great extent made the young, atheists. This leads to a lively discussion between Madhavan, his father and his cousin Govindankutty Menon. The topics which enter here are God, religion, science, scientists like Darwin, Charles Bradlow, Wallace, Spencer, Huxley etc. Though this chapter has no direct link with the social theme of the novel, it is an enlightening part to realise the intellectual growth of the educated of the period. Western culture, growth of science are appreciated.

41. Ibid., PP.218-261.

It was a period of growing admiration of colonial culture. The preparation of one's community to reap the benefits of this culture is all along stressed. Indian national Congress was founded in 1885 and though this novel was published in 1889, there are sufficient references to Congress.⁴² The author displays a real grasp of the functioning of the Congress. Madhavan says "There is no sabha as dignified as Congress so far."⁴³ The appreciation of colonial rule is reflected in Madhavan's words when he says that India has benefited and progressed by British Government.⁴⁴ The novel ends with the marriage of Indulekha and Madhavan and Madhavan's entry to civil service. The couple shifts to Madras along with his parents. The shift to a nuclear family set up from the huge tarawad set up is implied here.

The novel was written by a Nair, O.Chandu Menon who was educated, employed in the colonial judicial set up. In the traditional caste order, Nairs had a subservient social role to play but they were closer to the power centres due to the peculiar social situation. Even there, only the highest caste had the privilege of learning Sanskrit. But western education without any social restriction of admission to education,

42. Ibid., PP.247-254

43. Ibid., P.251

44. Ibid., P.250

attracted Nairs who entered different levels of employment. Now they came near the contemporary power centres under the colonial system. This shifting status with a new confidence emerging from English education and employment made them assert and question the age old ideology that surrounded them. Thus the present work itself was a challenge by a Nair judge of the day. In the work he admires all English men and ridicules the highest caste and the sambandham. While Madhavan and Indulekha were idealised, they are shown as inspiration to the younger generation. They were well versed in Sanskrit and English and never reject tradition as bad but assert when unreasonable steps are taken by elders. This assertion is an indication to the young and shown as a benefit derived from education. This work 'Indulekha' can be perceived as a cultural answer to the colonial interpretation of a stagnant Indian culture, This is obvious from the author's stand against the recommendations of the Malabar Marriage Commission.⁴⁵ Though novels were set up at the contemporary social backgrounds and new trends showing the erosions in the Marumakkathayam usage and sambandhams, still he did not appreciate the interference of the administration in social usages of Malabar. He argued that Nairs had a system of marriage.⁴⁶ Menon's stand is appalling

45. See Appendix - Dissent Note by O.Chandu Menon, MMCR, 1891, Enclosure, C, NAI.

46. Ibid.

since he maintained a stand against sambandham, ridiculing Nambudiris and portraying them as stagnant, but his dissent note of Malabar Marriage Commission offers a contradictory stand. It is said that he had not imbibed the spirit of Renaissance or the contemporary expediency of reforming his own community.⁴⁷ Menon differs to say that Nairs had a system of marriage and that legislation was not necessary. It cannot be said that Menon who was a sub-judge and a voracious reader who arranged the availability of recently published books from England to read, was unaware of the social revolution initiated by Chattampi Swammikal (185-1924) Sree Narayana Guru (1856- 1928), Vagbhatananda (1885-1940), Brahmananda Sivayogi (1852 - 1929) He had realized the formation of Indian National congress in 1885 in Bombay, described its nature, intentions within four years of its inception. It cannot be accepted that he was ignorant of the social vibrations of the period. His argument that Nairs had a system of marriage and rejects legislation in this regard might have been because he believed that more than judicial sanctions to effect social changes, it was necessary that an inner realization was what was expedient. The discernment and articulation, he projects through the character 'Indulekha' who was educated in the English way was the answer. It was a stress on individual assertion and consciousness to effect a social decision. This appears a call to the young men and

47. K.E.N. "Varenya Navoathanathinte Athirukal", in Nammude Samooham, Nammude Sahithyam, Trissur, 2000, P.54.

women to realise the good and bad, appropriate or inappropriate. 'Indulekha' succeeds in ridiculing a superficial relationship of a man and a woman and to opt for a compatible partner in marital life. The character Indulekha fully suggests the empowerment of women through education.

'Indulekha' has been hailed as a novel exemplifying the reflection of social change in creative literature.⁴⁸ This novel attempts to bring out new ideas of the educated middle class about family, marital relationship, endogamy, thus creating a familiar world to the reading public. This could be possible only for a writer who was socially committed and one who believed that he was part of the changing social scenario. The question whether novels was a favourite literacy genre during the period find an answer in the sixty editions of 'Indulekha' till 1971 and each edition ranged from 1000 to 6000.⁴⁹ Many novels emerged following 'Indulekha'.⁵⁰

48. C.Achutha Menon, Kalakaumudi, 623, 1987, P.18

49. K.N.Panikkar 'Creating a New Cultural Taste in Culture, ideology and Hegemony, Delhi, P.13, Indulekha's first edition was sold out within 3 months, within a year, the English translation came out and it was done by the British Collector of Malabar Dumaguergue. Indulekha was the first Malayalam best seller and the first Malayalam work to be translated into English. Also see George Irumbayam, Malayalam Novel in Pathonpatham Nootandil, Trissur, 1984, P.81.

50. Meenakshi (1890) Indumathi Swayamvaram (1890), Saraswathi Parinayam (1892), Sukumari (1897)

The 18th chapter which develops as a discussion, touching on religion, God, atheism, science, tradition, politics appear as a lively part of the work. It is a long discussion about contemporary developments and an obvious example of conflicting values of tradition and modernity. It has been appreciated as well as criticised.⁵¹ It is evident that Menon envisaged a socio-cultural enlightened Keralam through his work *Indulekha* which was created at the background of a Nair tarawad of late 19th century. No one of the day could escape the social rigours and the conflicting values of the time. Thus his social experiences led to '*Indulekha*' while his

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51. (1) M.G.S.Narayanan, 'Colonial Culture and National Culture' A Study of Their Convergence in *Indulekha* - A paper presented at ICHR Seminar, Feb.1994, P.11 "Whatever the literary critics had to say from the artistic point of view, this chapter is an invaluable social document throwing light on the reflections of an enlightened Keralite about the national stage as well as the political, philosophical debates going on in educated circles.
- (2) K.N.Panikkar, op.cit., P.143. "it was a powerful cultural and political statement, integrating into the plot, the vital issues Indian society faced out that time.
- (3) P.K.Balakrishnan, Chandu Menon Oru Padanam, (Mal.) Kottayam, 1971-PP.112-117 It was a stone blocking the unhampered progress of the plot but a direct discussion with a perspective about Renaissance.
- (4) K.E.N.op.cit., P.53. This chapter has no charm of a discussion. Menon has not been able to create a trend of enquiry by this chapter. It has only helped to glamorize the colonial culture.

judicial career led to the writing of his second novel 'Sarada'⁵² which was planned to have three parts. The first was published in 1892 with II chapters. Though incomplete and without an end, it reflects the social developments relating to Nair tarawads like claim of individual property.

The novel 'Sarada' develops from the issue of sambandham and its dark side to the gradual distintegration of the marumakkathayam tarawad, with the claim of individual right of property from the common tarawad property. For this, the judicial help was sought. 'Sarada' unveils the situation of transition of Nair community trying to adjust to a new social order. This novel was utilised by the author to record his experiences in judiciary and the growth of judiciary as a powerful force in Malayalam life. There were many vakils and other educated men surrounding this field and litigation was increasing.

The heroine is Sarada. Her mother belonged to a famous tarawad called Puncholakkara Edam. Kallianikutty was given in sambandham to an ugly man. But she runs away with the help of a pattar called Vythipatar and servant. They reach Kasi where she accepts Raman Menon, an artist as her husband.

52. O.Chandu Menon Sarada, Kozhikode, 1892.

Sarada was born to them. The family suffers due to financial constraints and diseases. Kallianikutty passes away on their way home. On reaching Malabar, Raman Menon sends a letter to the karanavan of Puncholakkara Edam to accept Sarada as a member of tarawad. This request was not only turned down but the karanavan reacts unscrupulously. So with the help of a relative called Rama Varma Tirumulpad, Raman Menon prepares to file a case against the karanavan. Both sides engage efficient lawyers. The story stops here. Sarada was published incomplete in 1892 though Chandu Menon died only in 1899. It is intriguing why it was incomplete.⁵³

The novel starts with the death of Kallianikutty Amma and her daughter Sarada asking whether they did not have a house. Raman Menon tells her that her mother was given in sambandham to an ugly, senseless person who was rich and could bring some benefits to the tarawad.⁵⁴ Kallianikutty Amma ran away from home unable to bear the relationship.⁵⁵ This is the starting point of the theme and sambandham is referred here as

53. C.Anantapayi, T.S.Anantasubramaniam, Karuppuram Veetil Gopala Pillai, Pathathil Radhakrishna Menon, have completed 'Sarada' in their own way. George Irumbayam, op.cit., P.29.

54. Rich Nambudiris conferred some tenurial concession of land to Nair tarawads, where they had sambandhams.

55. Sarada, P.14

a relationship of incompatibility and a Nair woman tries to escape from this. It is not mentioned whether Kallianikutty Amma was educated in the new way but she is referred to as intelligent⁵⁶ and it was sheer assertion to run away from her relatives and tarawad at the cost of insulting her family and dire consequences. The tolerance of Nair women adjusting to any man of karanavan's discretion is questioned here. In 'Indulekha', while Indulekha says an emphatic 'No' to sambandham and is determined to have the man of her wish, in 'Sarada', Kallianikutty escapes from the clutches of sambandham and chooses the man she liked as her partner. She was not bothered of legality to her relationship, or the approval of relatives. While 'Indulekha' is focused on sambandham relationship, 'Sarada' moves further to the imminent erosion of marumakkathayam relationship and claim of tarawad property by an individual. Menon's exposure to various judicial proceedings might have convinced him of the impending changes in property relationships going to weaken the impartible tarawad property.

56. Ibid., P.17

Malabar Marriage Commission had pointed out the growing trend of employed Nairs setting up nuclear units taking their wives and children.⁵⁷ Raman Menon is an ideal father attached to his wife and child. But in a situation presented in 'Sarada', the husband, wife and daughter remain deeply attached to each other. Sarada born and brought up in North India raises natural questions like, 'If I have a house, why can't we stay there? and why can't we stay at your father's house.'⁵⁸ The answers were difficult at that point of time because Sarada was the daughter of the Nair woman who ran away from the tarawad and her right in the tarawad had to be claimed. There was no individual claim of property in 1892.

Kallianikutty Amma's tarawad was Puncholakkara Edam, famous and rich. The tarawad gets more than a lakh para⁵⁹ of paddy and has four feeding houses for Brahmins. This implies the socio-economic status of the tarawad. The Karanavan, Koppunni Achan, an unscrupulous, authoritative person runs the tarawad with the help of his anantaravans. On his refusal to

57. MMCR, 1891, NAI. Also see the chapter Colonial Experiments.

58. Sarada, P.18.

59. Para is a measurement for grains.

accept Sarada into the tarawad, he is served a lawyer notice.⁶⁰ This is an indication to how family matters were being taken to court and specially the individual claim. In 1892, when Sarada was published, even the first act called 'Malabar Marriage Act' had not been passed. It came into effect in 1896.⁶¹ Menon through his direct experiences in judicial career had the opportunity to come across civil suits to claim the property and was sure of an imminent disintegration of tarawad at the tide of new forces and a new perspective about family life. Nairs were certainly passing through a stage of introspection, to reformulate and seek necessary legal steps in their marriage, inheritance patterns. The social consciousness developing influenced him to the extent that he foresaw many of the imminent changes that would affect the society. He makes an elaborate effort to describe urban centres. In this work, he brushes aside the concept of territorial restrictions as absurd and Sarada, the heroine was born and brought up in Kasi. Raman Menon, Kallianikutty Amma, Sankaran, Vythipattar, Krishnan had travelled to Kasi and Rameswaram. This did not in anyway inflict any taboo on them nor did they forfeit their caste status. At the same time, the rumour that Sarada was a Muslim girl creates panic among Nambudiris⁶² for fear of pollution.

60. Sarada, P.111

61. Malabar Marriage Act, June 1896, Leg.Dept.Nos.1-27, NAI

62. Sarada, PP.138-140.

Menon spreads a vast space for the theme which develops from North India to Kerala. Travel, exposure to variety of ideas, culture are implied as progressive trends. He was in touch with developments at different regions. For instance in 'Indulekha' he talks about Indian National Congress which was just four year old then. His heroes, Madhavan and probably Krishnanunni, an advocate are well educated. Most of the Vakils in 'Sarada' are Nairs like Shamu Menon. Raghava Menon, Madhavan Menon, Sivarama Menon, Chappu Menon, professionals had increased by the time of 'Sarada'. The presence of a strong judiciary is noted.

Kundan Menon, the karyastha of Rama Varma Tirumulpad, who is in charge of litigation of the family, regrets that he does not know English and thinks that those who know English should impart the knowledge gained from reading English books.⁶³ Menon continues his argument for English education in Sarada also. This is very evident when Kundan Menon requests the advocates Raghava Menon and Madhavan Menon to read and enable him to understand the peculiar aspects of new enactment and law in English. Unlike 'Indulekha', the theme of 'Sarada' develops through the scope and plan of litigation to

63. Sarada. P.154, P.157.

claim, the property of the girls, probably the only girl in the tarawad then. This is more important, since for Nairs, it was through the girl that the lineage continued. This novel unveils the different moods of the society and people surrounding it. Greed, hatred, ego, vanity, revenge, attachment, love are all seen here. The exemplary relationship of husband and wife of Raman Menon and Kallianikutty was what the author aspired for Nairs. Kallianikutty Amma escapes from the tarawad disgusted by her sambandham relationship which was imposed on her by the karanavan. In the case of her sister Lakshmikutty Amma, she was separated from her husband, Rama Varma Tirumulpad at karanavan's discretion. But Kallianikutty Amma discovers a compatible partner, in Ramankutty Menon. In both 'Indulekha and Sarada', it is the assertion of Nair women to decide who their husbands should be.

The first part of 'Sarada' ends with the efforts of claiming the property of Sarada from her mother's tarawad called Puncholakkara Edam. Though the author died only after 7 years of its publication, the second part did not come out. Was Menon waiting for any judicial sanction after the Malabar Marriage Act of 1896 which enables just the registration of sambandham? Efforts were there to claim individual share or tavazhi partition through bills. Both these novels make sense

only when they are understood with their socio economic background. Thus the images are created through literary works. Both centre round matrilineal tarawads of Malabar and how these joint family units with all their traditional characteristics go through a cultural intervention of the late 19th century. The strong pressure of the period to appropriate certain relevant reforms and reject certain outdated social usages is the continuous line of the theme.

The growing trend of litigation and the overwhelming presence of judiciary as a way of hope for many social demands are well reflected in 'Sarada'.⁶⁴ A number of vakils, writers, karyasthans who surround the judiciary clubs of vakils are described here. The shift from idleness of Nair life to do work and the openings of employment are projected by the author.

In 'Indulekha', the heroine is presented in typical malayali dress but covering the breasts. In 'Sarada', the heroine is dressed up in an English fashion probably to show that she was born and brought up outside Kerala. She wears a frilled skirt with jacket and gold girdle, wears pearl chain with pendant.⁶⁵ The changing concept of dress with the colonial

64. Sarada, PP.48-51 and PP.52-5

65. Sarada, Pp.68-69.

influence is shown here. 'Sarada' provided only a partly picture of the Nair tarawad and the gradual erosions in the integrity of this family unit. Though this novel is incomplete, still it provides symptoms of introspection by the middle class and the conflict of the traditional values with the modern. Above all, it is an attempt to relate to the familiar Nair life.

Chandu Menon, author of these two novels was a sub-judge, educated and cherishing new values like modern education, employment and social identity. In 'Indulekha' he rejects sambandham relationship as outdated and as a tie of incompatibility. For this, he ridicules the character of Suri Nambudiripad to prove his point that mere caste status does not create happy marital life. Actually, the continuous line of development in this novel was the aspiration of the Nair community to accept endogamous relationship. Both novels stress on man-woman relationship in a new perspective. But Menon, as a member of the Malabar Marriage Commission 1891, through his dissent note argued that Nairs had a marriage system and they do not require a legal intervention. This attitude has raised a long stretched discussion about his dual personality and attitude towards social issues. North Malabar was relatively free from sambandham with Nambudiris but in other parts of

Keralam, this sort of alliance was practised in the 19th and early part of 20th century. Menon's father had set up a family house at Oyyarath at Thiruvangad, Talassery where he lived with his parents. His father was keen to educate his son with the desire of seeing him employed. This trend of nuclear family was growing in Malabar and contemporary newspapers and Malabar Marriage Commission Report⁶⁶ had noted this development. Though the Malabar Marriage Act was passed in 1896, Menon's dissent note remains an intriguing one. He does not avail the opportunity to implement his stand against sambandham in an official way. It is all the more interesting that Menon was made a member due to his official status of a sub-judge and he was an admirer of colonial education and government. His argument was that Nairs had a marriage system and sambandham which etymologically mean marriage. Sambandham has two characteristics which the contemporary generation resisted (1) sambandham with the higher caste without legality (2) lack of assurance or permanency of the marital relationship. If both these were not problems, sambandham means real marriage.

O.Chandu Menon through his works, shook not only the Nairs but other communities also by creating a new perspective to think about the incompatible relationships. Through his

66. See the chapter - Colonial Experiments.

second novel, he was stressing the right of an individual to claim the property of the tarawad. Both depict the relationships, woven inside these family units. By the beginning of the 20th century, consistent efforts were undertaken by Nairs to have individual share of the property. Thus social vibrations accompanied the new direction in Malayalam literary scene. The attitude towards education, life style, marriage pattern were all getting a new reading. Education was perceived as the ladder to socio economic progress and self reliance.

Like novels, plays emerged with social aims and perceptions. Plays have two characteristics (1) They are literary forms (2) They are theatre forms when staged, acquiring a life of action and function. Plays, if effective, establish a rapport with the audience. These become more relevant when they have socio.economic themes. Regarding the history of plays, Malayalis were familiar with art forms like Teyyam, Thullal, Poorakkali, Kakkarissi plays which were considered as the favourite enjoyments of lower castes whereas higher castes engaged Kathakali or Koodiyattom for entertainment. Nambudiris arranged for the performance of Kathakali in illoms⁶⁷ which only the aristocratic among them

67. See how Chandu Menon depicts Suri Nambudiripad in 'Indulekha.' Suri Nambudiripad asks Indulekha whether she is mad about Kathakali and confesses that he is mad, PP.27-28.

could afford. Prestigious Nair tarawads initiated Nambudiris in having kathakali at home. The team of players stay at the illams for days and perform everyday and they move from there to another illom or tarawad. The line of caste distinction in matters of artistic forms can be seen. Art was differentiated as aristocratic and non aristocratic. The common people had only the chance to see pooram or thullal. The high caste did not entertain these. There was certain unwritten restrictions in the artistic field differentiating art forms on such lines.

The early dramas were musical dramas where music was sung as dialogues. Kunhikuttan Tamburan's Abhinjana Sakunthalam was the first drama (1881-82). In Malabar P.S. Varier, Kadathanad Udaya Varma Tamburan were active as dramatists. But most of the early dramas which were musical did not relate to regional issues and were mostly translations from Sanskrit and later from English. In North Malabar, it was the Kuttamath family namely Kuttamath Kunhambu Kurup and Kuttamath Kunhikrishna Kurup who took been interest in plays. U.K.C. Nambiar, Vidwan.P Kelu Nair, Chandukutty Bhagavathar, K. Ananthan Nair were others who developed the field of drama.⁶⁸

68. Manoharan.P -Kuttamath Family And Sanskrit Literature, Payyannur, 1990, PP.54-79.

It is significant that theatre forms like Kathakali was the entertainment and enjoyment of an aristocratic among higher castes. A liberation from puranic theme becomes evident by the end of the 19th century. The period of transition leads to observation and criticism of contemporary social behaviour. Thus in 1889, Kodungallore Kochunni Tamburan's 'Kalliani' was written and staged.⁶⁹ By the early part of the 20th century, these plays were staged in villages for a wider audience. Such communication of messages facilitated an indication to the existing social inequality. In other words, plays approached people irrespective of the social status, gradually becoming a popular art form in Kerala. The attempts to inculcate patriotic, nationalist feelings along with a social perspective succeeded during the early part of the 20th century, Vidwan.P. Kelu Nair's Paduka Pattabhishekam, Pakkanar Charitram, Kabirdas Charithram of 1920s were in this direction. Kelu Nair was a staunch nationalist and social activist.⁷⁰ Kuttamath family made a mark in theatre activity during 1815-1945. Kunchunni

69. Kattumadam Narayanan - Malayala Nataka Prasthanam, Trissur 1990, P.71.

70. K.K.N.Kurup "Role of Theatre" in Nationalism and Social change, Trissur, 1998, PP.101, 102.

Kurup (1815 - 1885) used to stage dramas in his courtyard. Cheriya Rama Kurup (1847 - 1902) Kunhikelu Kurup (1863 - 1916), Kunhambu Kurup (1815 - 1911) and Kunhikrishna Kurup known as Mahakavi Kuttamath opened a new platform for plays⁷¹ which linked the common man with theatre. Mahakavi Kuttamath's Devayani Charithram, Balagoplan, Dhruvamanasam, Nachikethas, Ushaniruddam are plays which marked the era of transition.

Though theatre activity was not ably or efficiently organised, it had an aim. In 1915, a drama was staged at Kozhikode Town Hall, in which there were sufficient implications against British rule and this resulted in a harassment of actors by police.⁷² Bar association of Kozhikode and Talasaery by 1920s stage dramas on their anniversary and these expressed allegiance to nationalist movement.⁷³ Malabar was gradually acquiring a new theatre interest and through that a carrier of nationalist and social feelings. The shift from the

71. Kattumadam, op.cit., P.126

72. Ibid., P.127

73. Ibid, See Ayyappa Panicker -A Short History of Malayalam Literature, Thiruvananthapuram, 1987, PP.75-78.

It is in this context that the play called "Adukkalayil Ninnun Arangathekku" has to be placed. This was written by V.T.Bhattathiripad in 1929. It was first staged on 10th December 1929 at Edakkuni, Trissur, at the front yard of Vadakkini illam as a part of the 22nd Annual meeting of yogakshema. The title means "From kitchen to the stage."

Vallithiruthithazath Raman Bhattathiripad was born on 26th March 1896 in Mezhatthur Village in Ponnani taluk of Malappuram district, as the son of Tuppan Bhattathiripad and Sreedevi anatarjanam . After vedic education, he started working as a priest at Mundaka Mana Sastha Kovil. Determined to study, he joined high school in 1918. In 1919, he joined Nambudiri Vidyalaya at Edakkuni but was dropped from school on his attending the Ahamedabad session of Indian National Congress. This punishment was due to the fear of pollution and the break of caste rules like travelling out of the area. The nationalist feelings in him led to the beginning of a magazine called 'Vidyarthi' while in school.

In 1923, he joined the yogakshema company, as a clerk and gradually became the proof reader in Mangalodayam Press. From then onwards, he actively involved himself in various

socio cultural activities and started writing in Yogakshema, and Unni Nambidiri. In 1924, he had sambandham with Madhavi Kutty Varasyar and had two daughters. Social inequality of the period, gender inequality and contradictions within the Nambudiri family disturbed him. He started bold attacks on the conservative section of his own community which stood against any reform and obstructed the way of the community from progress. The activists of the period upheld the call to make Nambudiri a human being.⁷⁴ The self alienation of the community had deprived them of the benefits of new education, employment and the urge to work. The refusal of many to note the socio, economic and political developments in the country, troubled the progressive minded Nambudiris. Women's question emerged a significant issue. The different moral codes for men and women, the restricted space for women, purdah or gosha, sambandham of aphans were not symbols of a progressive community. V.T. Bhattathiripad emerged with a loud voice against social atrocities and harassment on women. In his "Penkidangalkku Oru Ezethu"⁷⁵ (A letter to the girls), he touches on the minute details of hygiene. He tells them to dress modestly, keep their hair neat and tidy.

74. See chapter IV of the dissertation, the movement among Nambudiris to organize themselves and reformulate.

75. V.T.Bhattathirpad, Sampurna Krithikal, Kottayam,1997,P.536

His literary interest and urge to better the community, manifested in writing several forms of literature. He has written stories which is compiled into Rajani Rangam (1928), Ponvazhi (1930), Plays like Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekku (1929), Karichanta (1932), articles like Sathyamennath Evide Manushyanakunnu (1961), Vedivettam (1980), Kalathinte Sakshi (1981) , Ente Mannu (982), Autobiography Kaneerum Kinavum (1972), Karma Vipakam (1988). This wide range of literary activity earned him the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award and Fellowship. He passed away on 12th February, 1982.

As noted earlier, he wrote the sensational drama, "Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekku" in 1929. In the same year, some antarjanams gave up gosha and appeared in public . It was a moment of contentment for the activists who were encouraged by this bold gesture. In 1930, V.T.Bhattathiripad, an aphan, married an antarjanam, Sreedevi of Ittiyamparamaba, sister of activists like ICP Nambudiri and I.S Nambudiri. This was V.T.Bhattathripad's second marital relationship and an assertion to show that an aphan could have a caste marriage. V.T.Bhattathripad who had repeatedly argued for women, left the first wife to justify the cause of the movement to prove that an aphan could marry an antarjanam. Thus he violated a long

standing tradition. It is seen that later he regretted that he had left back an innocent woman to satisfy himself for a principle.⁷⁶ He left a will, giving cash share to his two daughters by the first marriage. A glance through V.T.Bhattathirpad's activities and writings will show that he had stressed for the empowerment of women through out, their rights, identity and equality. But even an activist like V.T.Bhattathirpad committed the error of neglecting his first wife - a sambandham relationship and daughters. It troubled his conscience throughout and he later confessed to his friend and brother-in-law, ICP Nambudiri that he had committed a grave sin for which he did not deserve pardon.⁷⁷ This dual personality in him remains an intriguing problem in the women's question. His social commitment is reflected in most of his works and more so in the play "Adukkalayil Ninnun Arangathekku". This title literally means "From Kitchen to the Stage". It is a symbolic one suggesting that from kitchen supposed to be the conventional space for women, they should come to the front.⁷⁸ This play was written in 15 days and it is seen that his friends were also involved in the writing of the

76. Unni Varier, Interview with ICP Nambudiri in Malayala Manorama, 24 March, 1996.

77. Ibid

78. The problems of anatarjanams have been detailed in chapter II, Adukkala means kitchen, Arangathekku means to the stage.

script and it was a joint or share enterprise of the Nambudiri activists.⁷⁹ The play was effectively used as a propaganda to open the eyes of Nambudiri community. It exposed the inner contradiction in the Nambudiri family life, women's problems, Adhivedanam, distance pollution, sambandham. The play is dedicated to the hands of young girls.⁸⁰ The play is written in "Nambudiri dialect" and it is entirely a Nambudiri theme with the intervention of judiciary. The movement of this period had organised each community. For instance, Yogakshema Sabha, Nair Service Society and others for uplifting each community. This community identity to solve their own problems was a development by 20th century. Endogamy for all Nambudiris, monogamy, property rights were the crucial demands held by Nambudiri activists. Yogakshema Sabha which was founded in 1908, had a moderate disposition, so yuvajanasangham with more active ideas come to the forefront. V.T.Bhattathripad, M.R.Bhattathirpad and M.P.Bhattathirpad were all members of this. All the three utilised their creative talent to write plays which gave hard blows to the orthodoxy in their own community.⁸¹

79. Premji or M.P.Bhattathirpad, Mathrubhumi, 5th Feb.1995.

80. "Kanyakamarude Karappallavangalil" V.T.Bhattathirpad-
Adukkalayil Ninnun Arangathekku, Kozhikode ,1929, P.1

81. M.R.Bhattathirpad wrote Marakkudakkullile Mahanarakam (The hell inside the umbrella) in 1931, Premji or M.P.Bhattathirpad wrote Ritumati in 1942. Both these activists married widows challenging convention.

The play starts with vedic chanting by two Nambudiri children under the supervision of a teacher. The hero and heroine are introduced in the second scene, where Madhavan does not hide his feelings for Thethi, his childhood playmate. He puts his gold ring on her finger and immediately she reacts asking him whether girls could wear gold ring.⁸² Antaranams could wear only brass bangles and except mangalasutra, there was no gold chain except on occasion like marriage. Madhavan makes an introspection about the social situation and decides that education was necessary for everyone. He takes a pledge that he would go to school and leaves for Trissur for studies. Thethi's marriage was settled with Karkatakunnath Nambudiri who was old and who already had wives. The old Nambudiri accepted the proposal expecting a substantial sum as dowry, with which he could pay the tax, repair the house and was convinced that he would not be able to marry again. Thethi is not informed about her marriage but she develops a doubt that she was about to get married. Thethi shows her apprehensions about future. She is keen to know about her mother's anxiety and hints by servants. She asks herself " Where are they going to send me? what is the situation there ? Is it a distant place ? Will there be anyone to compete with me? Everything

82. V.T.Bhattathirpad, op.cit, P.7,10,11

will happen according to fate". She continues to ask herself whether Madhavan might have forgotten her and the ring and that he put bindi on her forehead and whether her brother had informed him about the marriage ? ⁸³ These questions raised by her has a number of related issues. She is kept ignorant about her marriage like who the bridgeroom is, which illam she is to be sent and whether there are sapatnis? Later she reconciled by saying that everthing is fate. But still there is a streak of hope about Madhavan and that her brother would take an appropriate step to inform Madhavan. Here, the antarjanams on her own cannot do anything. Thethi's anxiety is the anxiety of all antarjanams.

In the 11th scene, the conversation which develops among friends of Madhavan, discuss about gosha, sambandham, marumakkthayam and individual property and the problems of aphan. Here V.T.Bhattathiripad, makes the famous statement that one can be born as a dog, cat but not an aphan. This carries the agony of an aphan of an illam. During this talk, Madhavan gets Thethi's brother Kunju's telegram informing him about fixing Thethi's marriage to Karkadamkunnath Nambudiri. Immediately Madhavan leaves for home.

83. Ibid, PP.54-55.,

Karkkadamkunnath arrives at Vilayur illam with his people for the marriage. He is dressed up in the conventional way. Now enters the messenger from court with the injunction which says. "Order from II class Magistrate. The petition filed by Vilayoor Manakkal Kunju Nambudiripad requests to ban the marriage of his sister Devaki or Thethi to Karkkadamkunnath since it is against the wish of the petitioner and the girl. If it is done against the court order, Karkkadamkunnath would be punished".⁸⁴.

The intervention of judiciary in social matters is sought and it comes as a relief and solution to many who had to undergo such undesirable social customs. It was a message that Yuvajanasangham sent across to Nambudiri community. Thethi's father compromises with the situation and new developments. He decides to give his daughter in marriage to Madhavan. Karkkadamkunnath Nambudiri was old, having other wives whereas Madhavan is young, educated and progressive minded. The positive alternative and aspiration of the community is reflected here.

84. Ibid, P.78

In the fifteenth scene, the marriage of Thethi and Madhavan is enacted. But the most relevant scene is the sixteenth, where Thethi's brother Kunju, organises a function in connection with marriage and it is the Nambudiri yuvajanasangham's special meeting, where odikkan and father of Thethi invited guests like Krishnan Nambiar, Parasuram Iyengar as special guests. Kunju makes a speech, where he touches on various aspects of Nambudiri life which required urgent reforms. He says that instead of considering the ritual status of a bridegroom, what has to be considered is the age factor, compatibility of the boy and the girl and whether they like each other.⁸⁵ If one continues traditional ways and thinking, it is equal to murder. He says 'If my sister is given to the old man, she will be like a walking stick and her life will be dark and like a desert.'⁸⁶ Same way, the problems of aphas should be solved and the community can get rid of the ills, if they realise. Old karanavar should be convinced of the need to change. Madhavan, husband of Thethi now tears the gosha worn by Thethi and she is shown as fashionably dressed. The guests greet the couple with a long applause. This symbolic act was to the Nambudiri community to give up gosha which kept the anatarjanams from the main stream and gave them so much

85. Ibid., P.80.

86. Ibid.

humiliation. The play ends with the address to the couple, two by antarjanams and by the London branch of the Nambudiri young Men's Association. It says "we, the members of the London branch of the Nambudiri Young Men's Association, congratulate you on this happy occasion. This is auspicious in the history of not only two blessed members of the community, but of the community itself-may, perhaps of the whole of Kerala in that it signifies a thirsting desire on the part of the younger generation of the community to shake off the bond of age long custom and tradition".

Suffice it to say that everybody with a certain amount of sympathy towards the community will look upon you as the liberators of the community, from the disabilities of wedded life brought about by the cursed custom of not looking to the wishes of the bride and bridgeroom. We hope that many enthusiastic youths, who are making loud protests in the press and platform against the terrible aspects of the country's domestic life, would emulate your example and cast off the various evils prevalent in the community. May we, in conclusion, appeal to you to become pioneers in boldly leaving aside the purdha system which was a firm hold on the community⁸⁷

87. Ibid, PP.84-85.

Vilayoor Achan Nambudiri, father of Kunju and Thethi shows his happiness and thanks everyone for the marriage. He says that he is convinced that antarjanams need a better treatment and their feelings should be respected. In his joy, he donated the amount, he had kept towards dowry to the sabha for its activities. Vilayoor Achan Nambudiri represents the old generation who had the inhibition to adopt relevant changes in social usages but the characters are portrayed as grasping the changing scenario.

The play ends with an English sign Hi Hip Hurrah.

It is noted that this play fell like a bomb on the Nambudiri orthodoxy. It was staged on 10th December 1929 at vadakkiniyedath illom, against the opposition and threat of many. When it was planned to stage at Mezhathur, V.T.Bhattathiripad's brother Trivikraman Bhattathiripad strongly opposed it. But V.T.Bhattathiripad's aunt, Neeli Antarjanam, a widow encouraged and supported the troupe to stage the drama. See the sparks of discernment in the words of this uneducated widow. "It is fortunate that youngsters have started desiring that their wives should look neat and dignified. Isn't it better to walk or travel with one's husband than with a servant and dasi? I am ready to accompany the antarjanams who wish to see the drama. If any threat comes, I

will definitely try to protect them. I am ready to face any consequence".⁸⁸ The encouraging and bold gesture from the old widow inspired and intensified the urge of other antarjanams to see the drama.

V.T.Bhattarhipad's brother employed every strategy to humiliate and demoralise the entire troupe and specially V.T.Bhattathiripad. Hired men waited to physically assault V.T.Bhattathiripad. But the young activists were prepared for any eventuality and to see that the drama was staged. It was in every sense, an achievement for the activists to stage this realistic drama as they planned it to be. The effect was remarkable. Even V.T.Bhattathirpad, the main inspiration behind this, took pride in saying that he felt fortunate in having thrown some sparks of fire on the thoughts of Nambudiri community.

Though there were women characters, all the roles were played by men.⁸⁹ Women had not started entering in public. So there was no chance of making them act. In fact, the symbolic

88. V.T.Bhattathiripad, "Natyavum venda, Natakavum Venda" in V.T.Studies and Memoirs, ed. By Sreekumar, P.V.Mezathur, 1997, pp.84-91.

89. The names of actors are provided in appendix.

gesture of Madhavan in tearing the gosha of Thethi was a bold message to antarjanams who remained in the interior. The theme of the play is centred round misery of women and aphans. The remedy was endogamy for all Nambudiris and it is projected in the play. The rule of primogeniture enabled Mossamburis to marry antarjanams three or four times. Thus to escape from the life of a spinster, young girls were married to old Nambudiris who already had three or four wives and a number of relationships. Age, health, adivedhanam were not considered. For men, he did not bother about the girl, for he was prepared for third or fourth marriage for the sake of dowry when he found that he had to pay tax or had to repair the house. But marriages whether third or fourth was conducted strictly in the ritualistic manner and horoscopes had to match.⁹⁰. Thethi, the heroine is not educated. She is not prepared for anything and the character is weak. She never asserts. She reconciles saying that this is all fate. It is just because her brother, Kunju who had a discernment about the changing time and values, turns to seek judicial help to stop the marriage. But the ray of hope comes from vilayoor Achan who represents the old, when he says that the feelings, passion of antarjanams have to be taken seriously and

90. Nambudiri marriage is discussed in second and fourth chapters of the dissertation.

he articulates his joy over the marriage of Thethi and Madhavan, the young couple. Madhavan, an aphan, marries an antarjanam against convention. Kanishta vivaham was an important matter in the social agenda of Yuvajanasangam.

There were references to sambandham and attack on Nambudiris who observe all rituals but indulges in loose marital relationships with women of lower caste. Marumakkathayam and the social basis of demands of Nair community to stop sambandhams and their demand for partition of marumakkathayam property are discussed in this play. The real effect of the play was on antarjanams who veiwed a play for the first time, from interiors of the illam. They could see their image on the platform. The agony of living as sapatnis, or as the wife of an old man, the total absence of an innate feeling of love, affection or compatability could be related to the events of the play. V.T. Bhattathirpad was deliberate in writing this play with the intention of staging it, for plays have added effect on the audience, creating a rapport with them. It was totally a men's effort projecting the issues of the community. The message was clear and loud. Nambudiri community should be prepared to reformulate by sensing the trends of a changing

socio economic scenario.⁹¹ Thus literary activity was integral to his policy of social activity.

V.T.Bhattathiripad is the author of several works ranging from autobiography to articles and plays. But he becomes the real artist and creative writer with this play, since it has a social purpose, aim and commitment. V.T.said "Any change in life is decisive. This has to be adopted in literature and one's own life. Pen is effective than a rifle"⁹² The time factor was significant because within a year, some antarjanams showed the examples of giving up gosha, accepting a modern dress like sari and blouse. In the next year, Parvathi Manazhi gave up gosha. she was followed by Parvati Nenmenimangalam and Arya Pallam. They formed antarjana samajams. After the initial inhibition, women took up their cause and articulated their needs and requirements.

The address sent by London branch of yuvajanasangham is an indication that Nambudiris had started crossing territorial restrictions but even there, concerned about their community.

91. The aspirations and efforts of the community led to the Nambudiri Act , XII, Madras, 1933.

92. V.T.Vasudevan - Ente Ammakku, Enikalla:in Deshabhimani weekly November 12-18, 1995.

Madhavan, the hero, an aphan gets educated. He emerges with clear notions about marriage. So far aphans could enter into sambandham only. Madhavan's marriage with Thethi, an antarjanam is the significant turn of the play, it indicated endogamy, a solution for aivedanam, and of sambandham and also the way for all Nambudiri girls to get married. The rule of primogeniture had been an obstacle for all Nambudiri women to get married. Thus the voices in this play were expression of a feeling arising out of the agony suffered by antarjanams to satisfy tradition and custom. Female desire had all along been crushed to satisfy tradition. Though this play is dedicated by the author in the hands of Nambudiri girls, the heroine is not assertive or prominent.

A dedicated social activist like V.T.Bhattathirpad too believed marriage as a solution for women's problems. Marriage was perceived as a protective shelter for women. There is no hint about educating the girl Thethi but Madhavan and Kunju are educated. Women were not encouraged to be self reliant. She was to be under the shadow of a patriarch.

Endogamy is the underlying aspect of the play. By 1929, aphan's increasing demand for caste marriage was strong in the agenda of yuvajanasangham. This would alleviate he

problems of the community relating to spinsters, adivedananam, sambandham. It would redefine the family relationships, property rights and a change in family atmosphere. It means the rejection of primogeniture, enabling the aphans to bring their wives to the illam. So far, the Nair wives of aphans could never enter the illam. When all Nambudiri men could marry Nambudiri women, bring them to the illam, the whole family scenario would change. This would naturally lead to a new economic situation. The children of all members would grow together. All could claim property rights. Such a situation completely affect the traditional concept and ideology of Nambudiris. This was the actual aspiration of all aphans. Caste marriage would provide them a status at home, an identity and family. They need not remain a stranger at home, or a visiting husband at Nair tarawads. The emotional security, family obligations, duties of a husband and father emerge with the consistency of a marital relationship.

The marriage pattern shown in the play was an alternate model of marriage projected by V.T. Bhattathiripad, in place of the traditional pattern where the bride was fully covered by cloth. Nambudiri marriages were ritualistic. In

this place was shown, a simple ceremony in the midst of relatives and guests who were to be the witnesses. The tearing of the veil of Thethi by Madhavan sends a strong message to the community as to how women had to be treated.

In spite of personal problems created by relatives, V.T.Bhattathiripad did not postpone any activity for future. He believed that every possible action should be taken in the present. His brother stopped rice and grains to all members of illam who saw the drama and supported V.T.Bhattathiripad. In 1930, to justify his stand for endogamy, V.T.Bhattathiripad, an aphan married Sreedevi antarjanam of Ittiyamparamba, who was fixed in marriage to an old Nambudiri.

Even Yogakshema activists had criticised V.T.Bhattathiripad for the play. Moderates like Kurumattur Narayanan Nambudiripad, criticises V.T.Bhattathirapad for exposing the ills of the community, ridiculing them in front of public. But he was encouraged by his conscience to send shock waves to the minds of Nambudiris, and to remind them of the rotten state when other communities were going through active consciousness to appropriate relevant reforms. Though this play inspired later plays, like Marakkudakkullile Mahanarakam and

Ritumati, none of them attained the relevant social significance of 'Adukkalayil Ninum Arangathekku'. He gives the glimpse of a world familiar to him and encouraged the audience to have a discourse about things which were not discussed earlier.

During the early part of the movement, it was men who talked about women and only by 1930s, the initiative from women emerged. Their articulation of their own problems and the realisation to have a platform for themselves resulted in antarjana samajams. By 1940, there were 100 such samajams. The distinct character of the Nambudiri movement is that, the activists were keen to fulfill their demands without delay. This peculiarity showed in widow marriages, inter-caste marriages, endogamy, monogamy etc. The young activists did not wait for future. The present had to settle the problems.⁹³ It must be noted that, when Nambudiri activists argued for endogamy and an end to sambandham with Nairs (This was also the demand of Nairs), it was putting an end to a long inter-caste marital relationship. Both the communities on the way to organize themselves were drifting apart with the conviction of

93. The first widow marriage in the community was between Uma and M.R.Bhattathiripad in 1934, First boycott of gosha was in 1929.

a cultural identity of one's own. V.T. Bhattathiripad's works were mostly of themes relating to Nambudiris, specially "Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekku" speaks in a Nambudiri style, where the vocabulary is better understood by the Nambudiris.⁹⁴ This is because, the commitment of the writer arises from a social, political, cultural environment to which he belongs. The consciousness imbibed from this, makes him an effective writer.

Women in a traditional society was expected to be a good wife and mother. Beyond that, it was never felt that she had a role. She had to be chaste, dutiful, prove her sincerity and subordination in all her activities. This 'perfect' role in patriarchal society was invisible and it was never felt that she should be recognized. But the era of awakening brought in an introspection about women's role, her aspirations and desires. For this, she had to expand her space a little, displaying abilities that she could have different functions beyond a wife and mother. The growth of modern education gradually absorbed girls, though with initial hiccups. The opening of new profession and employment for men opened up

94. See the language of this play

new space for women as wives. The nuclear family set ups led to her identity being recognized as wife and mother. The social reformers had addressed the problems of women, stressed the need of their education. But women themselves raised their problems comparatively late. Literary works from late 19th century, raised the issues of women and the novels and play discussed here are relevant in this context. Social movements which reflected in the contemporary literary works cannot be perceived as singular movements. These were a part of the growing national consciousness and nationalist movement. Though community based, these movements drew inspiration from nationalist movement which was gaining intensity by 1920s. Literature was a medium of expression of the social consciousness and emerging nationalist ideology. The changing pattern of social system was well reflected in the literature. These interactions were one of the peculiarities of the transition from traditionalism to modernity.

IN RETROSPECT

Swarna kumari E.K. “Social changes in malabar with special reference to two traditional communities 1881-1933 ” Thesis. Department of History , University of Calicut, 2001

Chapter - VII

IN RETROSPECT

This study has been an attempt to situate two prominent communities namely Nambudiris and Nairs in the traditional society of Malabar and to understand the socio-economic basis for a reformulation. The term "Social change" is used here to mean a shift of socio-economic perceptions. This had a gradual and slow effect and no change can be effected unless, there is an introspection and consciousness to reformulate.

Malabar had an agrarian background where people depended mainly on agriculture, thus linking them to land and to an extent to small scale handicrafts. Caste as an institution determined the social status and it reflected in the tenurial pattern also. Each caste had several sub castes and these caste variations has fixed the level of social and cultural status within a major caste. Even dressing style and jewellery were related to this. While such variations determined the status of different castes, untouchability and distance pollution were practised with graded levels of distance between castes. Socio-economic exploitation and oppression by the dominant against subordinate in the socio-economic sphere was the character of traditional society.

Though purity, pollution, rituals, ideology and untouchability maintained a gulf between each other, in reality each caste had to depend on the other for various needs and skills indispensable for day-to-day life. Thus tradition and custom determined the life pattern of each caste. It is in this context, that the distinct cultural identity of two communities is studied.

The Nambudiris and the Nairs were partilineal and Nairs were matrilineal. In spite of such a contradictory characteristic of inheritance, these two communities had a harmonious interaction for centuries which has been termed as an unequal relationship. Some of the problems which emerge from such a discussion are, why was the highest caste in this region, namely Nambudiris who were highly ritualistic, entered into marital relationships with lower caste namely Nairs, with whom they had to observe pollution and untouchability. According to caste prescriptions, Nambudiris and Nairs could see each other but not touch.

The study has been an endeavour to approach the whole topic in the light of tradition versus modernity. In the traditional social sphere, Nambudiris as a community had

indulged actively in intellectual pursuits. They had excelled in Sanskrit, astrology, astronomy, architecture, medicine, ayurveda, philosophy, logic, grammar, art and to a great extent, retained monopoly in various disciplines. They were ritualistic, with a high social status to boast of. But the economic status varied. Some of them were janmies, some were teachers, some were priests. Among them were Vedic and Non Vedic Bhrahmins i.e., those who could recite Vedas and those who were not permitted to recite Vedas. Though economic variations and caste variations existed, the social customs practised were the same. Such a system was determined by tradition on the basis of right to Shadkarma or six actions.

They practised the rule of primogeniture, sambhandam, aivedanam, parivedanam but endogamy strictly for antharjanams. The contradictory character of ethical and moral code for men and women is striking. Sambhandam with Nair women was permitted by custom and tradition. A well propagated ideology, perpetuated this pattern of relationship. Sambhandam had no binding terms like legality on a Nambudiri as a husband or father. Nambudiri did not contract any social pollution in having a Nair wife. It was considered a sin to accept Bhrahmaswam or Brahmin's property by a Nair wife or children.

For years, this "unequal" relationship continued. The line of enquiry here is to know, whether it was so unequal or why was that Nairs accepted such hypergamous relationship ? Nairs are Sudras. The relationship with Nambudiris enabled them to climb up the social ladder inspite of a low caste status in the caste order. Nairs, thus could be near the centre of authority and power in the traditional period. The children out of sambhandam relationship were the children of a high caste father but these children actually inherited the mother's caste.

There were soldiers among Nairs, protectors among them and tenants directly under the janmis. All these openings enabled them to be near the rich and high caste Nambudiri janmis. Apart from these social privileges, there were economic benefits. Through Sambhandhams, Nair tarawads could obtain gifts like some property or tenurial concessions. It has to be noted that, it was not only the Nairs but also the Nambudiris or the eldest Nambudiri who entered in to sambandhams. Moosamburis were the custodians of illam property. The accessibility and proximity to the superior caste gave the Nairs, prestige and pride. It was also not possible to reject a sambhandam, when Nairs were lower in caste order and were tenants or

cultivators. In other words, it was the relationship between a dominant against subordinate. But such relationships never affected the caste or cultural identity of both. This was preciously guarded in Kerala context.

One striking resemblance of both Nambudiris and Nairs, who followed different patterns of inheritance and custom, was the similar aim to protect property. Nambudiris who were patrilineal lived in illam, which was the joint family unit. The eldest Nambudiri was the custodian of the property and all rights and duties were invested in him. Only he could have caste marriage. His wives and children, all his brothers and unmarried female relatives lived there. Every member had the right of maintenance and share of property. But such share was conceptual and not a reality. Aphans could not marry antharjanams but could have sambandhams. Such a partner was not brought to the illam for the very reason that the other castes were not permitted in illam. Illam property was inpartible. It passed on from the eldest Nambudiri to his eldest son, as in the European marital system in the medieval period. Thus the social relationship was designed to prevent dismemberment of the property. The demand for endogamy led to a thorough change in property rights when aphans could marry Nambudiri girls. The

set up of nuclear family units also affected the edifice called illam. Claim of property by each member and the Madras Nambudiri Act of 1933 is significant in this context. The trustee of the illam was responsible to pay the tax to the authorities in all changed, political conditions. He was the person who wielded and transacted all economic aspects of illam. The demand of aphas to have caste marriage, sent clear and far reaching messages of endogamy, property rights for all and an identity issue in illam.

Nairs who were matrilineal lived in the joint family house known as tarawad. The eldest male member managed all affairs of the family. He was the trustee and the family affairs were according to his discretion. All members had right of property but no one could claim it. There was no partition. The property remained intact. All members had to be maintained from the tarawad income. Women did not move out of the tarawad on marriage. This large protective shelter of tarawad assured the requirements of every member. Every member had the right of maintenance but no right to claim his/her share. Karanavan was the tax payer on behalf of the tarawad. He represented the tarawad for any social or religious function. As such, his position was recognised by government and repeated reluctance by the colonial government to curb his powers, can be deducted

in legislations. When the tarawads were divided, it was to another mini frame of tavazhis. This was when tarawads became unwieldy. Formation of tavazhis meant that the head of the tavazhi had to pay tax to the government. It is only later when individual claim of property was made possible that individuals started paying tax. Thus the pattern from corporate land control to individual holdings was a significant development in the days of transition.

A discussion of social situation like this, raises the question, as to what was the socio-economic basis of the demands by both the communities for an introspection and reformulation in the context of the modernity? And to what extent did they aspire a change? How far the literature of the period represented the aspirations and changing perspectives of these two communities? The entire discussion is an answer to these questions.

The discussion about the land tenurial pattern and the erosions in the system, showed the emergence of a section of Nairs as educated and employed who created new understanding of social relationships at home and out side. In both

communities, a minority initiated an attempt to create a social identity and prepare themselves to face the fast changing scenario in the colonial context. The economic changes in the tenurial pattern and new employment opportunities had social consequences. The modern education was an instrument for such changes.

This study is also an attempt to reject certain concepts like all Nambudiris were rich and powerful and the Nair women enjoyed absolute freedom in matrilineal tarawad. Nambudiris have always been regarded as having high socio-economic status. But it is seen that, though Nambudiris were ritualistically the same, the sub caste variations had provided different economic and social status. It can be noted that among Nambudiris, there were "Vedic" Nambudiris who can be called othullavar or those who could recite vedas and non vedic or othillathavar or those who cannot recite vedas. The order of social precedence among them to "Adyans" and "Asyans" indicate the aristocratic nature of Adyans. Adyans and Asyans had different dressing patterns and jewellery. If an Adyan antharjanam was married to an Asyan illam, when she visited her own illam, she could never dine with her relatives. This speaks of the variations within the community regarding the social status accorded to different sub

castes.¹ The professions also varied. Some were teachers, some were priests or astrologers or physicians. Some availed of the free food provided at free feeding houses of the temples. Such disparities remained at every social and economic realm. But all were governed by a same ideology of a high caste. Rituals shaped their life pattern. The Nambudiris who possessed land enjoyed great social status than their counterparts who never owned landholdings. The sub caste "Pattar" is a good example.

Like the general variations within the community, the contradiction in the gender status is striking. While men enjoyed and had social freedom, women were put to strict social and moral restrictions. They were kept behind gosha or seclusion. Every move of a woman was noted. Her voice has to be restricted. She has to be content with the biological and customary roles of a wife, mother and daughter. For man, it was permitted extra marital sexuality while for women, it was forbidden. There were many spinsters in the community due to the rule of primogeniture. But Yogakshema and Yuvajanasangham took women's issues like education, adivedanam, sambandham. Gender equality was never in the agenda of the reformers. Endogamy was the vital issue discussed and urged. Therefore the reforms were centred around the following ideas.

1. For details, see Chapter II and illustrations

All Nambudiris should be permitted to marry from the caste, bring the wife to the illam, and build up a family. This in turn raised the question of individual property for all members. The demand for individual property, gradually upset the impartible nature of illam. Along with this should be read the acceptance of new education and employment. Employment at different places away from illam led to many changes in the behaviour pattern of Nambudiris and in the nature of possession of land holdings.

Judicial verdicts empowering the widows to claim the the property of husband's illam came to be a turning point in the women's question and status. Thus women, who were married, acquired the right to have a legal status in her husband's illam. Judiciary gradually recognised the aspiration of Nambudiris. This is implicit in the words of K.P. Madhusoodanan who submitted a bill in the Madras Legislative Council in 1931. He stressed that "The thrust of my bill is to know whether all Nambudiris could marry from their own community. Another important question is whether a member of this community can claim his share of family property². These words raise direct questions which have strong implications. It is the question of endogamy and a right to have one's property. Both were gradually sanctioned by the judicial intervention.

2. Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council Vol.2 VIII, 1931, Page - 10, Tamil Nadu Archives.

The colonial legislations and judicial decisions were welcomed by the progressive groups and existing social practices were changed in favour of modernity. Property rights, inheritance pattern and the centres of authority changed but the ritualistic and cultural identity remained. The initiative taken by an active section had to be accepted gradually by the orthodox section due to the economic dimension involved in it.

Nambudiris still follow the samskaras. Upanayanam is a decisive event in a brahmin's life and a Nambudiri still wear the thread called punool or sacred thread though caste symbols like the tuft or conventional dressing pattern were dispensed with. A uniform dress code has gradually emerged in society. Gosha is abandoned. Even in the field of art, especially theatrical performance, Nambudiris accepted a propagandist role for social purposes. This was a break from the classical art form with which Nambudiris were comfortable for centuries.

Throughout the development of the movement, it maintained a humanitarian attitude, trying to grasp the sentiments of men and women. In spite of the changes accepted by the community, the inner identity of a Nambudiri Brahmin is still retained by them. An activist V.T.Bhattathiripad openly said in 1980 that he was unhappy with the direction and aim of the movement.³

The Nairs utilised the openings created by the colonial government. This exposure led them to think of an alternative model of employment which they could attain through English education and that took them to different areas out of

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3. V.T.Bhattathiripad said that nothing much has changed. The humanitarian and cultural achievement envisaged during the movement has not been achieved.

Sree Kumar (ed) V.T.Studies and Memoirs, Mezhathur, 1997,
PP.238 - 250.

the traditional family units called tarawads. Employment in government sector, profession like vakils and clerks with a self reliance gradually affected their social perception.⁴ They slowly came out of an ideological grip, demanded for endogamy, set up nuclear family units, which in turn gave a blow to the Nambudiri Community and in another way, hit at their own joint family concept. The age old inter caste marital relationship gradually came to an end.

Nair women who have been believed to have relative freedom, compared to antharjanams, moved from the patriarchal set up of tarawad to nuclear units, where a husband was expected to protect her. But she gained an identity as a wife and mother in the new terrain, creating a space for herself. Though Nairs are rightly equated with matriliney, no Nair woman could own her share of property or make transactions. Property of a tarawad

4. Contemporary newspapers reflect the shifting trends to nuclear units with father and mother and children as a unit. Tarawads could not entertain individual aspirations. See Chapter V.

always remained impartible. Tradition had sanctioned tavazhi partition, when tarawads become unwieldy. Here also, woman was considered as the prime point to form a separate group with her children surrounding her. Even there, the custodian of the family was not a woman. The next eldest male member became the karanavan. Thus the 'enviable' right of a Nair woman remained invisible. When the Malabar Marriage Bill was presented, the demand was for the provision to recognise sambandham as a real marriage through registration and there by acquire the right of property of father. This recognition was a moral issue, a matter of self respect for Nair women to show that they have husband and children who have right in the father's property. This assertion was the outcome of the changing values and perspective about a family unit mainly of a middle class. It was later in 1933 that tavazhi partition was provided. The wife and children were to be maintained by husband or father. On the death of a male who died intestate, the whole of the property would belong to the children, his widow and mother. It is here that the slow evolution of the right of wife and mother can be noted. It was only in 1958 with Kerala Hindu Marriage Act that the conceptual right of woman and her individual share becomes visible and a fulfilled reality. Along with this, the reality of endogamy and monogamy gradually brought in a consistent marital relationship and family of her own. This was possible through systematised married system, though marriage was perceived as a necessity to protect women.

Nairs by forming a community organisation called Nair Service Society underlined the unity and organisation of Nairs and their welfare. To a great extent, sub caste fusion has been achieved because of this effort. But these community organisations have naturally led to developing one's own interests, thereby leading to a rift between communities.

Tarawads which were once the pride of Nairs remains a sentimental hold on Nairs, though practically, no such tarawads remain now. But even now, Nairs prefix the tarawad name to the first name. Some of the customary restrictions are still followed like pollution by birth or death of any member of the tarawad. It is even preferred, to bestow the tarawad house to the daughter, since it is a conviction that the lineage continues through the daughter.

By the end of the 19th century emerged a number of social reformers like Chattampi Swamikal, Sree Narayana Guru, Vagbhadananda, Sivananda Paramahansa, Sivanada Yogi who talked against untouchability, caste inequality, functions of vanity like Talikettukalyanam, Tirandukuli and Pulikudi. What they envisaged was a castless society with, human beings as the centre point. Though distance pollution or untouchability are

not existent, social equality remains a distant reality. The organisation and direction of each community ended in creating a social identity of one's own.

Along with this, it can be noted that there existed gender inequality. Women had a subordinate role in the traditional order and in the days of transition. Her problems were actively discussed but even at that level, her protection was the major factor considered. Even a revolutionary like Sree Narayana Guru said that a woman should spend according to the family income and protect her own chastity.⁵ It has always been insisted that women should be chaste and that remained a lesson from the traditional moral and ethical code of a traditional society. In spite of these rules, there arose a preparation for women's entry in public and women's question held a key place.

Brahmanada Sivayogi attacked the prevalent attitude towards women, remarking that women are in a "Cage" and she should be freed and given equal opportunities. Swami Sivananda Paramahansa broke all conventions to set up Sidha Samajam at vatakara propagating a new philosophy of life and rejecting the concept of family, caste and property ownership. There is no

5. See Chapter V

gender destruction in his centres. The identity of husband, wife, father, mother are not relevant for the followers. The existence of such a life pattern in our midst remains a significant social reality.

The cultural character and identity of Nambudiris and Nairs has been already discussed. Culture is the pattern of life which encompasses all aspects integral to life. Though with the passage of time, many customs were dispensed with, still each community retained their peculiar behaviour. The formation of community organisations, intended for the welfare of each has to a great extent, led to a shrinking attitude, confining to one's own community. When inter caste relationship called sambandham was put an end to, social activists had argued for inter caste marriage for men and women. But that attempt did not succeed. These community organisations, while improving the status and unity, indirectly created a polarization among themselves. The Nair Service Society has acquired political aspiration and ambitions and has formed even a democratic party.

The reformulation of the social order and emergence of social consciousness were articulated by the substantial changes in the traditional landholding pattern. The economic

front in Malabar had accepted and integrated new trends like capitalism. The plantation and industries set up by colonial investments brought in a new work culture, distinct from traditional dependence on agriculture. Cash crops, textile mills and plantations recruited workers without caste inhibitions. The redefinition of money economy entered the Malabar psyche. New planters and factory owners entered to find a place along with janmis. Wages without customary obligations freed the average malayali from an age old ideology. The idle behavior to take bath, pray, eat and sleep was giving way to do a need to do work and earn and maintain a family. The growing sense of duty and affection towards one's own children, required a situation of individual income and property. The social basis of demand for one's own share of property and one's own family unit are related to one another. This social atmosphere was created by the intervention of legislation of a colonial state.

Malabar by the end of the 19th century felt the touch of nationalism. The gradual awakening to the concept of one nation inspite of admiration for colonial system of education, pulled the educated and employed to think and work for political freedom. Along with the national movement, arose social programmes. While India was seeking freedom from

British, on one side, social reform movements were keen to eradicate certain out dated customs, on the otherside. Thus social reform movements can be understood only with the nationalist movement at the back ground.

By 1940, it was obvious that political freedom was imminent. By this time, Malabar Society especially Nambudiris and Nairs had come a long way, achieving many of the social demands. Political, social and economic aspirations were linked to each other. Many of the political activists were simultaneously agitating for social and economic realities. National and social consciousness intensified simultaneously.

The introduction of English education affected the socio-economic scene of Malabar. The new education opened new doors to an alien language, knowledge, employment and a vast treasure of literature. The educated enjoyed the reading of western literature. A new habit of reading of books and periodicals emerged. Such readings inspired some of the talented to write literary works of their own. While English was accepted as a medium of instruction and for official use, English literature was appreciated and enjoyed, the educated

writers preferred to articulate in their own language. Malayalam literature acquired a new face by the emergence of novels and plays. Novel was a western form but Malayalam novels of this period were the reflection of the contemporary socio-economic trends in society. As such, it had a social purpose of spreading a message of change into reality.

Although plays were enacted in Malabar till 1920, they were in the grip of tradition dealing with themes from Puranas. The deviation from the conventional track and resorting to social themes and social realities gave a new character to the plays. These plays as noted earlier, have two characteristics. (1) It is a literary form (2) It is a theatre form, when staged. Plays can create a life when staged and can establish an instant rapport with the audience. During 1920s and 1930s, some plays were designed with the propagandist character depicting social reality and implying reforms. Thus literature of the period, sensed the aspirations of the people.

All social reformers of Malabar had envisaged an egalitarian society. But caste remains a determinant in the life pattern of these two communities. It can be surmised that they have achieved a social identity. Both the communities have

rejected or forgotten usages like untouchability or distance pollution but they remain as distinct groups especially regarding marital relationship. The new historical forces unleashed by the colonial state and its agrarian system were responsible for a reformulation of these two prominent castes of Malabar society. While they retained some of the rudiments of tradition , they rejected many aspects of tradition in favour of modernity. The western education had been a harbinger of change and tradition. The emerging literature under its impact reflected both social reality and budding aspirations. In fact change was substantial but it never uprooted the roots of the soil.

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GLOSSARY

adhyan	:	Nambudiri who had a superior status within the Community.
adivedanam	:	Practice of having a number of wives.
aliyasantanam	:	System of inheritance through the female line - Term used in Kannada speaking areas.
anantaravan	:	Junior member of a tarawad
antarjanam	:	Nambudiri Woman
aphan	:	Younger Nambudiri of an illom
asyan	:	Nambudiri having an inferior status
balaima	:	ritual pollution on birth of a child in a tarawad
brahmaswam	:	brahmin's property
brishtu	:	ostracism
dasapushpam	:	literally means ten flowers
dasi	:	maid servant
devaswom	:	God's property
gosha	:	Purdah used by antarjanams

illom	:	joint family house of a Nambudiri
Janmam	:	A type of land ownership
Janmi	:	One who holds Janmam land
Kachams	:	Godes
Kama	:	God of romance
Kamazthithali	:	Jewellery worn by Asyans
kanam	:	A customary tenure or lease
Kanakkaran	:	One who holds the kanam
Kanishta	:	Younger Nambudiri in an illam
karanavan	:	Senior male member and manager of the tarawad
kavu	:	Small shrine
Keikottal	:	clapping of hands - a ritual related to the ceremony of a dead relative.
Kolathu vechudukka	:	dressng style of Adhyan women
kotthubali	:	last rites done for a dead relative
kudiveppu	:	function relating to the entry of the bride to husband's illam
malathithali	:	jwellery worn by Adhyan women

Mana	:	Family house of Adyan Nambudiri
makkathayam	:	System of inheritance by which one's own children inherit the property.
marumakkthayam	:	System of inheritance through the female line, A man's legal heirs being the children of his sister.
maryada	:	custom
melcharth	:	overlease
Moosamburi	:	Eldest son of a Nambudiri family
Nair	:	A caste in Kerala
Nalukettu	:	An architectural style in Kerala with a courtyard in the centre
Nambudiri	:	Malayali brahman who rank high in the caste order.
Okkuvechudukkal	:	Style of dress by Asyan woman
Onam	:	Harvest festival of Kerala
Othikkan	:	Vedic Instructor
Othillathavar	:	Those who had no right to recite vedas.

Othu	:	Vedic studies
Othullavar	:	Those who had the right to recite vedas
Para	:	A measurement of grains
Paramba	:	The compound around a house
Parivedanam	:	The younger Nambudiri could have a caste marriage, if the mossamburi had no children or remains unmarried.
Patton	:	rent
pudamuri	:	Nair marriage where the bridegroom presented pudava or cloth to the bride.
Pulikudi	:	literally means drinking of tamarind juice. A function during pregnancy
Pumsavanam	:	function during the pregnancy of an antarjanam
Purayidham	:	House and compound

Puthappu	: long cloth used to cover the body
Salai	: School
Samavartan	: end of vedic studies, brahmacharaya a stage in a Nambudiri life
Sambandham	: Nambudiri-Nair marital relationship
Sapatnis	: fellow wives
smarthas	: Those who know smrithis
smartha vicharam	: Trial to prove whether an antarjanam has committed adultery
Talikettukalyanam	: function relating to tying a tali an Nair girls before puberty
Tarawad	: Joint family house of Nairs
Tattudukkuka	: Peculiar style of dressing by Nambudiri
Teyyam	: folk art of Kerala
Tirandukuli	: cermonial bath after first menstruation

Triruvathira	:	Festival for women
Tuft	:	Knot of hair rept as caste symbols
Upanayanam	:	Occassion of wearing the thread as a caste symbol by brahmins
Vannathi	:	Washer woman
Vishu	:	Festival of malayali in the month of medam
Vrishali	:	dasi, servant.

Appendix - I

MEMORANDUM BY

O.CHANDU MENON,

MEMBER, MALABAR MARRIAGE COMMISSION

I, wish to make a few observations separately about the proposed legislation in respect of marriages of the Marumakkathayam Malayalees.

Myself a Malayalee of this class and as such deeply interested in the question, I need hardly say that I have given my best consideration to the arguments advanced for or against the measure and that the opinion, I am about to express, is the result of a long careful and anxious consideration of the questions in all its bearing and aspects. I have tried my best to ascertain the opinion of the people in general and have discussed the matter with many intelligent and enlightened men in Malabar. Here it is necessary for me to note that I do not attach much value to the evidence taken before the commission as a true reflection of the native public opinion in Malabar on the subject of the proposed changes in the marriage system. It appears to me that most of the witnesses that appeared before us, and many that answered interrogations, had made up their mind before-hand, either to support or oppose the Bill and did not care to represent public feelings on the subject.

As stated already I have spoken to many respectable Hindus of North and South Malabar on the subject and I have no hesitation whatever in saying, from my personal knowledge, that the great body of the people or rather a very large majority, including, I may say, the whole of the aristocracy of Malabar, do not desire any change. I am fortified in this view by the unanimous opinion of the President and the other Commissioners, who have passed a resolution to the effect that in their opinion, a large majority of the people do not desire any change. The large majority not only do not desire a change, but are in my opinion, extremely averse to any change, or more correctly speaking, indignantly condemn the proposed measures. Here I must state my firm belief that the measure would not have met with such universal and so vehement an opposition from the public, had it not been for some of the provisions in the Bill which the people rightly think, have the effect of changing their nationality, their 'individuality' as Marumakkathayam Hindus. There is hardly one Nayar in one hundred, among the body of the public of Malabar, who does not view with horror the provision of marriage and the provision in the Bill as to the nonrecognition or rather the abolition of caste for purposes of marriage and the provision that changes the fundamental principles of the law of succession of the

Marumakkathayam Hindus. The provision regarding the registration of marriages and the removal of the hitherto rules of consanguinity and affinity are also equally discusting to the public in general. In my humble opinion, nothing could have been more unfortunate for those few, who ask for marriage law, than to have published this obnoxious Bill as the basis upon which legislation on the subject was to proceed.

Of course, I admit that there is a very small minority, a very infinitesimal fraction of the population, consisting of some of the English-educated men and a few others, who desire a change in our present system of marriage. They would have done better if they had consulted the public opinion thoroughly and carefully before bringing out such a Bill. The violent changes in the Bill, naturally had the effect of making the orthodox Malayalees (and they are the large majority) had the measure as one designed for abolishing caste and Marumakkathaym system of succession, on the pretext of legalising marriages. In this connection it becomes necessary to say a few words about the Bill it self, in order to show the ideas of the people generally about the matters therein death with.

The public are struck with the provision which disposes of, in a summary manner, the caste system in Malabar. Whatever may be the prevailing opinion of the portion of the English educated Malayalee doubts on the subject, there cannot be any doubt as to the fact, that all eminent English and native thinkers or the present generation, who are intimately acquainted with Indian Institutions and characters have always thought that it would be highly impolite, for the Government, to interfere with the caste system in this country. On this point, a distinguished Law member of the Viceregal Council, an Englishman who had very carefully studied the question, in the course of his speech on the Brahma Marriage Bill, in 1872, said as follows ;

.....

That the law of succession of the Marumakkathayam Hindus, as the law of all other Hindus, who follow Marumakkathayam or nay other law of succession, is chiefly based upon religious rites, cannot be honestly denied by any one who knows thee customs of Malayalees. The general principal of the Hindu law which guided succession is that "he who is the spiritual benefactor of a deceased person shall succeed to the property of such person." That, according to the Malabar Law and customs, to a Marumakkathaym Nair, his Anandaravers are his

Pindakartha or the spiritual benefactors, no one can deny. That, has been so ordained and it has been going on in accordance with such ordinance for thousand of years past. Even the most enthusiastic supporters of the Bill, in their depositions before us, affirmed that a family of Anandaravers who omit to offer funeral cakes or observe pollution on the death of their Karanavan, forfeited their caste and society. Such is the religious constitution of the relation between karanavan and Anadaravaers in Malabar, and it was in accordance with this relation that our law of succession was formed. If we also ask the British Government to alter the law of succession, could we also ask in governemtn to after eligious law, enacted according to the notions of Hindu sages and law-givers for the spiritual benefit of the Marumakkathayam Hindus ? Could we ask the Government to legislative that the son shall be Pindakartha or the spiritual benefactor of a Marumakkathaym Nair in the place of his Anandaraven ? I am sure the British Government would indignantly refuse to legislate on the point even if we venture to ask them, as the British Government' would not interfere with our religious law, so they could not, according to their policy, interfere with our civil rights based upon such law, unless the people wish to change it or unless the exercise of such rights involves a crime or is passed to public policy.

.....

Having stated as above my opinion that the people are quite averse to changes on the proposed lines in the Bill, I have now to state my opinion whether the Marumakkathaym Hindus in Malabar have any system of marriage and if they have so system, whether they should have one, if least for the protection of small minority who ask for it.

.....

I think the Malayalam word "Sambandham" in its peculiar sense, as used throughout Malabar proper,, Cochin and parts of Trvancore, conveys, the same idea as the word marriage entmologically conveys in the English language, 'viz'. "The union of man and woman as husband and wife". Sambandham is the principal Malayalm word for marriage as Vivaham is in Sanskrit., whatever may be the basis of Sambandham of the Marumakkathayam Nairs, there can be no doubt that the idea which the word conveys to the Malayalee is the same as the Word 'Vivaham'. this generic name Sambandham which in South Malabar between Calicut and in Ponnani, cochin and parts of Travancore, is the only word to denote marriage, includes,

1. Guna Dosham as used in south and North Malabar
2. The Podamuri or its Sanskrit synonym Vastradaranam used in North Malabar.
3. Uvamporuka and Veedaram Kyruka of North Malabar
4. The Kidakora Kalyanam of Palghat and parts of Nedumangad.

The Podamuri, Vastradaranam, Uvamporuka, Veedaram Kyruka & c. are local expressions hardly understood beyond the localities in which they are used, but there would be hardly a Malayalee who would not readily understand what is meant by Sambandham Todunguka. The meaning of this phrase which means 'to marry' is understood throughout Kerala in the same way and there can be no ambiguity or mistake about it.

It is thus found that sambandham is the principal word denoting marriage among Marumakkathayam Nairs. It will also be found, on a close and careful examination of facts, that the principal feature of this Sambandham ceremony all over the Kerala, are in the main, the same. As there are local names denoting marriage, so there may be found local variations in the performance of the ceremony. But the general features are more or less the same. For instance, the examination, prior to

the betrothal, of the horoscope of the bride and the bridegroom to ascertain whether their stars agree astrologically, the appointment of an auspicious day for the celebration of the ceremony, the usual hours at which the ceremony takes place, the presentation of the 'Danon' to the Brahmans, the sumptuous banquet the meeting of the bride and the bridegroom in the central room of the house, the sprinkling of the rice on the heads of the bride and the bridegroom, are features which are invariably found in all well conducted 'Sambandham' in all parts of Kerala alike; but here I would beg to state that I should not be understood as saying that each and every one of the formalities above referred to, are gone thorough at every Sambandham. I would only say that most of them are generally gone through at all "Sambandhams" among respectable Nairs and I would further say that they ought to be gone through at every Sambandham differ from it. Of all the forms of Sambandham I consider the 'Podamuri' from the most solemn and the most fashionable in North Malabar. Of course my description will be borne out by the evidence that is before us.

.....

The freedom to a Marumakkathayam Nair, to dispose of his self acquisition by will, is what all the people of Malabar wish that they should possess. Wills or declarations of

a deceased persons, regarding the distribution of his self-acquired property have always been respected by Nairs and a legal recognition of it by courts will enable us to make sufficient provision for our wives and children.

Calicut

1st July, 1891.

O.CHANDU MENON

Source : Malabar Marriage Commission Report - 1891,
Legislative Department, NAI.

Appendix - II

LIST OF IMPARTIBLE TARAWADS

01. The Zamorin's family consisting of
 - a) Puthiya Kovilakam
 - b) Patinjare Kovilakam
 - c) Kizhakke Kovilakam
02. Chirakkal Kovilakam
03. Nilambur Kovilakam
04. The Kizhakke Kovilakam of Kottayam Raja's family
05. Thekke Kovilakam of Kottayam
06. Patinchare Kovilakam of Kottayam
07. Ayancheri Kovilakam, Purameri
08. Edavalath Kovilakam, Purameri
09. Ayirana Kovilakam in the Walluvanad Raja's family
10. Kadanna Mana Kovilakam of Walluvanad
11. Mandakad Kovilakam of Walluvanad
12. Aripara Kovilakam of Walluvanad

13. Tarawad from which Kuthiravatthath Nair attains sthanam
Pulapatta Amsom
14. Tarawad from Punnathur Raja attains sthanam ,Kotteppadi Amsom
Ponnani
15. Venganad Kovilakam of Kollangode Valia Nambiar
16. The Mayippadi Rajas family of Kasargod taluk
17. The Nileswhar Raja's family of Kasargod Taluk.

Source : Madras Marumakathayam Act 1933, Act No.XXII of 1933
Legislative Department NAI.

Appendix - III

The names of Nambudiris who acted in the play staged at Edakkunni in December 1929. It may be noted that all the roles were enacted by males. Names of the actors and the roles are provided here.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 01. Muthedathu Sankara Narayanan | | |
| Nambudiri | | |
| 02. Pillanezhi Subramaniya Nambudiri | - | Madhavan |
| 03. Manazhi Muthedathu Vasudevan | - | |
| Nambudiri | | |
| 04. Pillanezhi Narayanan Nambudiri | - | Thethi |
| 05. Narikkattiri Parameswaran
Nambudiri | - | Othikkan |
| 06. M.P.Bhattathiripad | - | Vilayoorachan |
| 07. Puliyedathu Nambyathan Nambudiri | - | Thethi's mother |
| 08. Vanjeri Vasudevan Nambudiri | - | Grandmother and
Ayyankar |
| 09. Cheruvallur Ravi Nambudiri | - | |

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 10. Panaykattu Narayanan Nambudiri | - | Kunju |
| 11. Taliyil Raman Nambudiripad | - | Moosamburi |
| 12. Cherupoyilath Krishnan Nambudiri | - | Uzhuthran |
| 13. Perumbalayil Mullapally
Brahmadathan Nambuduiripad | - | Cherunni, Thachu |
| 14. Kummini Parameshwaran Nambudiri | - | Edichakkarappan |
| 15. Nagarath Madhavan Nambudiri | - | Pochu Appan |
| 16. Kurumapally Purushothaman Nambudiri- | | Kardakkunnath
Achan Nambudiri |
| 17. V.T.Bhattathiripad | - | Kondhu.V.M. |
| 18. M.P.Neelakandan Bhattathiripad | - | Eroman |
| 19. Manjapatta Narayanan Bhattathiripad - | | Paru Amma |
| 20. Nenmenimangalath Vasudevan Nambudiri- | | Kunchipennu |
| 21. Mazhavancheri Narayanan Nambudiri | - | R.K |

22. Chovallur Neelakandana Nambudiri - Krishnan Nambiar
23. Kummini Krishnan Nambudiri - Peon
24. Kolathapally Bhavdasan Nambudiri - Pothayappan
-

Source : V.T.Bhattathiripad - Adukkalayil Ninum Arangathekku
Kozhikode, 1929.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

NAMBUDIRIS - TRADITIONAL DRESS

1. A Nambudiri boy during his vedic education



2. A Nambudiri-Home dress



3. A Nambudiri in ritualistic dress



3. Adhyan antarjanam

6. Adyan antarjanam

Home dress



5. Adhyan antarjanam

See Kolothuvechudukkuka



8. Antarjanam widow

7. Asyan antarjanam

Njerinhutukkuka



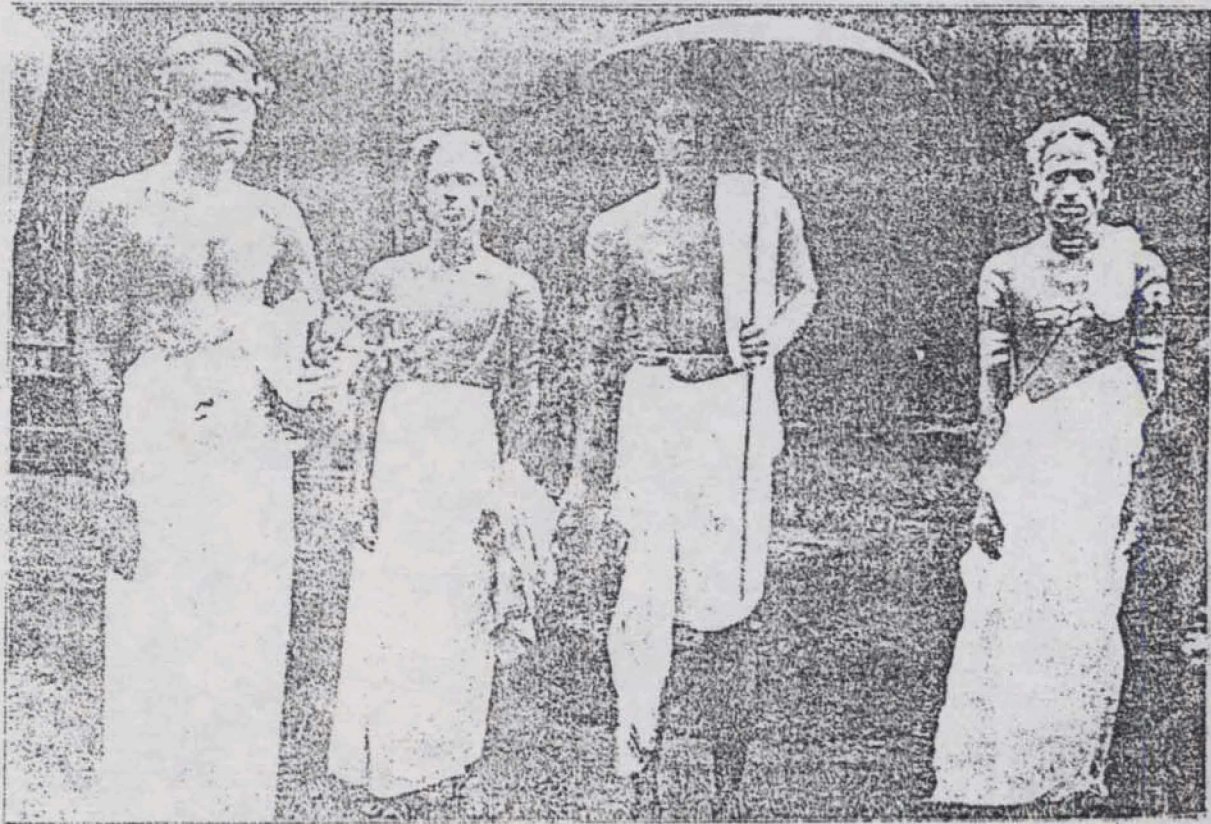
9. Puthappum Kudayum
(Shawl and Umbrella)



10. Antarjanam bride with her maid



11. Nambudiri bridegroom

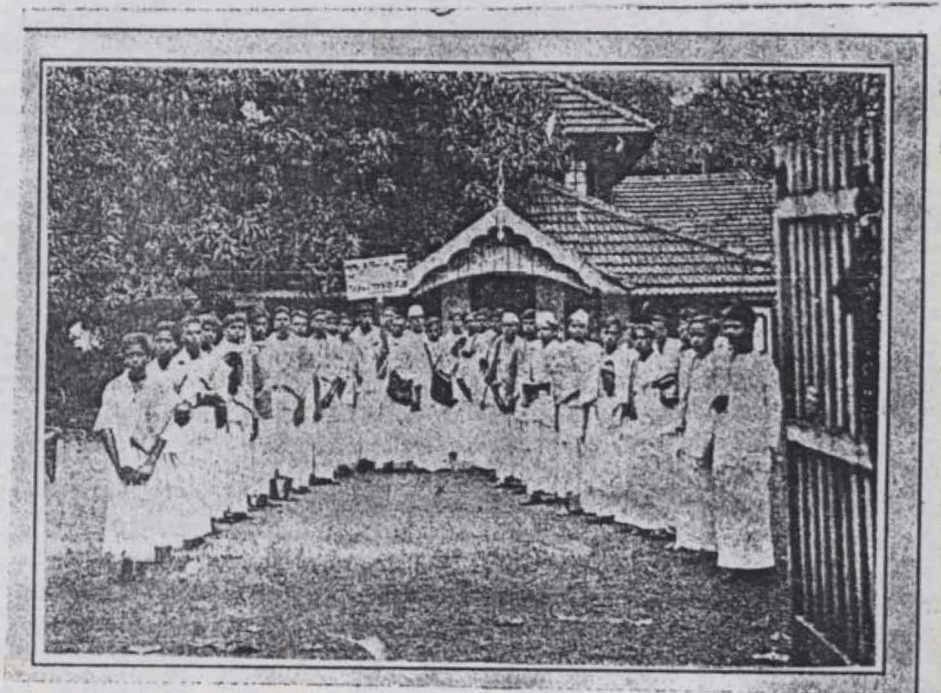


12. Nambudiri bridegroom

CHANGES IN DRESS



13. Arya Pallam, Parvathi Nenmenimangalam and Devaki Narikattiri
Who took initiative to boycott gosha.



14. Participants of Yachana Yatra

All Nambudiris are wearing dhoti,
shirt, and some are wearing caps



15. Vasudevan Nambudiri and Uma antarjanam of Ittiyamparamba
He has a tuft but wears a shirt. She wears a blouse but
has the ear stud called Chirru.



16. Devaki antarjanam wearing sari and blouse
She was the president of Kozhikode taluk
committee for eradication of untouchability

NAIRS DRESS PATTERN

17. Nair girls with big studs and jewels. They have not covered the chest.



18. A Nair girl dressed for sambandham.



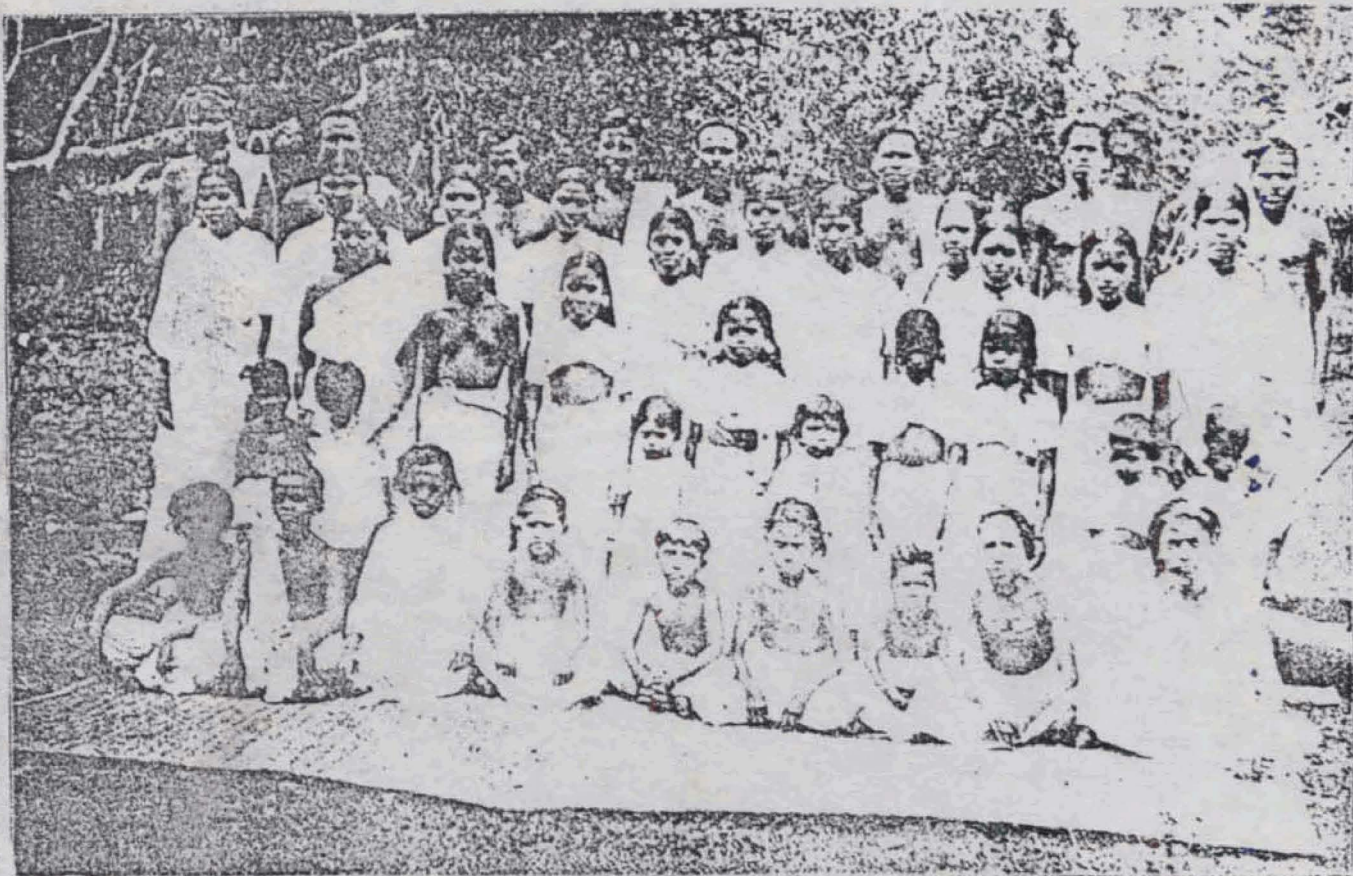
19. A Nair widow of 1920s.



20. Echanattil Lakshmi Amma (standing on left) before marriage with her relatives. Photo taken in 1912.



21. Echanattil Lakshmi Amma after her marriage with Ramar Nair who was Sub-Registrar in Madras Service. He is wearing a coat, tie, cap and has a walking stick. She has covered her chest. Photo taken in 1914.



22. A typical Nair joint family



23. A Nair joint family. Thekkil Kannan Nair, Vakil at Vadakara with his family. He is wearing coat, cap, and has a walking stick. His wife has covered her chest children sitting have not covered their chest. Photo taken in 1913.

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24. K.P.Krishnan Nair from Vadakara who later became the Collector of Tirunelveli district of Madras Presidency during 1930s with his family in 1931. He was later re-employed as R.D.M. of Kozhikode in early 1940s.



25. Anantan Nair with his son Govindan Nair Advocate, Talassery, photo taken 1910. Father has tuft where as the son the trimmed hair style.



26. This painting titled 'There Comes Papa', is by Raja Ravi Varma. The painting is dated 1893 and has strong indications.

NBHH83