

**ADDRESSING THE QUESTION OF TRIBAL LIFE IN
POST - COLONIAL INDIA: THE CASE OF JESUIT
MISSION IN POST- COLONIAL MALABAR**

Thesis

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for the award of the degree,

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

By

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Under the supervision of

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2025


DECLARATION

I, Shiny K. Mathew, do hereby declare that this thesis entitled '**ADDRESSING THE QUESTION OF TRIBAL LIFE IN POST - COLONIAL INDIA: THE CASE OF JESUIT MISSION IN POST-COLONIAL MALABAR**' is a bona fide record of research work done by me under the supervision of Prof.(Dr.) Godwin Samraj D.P, Controller of Examinations, University of Calicut, for the award of the degree of doctor of philosophy in History. I also declare that this thesis or part thereof has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma. The contents of the thesis are undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **ADDRESSING THE QUESTION OF TRIBAL LIFE IN POST - COLONIAL INDIA: THE CASE OF JESUIT MISSION IN POST- COLONIAL MALABAR** submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, is a bona fide work carried out by Shiny K. Mathew, under my guidance and supervision. Neither the dissertation nor any part of it has been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma or title before.

Both the examiners have not recommended any modifications or suggestions and, therefore, the original thesis is resubmitted as such. The soft copy attached is the same as that of the resubmitted copy.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AADI	:	Attapadi Adivasi Development Initiatives
BBC	:	Beach Blossoms Centre
CFR	:	Community Forest Rights
CMS	:	Church Missionary Society
DRDAs	:	District Rural Development Agencies
DSS	:	Sisters of Dinasevna sabha
FFHC	:	Freedom from Hunger Campaign
FRA	:	Forest Rights Act
IRDP	:	Rural Development Programme
JEMAI	:	Jesuit Mission for Adivasi Integration
JESA	:	Jesuits in Social Action
KILA	:	Kerala Institute of Local Administration
LMS	:	London Missionary Society
LSGIs	:	Local Self Government Institutions
MOTA	:	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
NCF	:	National Curriculum Framework
NFSA	:	National Food Security Act
PESA	:	The Panchayat Extension Act

PMRY	:	Prime Minister's Roger Yojana
SCF	:	State Curriculum Framework
SRC	:	Socio-Religious Centre
TSP	:	Tribal Sub-Plan
TUDI	:	Tribal Unity for Development Initiative

ADDRESSING THE QUESTION OF TRIBAL LIFE IN POST – COLONIAL INDIA: THE CASE OF JESUIT MISSION IN POST- COLONIAL MALABAR

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The study investigates the historical and contemporary role of Jesuit missionaries in shaping tribal development in Malabar after Indian independence. It examines how Jesuit interventions among tribal communities in Malabar evolved from their colonial roots and whether they align with post-colonial ideals of participation and self-determination. Drawing upon post-colonial theory, liberation theology, and theory of Cultural Marxism, the research critically analyses the continuities and transformations in Jesuit approaches to education, welfare, and social justice. The study draws upon archival records, Jesuit correspondence, government documents, and field observations from Wayanad, Palakkad, and Kannur. Through these sources, it explores the interaction between missionary initiatives, state policies, and tribal responses. By situating Jesuit engagement within the wider context of post-colonial governance and social change, the study highlights how religious institutions have mediated the relationship between state power and indigenous communities. It ultimately contributes to reinterpreting tribal development in Malabar as a site of negotiation between colonial legacies and post-colonial aspirations. The thesis is organized into four chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion. The introduction gives an overview of the research project and explains the conceptual framework of the study.

The first chapter, *“Evolution of Tribal Life in India: Historical Developments and Policy Interventions,”* traces the transformation of tribal communities from self-sustained pre-colonial societies to their altered circumstances under colonial and post-independence governance. It examines how British administrative and economic policies disrupted traditional tribal systems, resulting in displacement and social marginalization. The chapter further evaluates post-independence welfare measures that, despite aiming at upliftment, often reproduced colonial patterns of control and dependency. Through this analysis, the study situates contemporary tribal challenges within a broader historical continuum of state intervention and structural inequality.

The second chapter, *“Jesuit Legacy in Malabar: From Colonial Roots to Post-Colonial Period,”* traces the historical trajectory of Jesuit missions in Kerala, highlighting their transformation from colonial-era religious conversion efforts to post-independence social and community development initiatives. The chapter also considers how Jesuit missions adapted to shifting socio-political contexts in post-colonial India, negotiating the balance between spiritual objectives and socio-economic interventions.

The third chapter, “*Jesuit Intervention with Tribal Communities in Post-Colonial Malabar*,” focuses on Jesuit programs aimed at empowering tribal populations through education, healthcare, and initiatives fostering self-reliance. It analyzes specific projects such as the Jesuit Mission for Adivasi Integration (JEMAI), TUDI, and AADI, highlighting efforts to preserve tribal cultural heritage while advocating for indigenous rights. The chapter evaluates the effectiveness of these interventions in responding to structural inequalities, external pressures, and historical marginalization of tribal communities.

The fourth chapter, “*Perspectives and Challenges to Jesuits’ Work in Tribal Malabar*,” examines the internal and external obstacles faced by Jesuit missionaries in tribal areas. Challenges include resistance from landowners, tensions within Christian communities, and the difficulties of sustaining tribal identity amid modernization and external development pressures. The chapter further explores how Jesuits continue to promote social justice and community development, negotiating these challenges while striving to maintain participatory and culturally sensitive approaches in their engagement with tribal populations.

The study demonstrates that Jesuit missionaries in post-colonial Malabar have significantly shifted from colonial-era practices of religious conversion and cultural imposition to initiatives focused on social empowerment, education, and the preservation of tribal identity. Their programs, including TUDI and AADI, have promoted community participation, skill development, and ecological restoration, fostering agency and self-reliance among tribal populations. Despite these contributions, challenges such as limited personnel, infrastructural constraints, and cultural and legal barriers continue to affect the sustainability of their work. By situating Jesuit engagement within a post-colonial framework, the study highlights both the transformative potential of their interventions and the enduring influence of historical power structures. The conclusion presents a summary of the study’s key findings and interpretations.

Keywords: Jesuits, Tribal Development, Post-colonial Transformation, Cultural Identity, Social Empowerment.



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**പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ മലബാറിലെ ജസ്യൂട്ട് പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളെ
ആധാരമാക്കി പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ ഇന്ത്യയിലെ
ആദിവാസി ജീവിതത്തെ വിലയിരുത്തൽ**

ഷൈനി കെ. മാത്യു
ഗവേഷക

പ്രൊഫ. (ഡോ) ഗോഡ്വിൻ സാംരാജ്
ഗവേഷണ മാർഗ്ഗദർശി

പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ മലബാറിലെ ആദിവാസി ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പരിവർത്തനത്തിൽ ജസ്യൂട്ട് മിഷനറിമാർ വഹിക്കുന്ന പങ്കിനെ അടയാളപ്പെടുത്തുക എന്നതാണ് ഈ ഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം. പാർശ്വവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട ജനവിഭാഗങ്ങൾക്കിടയിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ ജസ്യൂട്ട് മിഷനറിമാർ കൊളോണിയൽ പ്രവർത്തനശൈലിയിൽ നിന്നും എത്രത്തോളം മാറിയെന്നും, അവരുടെ ഇടപെടലുകൾ പുതിയസാമൂഹിക സന്ദർഭങ്ങളോട് എങ്ങനെ പൊരുത്തപ്പെടുവെന്നും ഈ പഠനം അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നു. പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ, ലിബറൽ തിയോളജി, കൾച്ചറൽ മാർക്സിസം എന്നീ തിയറികളെ ആധാരമാക്കിയാണ് ആദിവാസി മേഖലയിലെ ജസ്യൂട്ട് മിഷനറിമാരുടെ പ്രവർത്തനത്തെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്തത്. ജസ്യൂട്ട് പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളെ പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ ഭരണക്രമത്തിന്റെയും സാമൂഹ്യ പരിവർത്തനങ്ങളുടെയും വിശാലമായ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ നിരീക്ഷിക്കുമ്പോൾ മലബാറിലെ ആദിവാസി വികസന പ്രക്രിയയെ കൊളോണിയൽ പാരമ്പര്യങ്ങളും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യാനന്തര പ്രതീക്ഷയും തമ്മിലുള്ള നിരന്തര സംവാദത്തിന്റെ വേദിയായി പുനർവ്യാഖ്യാനിക്കാൻ പഠനം സഹായിക്കുന്നു.

ഭാരതത്തിലെ ആദിവാസി ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പരിവർത്തനം: ചരിത്രവും നയപരമായ ഇടപെടലും എന്ന ആദ്യ അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ ആദിവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളുടെ സ്വയം പര്യാപ്തമായ പ്രീ കൊളോണിയൽ ജീവിതം, ബ്രിട്ടീഷ് ഭരണനയങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാക്കിയ മാറ്റങ്ങൾ, സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യാനന്തര ക്ഷേമനയങ്ങളുടെ സ്വാധീനം എന്നിവ സംഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ ഇന്ത്യയിൽ നടപ്പിലാക്കിയ ക്ഷേമപദ്ധതികൾ ആദിവാസി ഉന്നമനത്തെ ലക്ഷ്യമിട്ടിരുന്നുവെങ്കിലും, അവ കൊളോണിയൽ കാലത്തെ അധികാരാധിഷ്ഠിതമായ നിയന്ത്രണരീതികൾ തന്നെ പുനരാവർത്തിച്ചതായും ഈ അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

മലബാറിലെ ജസ്യൂട്ട് പാരമ്പര്യം: കൊളോണിയൽ കാലത്ത് നിന്ന് പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ കാലഘട്ടത്തിലേക്ക് എന്ന രണ്ടാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ കൊളോണിയൽ കാലത്തെ മതപരിവർത്തന പ്രവർത്തനത്തിൽനിന്നും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യാനന്തര സാമൂഹ്യവികാസവും പ്രാദേശിക വികസന പദ്ധതികളിലേക്കുള്ള ജസ്യൂട്ട് മിഷനറിമാരുടെ മാറ്റം പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്നു.

പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ മലബാറിലെ ആദിവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളിലേക്കുള്ള ജസ്യൂട്ട് ഇടപെടലുകൾ എന്ന മൂന്നാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, ആരോഗ്യ പരിപാലനം, സ്വയം നിർഭരത്വം തുടങ്ങിയ വിവിധ പരിപാടികളിലൂടെ ആദിവാസികളെ ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്താനുള്ള ജസ്യൂട്ട് പദ്ധതികളെ വിമർശനാത്മകമായി വിലയിരുത്തുന്നു.

നാലാമത്തെ അദ്ധ്യായം മലബാറിലെ ആദിവാസികൾക്കിടയിൽ ജസ്യൂട്ടിന്റെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ: കാഴ്ചപ്പാടും വെല്ലുവിളികളും ആദിവാസി മേഖലയിലുള്ള ജസ്യൂട്ട് മിഷനറിമാരുടെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് നേരിടുന്ന ബാഹ്യവും ആഭ്യന്തരവുമായ വെല്ലുവിളികളെ വിലയിരുത്തുന്നു. ഭ്രൂമകളുടെ പ്രതിരോധം, ആധുനികവൽക്കരണം, വികസന സമ്മർദ്ദങ്ങൾ

എന്നിവ പ്രധാന വെല്ലുവിളികളാണ്. തുടി, ആദി തുടങ്ങിയ പദ്ധതികളിലൂടെ സാമൂഹിക പങ്കാളിത്തം, സാങ്കേതിക വികസനം, പരിസ്ഥിതി പുനരുദ്ധാരം എന്നിവ നേടിയെടുത്തതായും ഈ അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നു. ആദിവാസി വികസന പ്രവർത്തനത്തിലേക്ക് കൂടുതൽ മിഷനറിമാർ കടന്ന് വരാത്തതും, അടിസ്ഥാന സൗകര്യങ്ങളുടെ പരിമിതികളും സാംസ്കാരികവും നിയമപരമായുള്ള തടസ്സങ്ങളും ജസ്യൂട്ട് മിഷനറിമാരുടെ ആദിവാസികൾക്കിടയിലുള്ള പ്രവർത്തനത്തിന്റെ ദീർഘകാല നിലനിൽപ്പിനെ ബാധിക്കുന്നതായി കാണുന്നു. കൊളോണിയൽ പാരമ്പര്യവും സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യാനന്തര പ്രതീക്ഷകളും തമ്മിലുള്ള സങ്കീർണ്ണമായ സന്ധിയിലൂടെയാണ്, ജസ്യൂട്ട് മിഷനറിമാർ ആദിവാസി ജീവിത പാരമ്പര്യത്തോടും സാമൂഹിക സാംസ്കാരിക പ്രതിസന്ധികളോടും സമീപിക്കുന്നത്.

സൂചകപദങ്ങൾ: ജെസ്യൂട്ട്സ്, ആദിവാസി വികസനം, പോസ്റ്റ്കൊളോണിയൽ പരിവർത്തനം, സാംസ്കാരിക ഐഡന്റിറ്റി, സാമൂഹിക ശക്തികരണം.



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Introduction

The shadows of colonial rule still linger over India, subtly shaping its governance, culture, and education, even as the nation strides forward in the 21st century.¹ Nowhere is this more evident than in the policies and approaches toward tribal communities, where development initiatives continue to mirror colonial-era strategies. Despite the promise of independence, tribal populations remain marginalized, with government programs and societal interventions often dictated by external authorities rather than the needs and aspirations of the indigenous people themselves.² The persistence of hierarchical structures, bureaucratic control, and assimilationist policies suggest that colonial legacies have not been fully dismantled but rather repackaged in a post-colonial framework.³

In this context, the role of Jesuit missionaries who had actively contributed to grassroots-level transformation in Malabar during colonial rule, becomes crucial in understanding tribal development in the post-colonial era. Their work extended beyond religious conversion to include education, healthcare, and economic upliftment, often positioning them as mediators between the state and tribal populations. However, this engagement raises significant questions—did Jesuit missions in post-colonial Malabar evolve to support indigenous self-determination, or did they continue to function within the paternalistic structures inherited from the colonial past?

¹ Bipan Chandra, et al., *India After Independence: 1947–2000*, Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 312-345.

² Virginius Xaxa, 'Politics of Language, Religion and Identity: Tribals in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 13, 2005, pp. 1363-1370.

³ Alf Gunvald Nilsen, *Political Modernity in the Postcolonial Himalaya: Towards a Comparative Political Sociology of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 140-151.

The question of tribal life in post-colonial India remains deeply entangled with historical legacies, socio-political structures, and developmental paradigms.⁴ The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted in 2007, affirms the equality of Indigenous peoples while recognizing their distinct identities and rights.⁵

While Africa has the highest overall population of Indigenous peoples, India hosts the largest indigenous population within a single nation-state.⁶ As per the 2011 Census of India, the indigenous (*Adivasi*) population in the country is recorded at 10.42 crore, accounting for 8.6% of the total population. In Kerala, the tribal population stands at 4.85 lakh, constituting 1.45% of the state's overall population. The Adivasis constitute a culturally and socially distinct group characterized by diverse traditions, livelihoods, and languages. They possess extensive indigenous knowledge systems related to agriculture, natural resource management, climate adaptation, food practices, and biodiversity conservation. Sociologist D.N. Majumdar stated that “A tribe is a collective of families bearing a common name, residing in the same geographical area, sharing a common language and culture, and adhering to tribal customs in matters of marriage, occupation, and social norms.”⁷ This definition highlights the cohesive nature of tribal societies, emphasizing their distinct cultural identity and social organization.⁸

The concept of the ‘Adivasi’ does not conform to a fixed definition. In the Indian context, the classification of Adivasis is primarily a political-administrative construct rather than an intrinsic social identity. According to Article 342 of the Indian Constitution, those communities listed under the Scheduled Tribes category are

⁴ Vinita Damodaran, ‘Colonial Constructions of Tribe in India: The Case of Chotanagpur’, *Indian Historical Review*, vol. 33, 2006, pp. 44–75.

⁵ T.C. James, *International discussion on Indigenous people and India*, RIS, New Delhi, January 2022, pp.38-42.

⁶ V.M Shah, ‘Tribals and cooperatives’, *Kurukshetra*, Vol. 34, 1986, p.4.

⁷ D. N. Majumdar, *Races and cultures of India* (5th ed.). Asia Publishing House. 1958, p.358.

⁸ R.N. Sharma, *Society in India*, Surjeet publications, New Delhi, 1984, p.168.

recognized as Adivasis. Historically, indigenous communities in India have been identified by various terms such as *Adhimavasi*, *Vanavasi*, and *Kadar*. However, the widespread adoption of the term *tribes* or *tribal people* to refer to these groups is largely a colonial legacy. Anthropologist George Pfeffer has highlighted that the identification of tribal communities as ‘tribes’ in India is not merely an organic social classification but rather a continuation of colonial administrative structures.⁹ This legacy persists in post-colonial governance, where the categorization and recognition of Adivasi communities remain deeply embedded in state policies and legal frameworks.¹⁰ It is widely believed that tribal communities in India were originally indigenous inhabitants who were marginalized through socio-political processes. This perspective is reinforced by historical observations, such as those of William Logan regarding the Adivasis of Kerala. Logan asserted that Adivasis were the original settlers of the land and were forcibly displaced into forests due to the encroachment of external communities. His account suggests that the expansion of dominant social groups led to the exclusion and marginalization of tribal populations, pushing them to the peripheries of society. This interpretation aligns with broader theories of tribal displacement and marginalization in colonial and post-colonial India.¹¹

The marginalization of tribal communities in India was a direct consequence of the British colonial policy of *Divide and Rule*, which ensured the seamless continuation of their administration without resistance. This strategy not only sidelined Adivasis politically and socially but also alienated them from other sections of society. The British institutionalized this exclusion through legal frameworks such as the 1874 Scheduled Districts Act, the 1919 Government of India Act, and the 1935

⁹ Georg Pfeffer, ‘Structure and Process in Tribal India: An Introduction’, *Contemporary Society: Tribal Studies*, Vol.1, 1997, pp. 1–14.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Witsoe, ‘Book Review: Alf Gunvald Nilsen. 2018. Adivasis and the State: Subalternity and Citizenship in India’s Bhil Heartland’. *Journal of South Asian Development*, vol. 16, no. 1, Apr. 2021, pp. 152–55.

¹¹ William Logan, *Malabar Manuel*, vol.1, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1995, (First published 1887), p.113, p.539.

Government of India Act. These legislative measures were instrumental in shaping the systemic isolation and socio-political subjugation of tribal communities.

British governance over tribal groups was characterized by isolation and exclusion, with colonial authorities enforcing policies without adequate knowledge of indigenous social structures.¹² Various administrative regulations further deepened the segregation of Adivasis, reinforcing their peripheral status. The British implemented governance models that classified and controlled tribal populations, perpetuating their marginalization and reinforcing colonial dominance over indigenous communities.¹³

In the post-independence era, various governance frameworks, state policies, and institutions have actively addressed the issues faced by Adivasi communities in India.¹⁴ Before independence, Adivasis lived in forests, hills, and plains, largely excluded from the mainstream socio-economic and political structures. Their status in princely states and colonial territories was often one of marginalization and neglect. However, after independence, recognizing that tribal backwardness contradicted the ideals of a free and just society, the Indian government initiated developmental policies aimed at integrating Adivasis into the mainstream.

The Indian Constitution incorporates numerous provisions to safeguard and promote the welfare of Scheduled Tribes. One of the most significant is Article 46, which is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy. It states: “The State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, particularly the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

¹² Virginius Xaxa, *State, Society, and Tribes: Issues in Post-colonial India*. Pearson Education India, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 49-67.

¹³ Raid Khan, et al., ‘British colonialism and the indirect rule: a hierarchical administrative structure to control the unruly tribes’, *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2021, pp. 1366–72.

¹⁴ Virginius Xaxa, *op.cit.*, pp. 63-67.

This constitutional directive highlights the government's commitment to uplifting Adivasis, ensuring their access to education, economic opportunities, and protection from social injustices. Through affirmative action, legal protections, and developmental initiatives, the Indian state has sought to reduce the historical exclusion of tribal communities and integrate them into the broader social structure. However, even after independence, the persistence of social hierarchies and systemic discrimination continues to oppress Adivasi communities in India. In both national and Kerala-specific political and economic spheres, Adivasis remain largely excluded from decision-making and resource distribution. Despite constitutional safeguards, their socio-economic marginalization remains a pressing issue.

The “Kerala’s development model,” widely recognized as a global benchmark, has not significantly improved the conditions of Adivasi communities.¹⁵ Instead of ensuring their upliftment, it has led to further marginalization, deprivation, and food insecurity among them. A study conducted by the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) in 2011 highlights the stark realities faced by Adivasis in Kerala. According to the study:

- 55% of Adivasis live in dilapidated houses, lacking even basic shelter.
 - The majority of Adivasi families do not have access to essential amenities required for daily sustenance.
 - Healthcare facilities remain largely inaccessible to Adivasi settlements, deepening health disparities. The failure to find a sustainable solution to Adivasi issues stems from the two conflicting development paradigms that dominate discourse on Adivasi development.
1. Preserving Adivasis in their traditional way of life
 2. Integrating Adivasis completely into the mainstream modern development model¹⁶

¹⁵ K.P. Kannan & N. Vijayamohan Pillai, ‘Development as a right to freedom: An interpretation of the ‘Kerala Model’, Centre for Development Studies, Trivendrum *Working Papers 361*, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, India, 2004, p.34.

¹⁶ Abid Firdousi, *Keezhalar neridunna asthithwaparamaya chodhyangal* (mal.), Haritha Publications, Trissur, 2009, pp. 18-41.

Both perspectives have advantages and limitations.

The first approach argues that Adivasis should be allowed to continue their ancestral lifestyle, maintaining their traditional settlements, economic systems, and cultural heritage. However, this model faces a practical limitation—the disintegration of traditional livelihoods due to land alienation, deforestation, and socio-economic changes. Attempts to restore past systems often fail because many of the resources and structures that sustained traditional life have already been eroded. The second approach seeks to fully assimilate Adivasis into mainstream society, advocating for their participation in modern economic and social systems. However, this perspective overlooks the significance of their cultural identity and indigenous knowledge systems. A one-sided and homogenizing development strategy disregards Adivasi autonomy, forcing them into unfamiliar socio-economic structures without addressing their unique historical and cultural contexts. Within this complex landscape, religious missions have played a significant role in shaping Adivasi society. The present study, *Addressing the Question of Tribal Life in Post-Colonial India: The Case of Jesuit Mission in Post-Colonial Malabar*, examines the interventions of Jesuit missionaries among Adivasi communities in Malabar, focusing on their role in education, social reform, and economic transformation. By critically analyzing the contributions and limitations of the Jesuit mission, this study seeks to place their efforts within the broader context of post-colonial tribal policies, assessing their impact on Adivasi identity, agency, and socio-political inclusion.

Statement of the Research Problem

The tribal communities of Malabar have faced persistent socio-economic and cultural challenges in the post-colonial period, despite various governmental policies and missionary interventions. While the Government of India and Kerala have implemented initiatives such as the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), Forest Rights Act (2006), The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (1989), and various rehabilitation and resettlement schemes, their effectiveness in addressing deep-rooted issues of marginalization, land alienation, and socio-economic exclusion remains debatable. These policies, though aimed at tribal welfare, often reflect

bureaucratic hurdles and structural limitations, where tribal voices are not fully integrated into decision-making. Governments and institutions continue to control tribal communities through bureaucratic systems, enforce land policies shaped by colonial rule, and exploit natural resources for economic gain. These actions keep tribal communities marginalized and highlight the lasting impact of post-colonial structures.

Within this context, Jesuit missionaries have played a significant role in shaping the lives of tribal people by introducing education, healthcare, and social welfare programs. Their efforts have provided crucial support to tribal communities, particularly in areas where state intervention has been inadequate. Through literacy programs, skill development initiatives, and advocacy for social justice, Jesuit missions have contributed to the upliftment of tribal people, facilitating access to opportunities that were previously beyond their reach. However, their work has also faced challenges, including resistance from dominant landowning groups, limited resources, and internal debates within the Christian community over the most effective strategies for tribal development.

This research seeks to critically examine the role of Jesuit missions in post-colonial Malabar, analyzing their contributions to tribal development while assessing the challenges they face in navigating resistance from local power structures and socio-political factors. Furthermore, it aims to explore how tribal communities perceive and respond to missionary interventions, particularly in light of their historical experiences with state-led assimilation policies, displacement due to development projects, and ongoing struggles for land rights. By adopting a post-colonial perspective, this study will evaluate how Jesuit efforts have facilitated social justice, cultural preservation, and economic upliftment, contributing to the broader discourse on tribal policies, empowerment, and sustainable development in post-colonial Malabar.

Terminological Explanation

Post –Colonialism

Post-colonialism examines the lasting effects of colonial rule on formerly colonized societies, focusing on identity, resistance, and the persistence of colonial structures. As Robert J.C. Young states, "Post-Colonialism is not just a condition 'after' colonialism, but a continuing engagement with colonial pasts and their lingering effects on the present."¹⁷ In India, post-colonial policies and institutions often retain colonial characteristics, shaping governance, economy, and social structures even after independence.

Mission

A mission is an organized effort to achieve a specific goal, often in religious, educational, or social contexts. Religious missions are commonly associated with spreading faith, establishing institutions, and engaging in humanitarian work. Historically, Christian missions have played a key role in education, healthcare, and cultural transformation, particularly among indigenous and marginalized communities.¹⁸

Missionary

A missionary is an individual who travels to spread religious beliefs and engage in social service. Christian missionaries in India established schools, hospitals, and churches, significantly influencing local cultures and traditions. While missionaries contributed to education and healthcare, they were also criticized for undermining indigenous religions and cultural identities. As Andrew F. Walls notes, "Missionary movements, while bringing new knowledge and social change, have

¹⁷ Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2003, p.30.

¹⁸ Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester 2009, p.21.

often been knotted with colonial interests, raising questions about cultural imposition and identity”.¹⁹

Kerala

Kerala is a Southern Indian state known for its high literacy rates, social development, and unique cultural heritage.²⁰ Historically, Kerala was a hub of trade and cultural exchange, influenced by Arab, Chinese, and European merchants. The state is also home to diverse Adivasi communities, whose traditional livelihoods have been impacted by land alienation and socio-economic marginalization. Jesuit missionaries played a significant role in Kerala’s tribal regions, establishing educational institutions and social programs that aimed to integrate Adivasis into mainstream society while also influencing their cultural and religious practices

Malabar

Malabar is a historical and geographical term referring to the northern region of present-day Kerala, India. According to William Logan, the word *Malabar* originates from a combination of the Dravidian word *Mala* (mountain) and the Persian/Arabic word *Barr* (country or continent) signifying a land of hills.²¹ It has been widely used in historical texts, including colonial records, to describe the coastal and inland territories. Malabar was historically significant due to its flourishing spice trade, attracting merchants from Arabia, China, and Europe. It was ruled by powerful dynasties such as the Cheras and later the Zamorins of Calicut before becoming a key region under British colonial administration as part of the Madras Presidency.²² The region played a crucial role in anti-colonial struggles, including the Malabar Rebellion of 1921.

¹⁹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1996, p.17.

²⁰ S.N. Sadasivan, *A social history of India. India*, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2000, p.29.

²¹ William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.1.

²² K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *The Zamorins of Calicut: From the Earliest Times Down to A.D. 1806*. Calicut University, 1999, p.44.

Culturally, Malabar has been shaped by Hindu, Muslim, and Christian influences, contributing to its diverse traditions, architecture, and social practices.²³ Jesuit missionaries were instrumental in establishing educational institutions and social reform movements in the region, particularly among marginalized communities, including Adivasis.²⁴ Their interventions in education, healthcare, and religious conversion left a lasting impact on Malabar's socio-cultural landscape. The term *Malabar* continues to be used to refer to the northern region of Kerala, covering districts like Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram, and Palakkad. It is frequently associated with tourism and business branding, as seen in names like *Malabar Tourism* and *Malabar Gold & Diamonds*. Administratively, the term appears in discussions on regional development and historical disparities within Kerala. Additionally, in academic and historical studies, *Malabar* remains significant for its role in colonial history, trade, Jesuit missions, and the socio-cultural evolution of the region.

Significance of the study

The role of Christian missionaries in post-colonial Malabar, particularly among tribal and marginalized communities, has been a significant aspect of social transformation. Missionaries adhered to the principle of maintaining an egalitarian society, engaging with communities while upholding the belief in equality. Their contributions to education, healthcare, and social reform played a crucial role in shaping the lives of the underprivileged.

India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, recognized the importance of missionary efforts in tribal welfare. In his speech at the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Areas Conference in 1952, he observed:

²³ M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala: Brahmin Oligarchy and Ritual Monarchy in South India*. CosmoBooks, Trissur, 1996 (2nd ed.), p. 26.

²⁴ Dominic Ferroli, *Jesuits in Malabar*, Bangalore Press, 1939, p.51.

The Christian missionaries went to various tribal areas and spent practically all their lives there... I don't find many instances of the people from the plains going to tribal areas... Missionaries did very good work there, and I am full of praise.²⁵

This acknowledgment highlights the dedication of missionaries, especially in remote regions like Malabar, where government and local efforts often fell short. In post-colonial Malabar, missionary initiatives expanded to address the socio-economic challenges that persisted despite India's independence. Their role extended beyond education and healthcare, encompassing empowerment programs that sought to uplift tribal and lower-caste communities in a rapidly changing socio-political landscape.

The significance of this study lies in its examination of the Jesuit missionaries' influence in Post-Colonial Malabar, assessing their contributions to literacy, healthcare, and social mobility among marginalized groups. By analyzing historical records and contemporary narratives, this research will provide insights into how missionary activities intersected with local cultures, caste structures, and state policies in the Post-Colonial period. Additionally, it will critically engage with the debates surrounding cultural assimilation, religious conversion, and the long-term impact of missionary interventions on indigenous identities. This study is essential for understanding the enduring legacy of Christian missionary work in post-colonial Malabar and its implications for present-day discussions on social justice, education, and tribal welfare. It will contribute to broader academic discussions on the role of religious institutions in post-colonial India and their complex relationship with marginalized communities.

Jesuit missionaries, who have always stood for the upliftment of marginalized communities, played a continuous role in addressing social issues in Kerala during the colonial period, particularly in Malabar.²⁶ Many Jesuit missionaries dedicated themselves tirelessly to improving the dire living conditions of the lower castes in

²⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Tribal Folk. The Adivasis, The Adivasis*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting(ed.), Government of India,1960, p.4.

²⁶ Joseph Thekkedath, S.J., *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, Bangalore: Theological Publications, 1982, p.79.

Malabar, whose socio-economic status had been severely impacted by caste-based discrimination. For instance, Lenus Maria ZucholSJ, affectionately called *PavangaludeAchen*(Father of the poor)actively worked in North Malabar, focusing his efforts on uplifting the oppressed communities and improving their quality of life.²⁷ While Jesuit missionaries addressed Adivasi issues in other parts of India, in Kerala, they primarily raised their voices for the marginalized castes within Hinduism, such as the Pulaya/Harijan communities, as well as groups like fisherfolk.²⁸ This was perhaps because they realized that these communities required more immediate attention than the Adivasi regions in Kerala.

During the colonial period, the authorities implemented various forest laws, such as those in 1870 and 1893, which displaced Adivasis from their traditional forest lands and rendered them landless. Land and the surrounding environment were fundamental to their way of life. Additionally, during the famine caused by World War II, people from Travancore were resettled in Adivasi-inhabited areas such as Idukki, Wayanad, and Attappadi. This large-scale migration created yet another threat to the traditional Adivasi way of life. In 1947, the tribal population in Attappadi accounted for 98% of the total population. However, by 2001, this number had drastically declined to 31%, and as per the 2011 census, the tribal population further reduced to around 27%.²⁹ This sharp decline is primarily attributed to the large-scale migration and settlement of non-tribal communities into the region. The increasing presence of non-tribal populations in this tribal belt has significantly disrupted the social, cultural, and economic lives of the indigenous communities.³⁰

The systematic settlement of non-tribal groups in tribal areas has created an unprecedented crisis, leading to the loss of traditional livelihoods and cultural

²⁷ Isaac Pilathara, *pavangaludezucholachen*(mal.), Bethel publications, Kannur, 2014, p.17.

²⁸ *Rev. Fr. Cedric Prakash - Mangalorean Star*, Mangalorean.com, <https://www.mangalorean.com/rev-fr-cedric-prakash-mangalorean-star>.

²⁹ Government of Kerala, *Tribal Population Statistics – Census 2011*, Scheduled Tribes Development Department.

³⁰ P.R.G. Mathur, *Tribal Situation in Kerala*, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, 1977, pp.56-62.

practices among the tribal population. Additionally, various development projects implemented in the region have further marginalized these communities. For instance, in Sholayar, Peringalkuthu, and Karappuzha, hydroelectric projects and dam constructions were carried out as part of developmental initiatives. While these projects were intended to promote economic growth and energy production, they resulted in the displacement of tribal communities from their ancestral lands.

In Sholayar, the construction of the Sholayar Dam disrupted the lives of tribal communities, forcing them to relocate and causing the loss of their traditional agricultural and forest-based livelihoods.³¹ Similarly, the Peringalkuthu Dam project, aimed at irrigation and hydroelectric power generation, led to the displacement of tribal families and the inundation of their lands.³² In Karappuzha, the Karappuzha Dam project, designed for irrigation purposes, also resulted in the displacement of tribal populations and the loss of their access to natural resources.³³

These development projects, while contributing to regional infrastructure and economic growth, have had severe consequences for the tribal communities. The displacement caused by these projects has not only deprived them of their land and resources but has also led to the erosion of their cultural identity and social cohesion. The lack of adequate rehabilitation measures and compensation has further exacerbated their plight, leaving many tribal families in poverty and vulnerability.

The 2011 census data highlights the continued decline in the tribal population, underscoring the urgent need for inclusive and sustainable development policies that

³¹ The Sholayar Dam is part of the Parambikulam-Aliyar Project (PAP), a multi-basin irrigation and hydroelectric project spanning Kerala and Tamil Nadu, aimed at harnessing water from the Chalakudy River for power generation and irrigation.

³² The Peringalkuthu Dam is located on the Chalakudy River in the Thrissur district of Kerala, within the Western Ghats. It was constructed primarily for hydroelectric power generation and irrigation, contributing to Kerala's electricity supply while also supporting agricultural activities in the region.

³³ The Karappuzha Dam is located on the Karappuzha River, a tributary of the Kabini River, in Wayanad district, Kerala. Built primarily for irrigation purposes, the dam supports agricultural activities in the region but also led to the displacement of tribal communities, affecting their access to traditional forest resources and livelihoods.

prioritize the rights and well-being of indigenous communities. It is crucial to ensure that development projects are carried out in consultation with tribal populations, respecting their land rights and cultural heritage, to prevent further marginalization and promote equitable growth.

In independent India, the implementation of various social reform measures and the enforcement of affirmative action policies have significantly improved the social status of Scheduled Castes. However, tribal areas continue to lag behind in terms of development. This disparity has drawn the attention of Jesuit missionaries in Kerala, who have actively entered tribal regions to address these issues. Alongside other tribal development initiatives, the Jesuit Tribal Development Programme has emerged as a prominent effort. Jesuit-led organizations such as TUDI and AADI in Wayanad and Palakkad have been implementing tribal development projects for years under their initiatives. However, the activities of Jesuit missionaries in tribal areas have also faced sharp criticism.

JaithirthRao, for instance, has argued that Jesuit missionaries are driven by a form of "*cultural Marxism*" under the guise of liberation theology.³⁴ According to him, their goal is to create unrest in Indian society, turn tribal communities against the majority, and ultimately undermine Hindu society. Another critique is that instead of empowering tribal communities, Jesuit missionaries act as agents of non-tribal interests, ultimately disempowering tribal populations.³⁵

While such criticisms are often directed at Christian missionaries in general, there is a need for a detailed and objective study of the tribal development programs being carried out by Jesuit missionaries in Malabar, the region with the highest tribal population in Kerala. Although extensive research has been conducted on the colonial and post-colonial activities of Jesuit missionaries in Kerala, there is a lack of in-depth

³⁴ JaithirthRao, *Marxist Jesuits Do Not Have Tribal Welfare at Heart*, BharataBharati, 19th July, 2021, <https://bharatabharati.in/2021/07/19/marxist-jesuits-do-not-have-tribal-welfare-at-heart-jaithirth-rao/>

³⁵ *Jesuit Missions among the Guaraní*, Wikipedia,

studies on their work in tribal areas. This gap in research needs to be addressed to better understand the impact and implications of their initiatives.

Area of Study

This study focuses on Post-Colonial Malabar, examining the involvement of Jesuit missionaries in the tribal regions of Malabar. Malabar, stretching from Kasaragod in the north to Palakkad in the south, was historically a British-administered territory, distinct from the princely states of Travancore and Cochin. During the colonial period, Kerala was politically divided into these three regions—Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar. However, in 1956, they were unified to form the present state of Kerala. Today, the term "Malabar" is no longer used in Kerala's political or administrative framework but remains significant as a cultural and historical identity.

In colonial Malabar, the Jesuits played a crucial role in shaping the socio-religious landscape. Their contributions extended beyond religious activities, as they actively engaged in education, healthcare, and social welfare. They established schools, hospitals, and orphanages, addressing critical societal needs and providing essential support to Dalit communities, promoting social upliftment and inclusion. These multifaceted efforts had a lasting impact on Malabar's social structure.

The tribal communities of colonial Malabar, residing in remote villages and forested regions, maintained a distinct way of life but faced exploitation, displacement, and discrimination under colonial rule. With the end of colonialism, Malabar underwent significant transformations, altering the socio-economic conditions of tribal life. In the post-colonial period, Jesuit-led tribal development programs became an essential aspect of Malabar's transformation, particularly in its tribal-dominated areas. The Jesuits focused on sustainable development, empowerment, and the preservation of indigenous knowledge and culture. By collaborating with local communities and advocating for tribal rights, they played a crucial role in safeguarding tribal welfare and helping them adapt to modern challenges.

This research is confined to the period between 1947 and 2023 because it marks 75 years of India's independence, providing a significant timeframe to assess the impact and continuity of Jesuit involvement in the tribal regions of Malabar.

Hypothesis

The study puts forward that post-independence tribal policies in India, including those implemented in Malabar, largely retained the colonial framework of governance, emphasizing administrative control and welfare measures rather than fostering genuine empowerment and self-determination among tribal communities. While the Indian state continued to adopt policies reminiscent of colonial rule—offering superficial developmental initiatives without addressing structural inequalities—the Jesuit missionaries working among Adivasis underwent a significant ideological transformation. Initially following inculturative strategies that sought to blend Christian teachings with indigenous traditions, the Jesuits in post-colonial Malabar transitioned towards a model of cultural symbiosis and interreligious engagement. This shift reflected a deeper commitment to social justice, inclusivity, and holistic development rather than mere religious conversion. By critically analyzing these contrasting approaches, the study seeks to assess whether the Jesuits' evolving mission strategies provided a more effective and participatory framework for tribal upliftment compared to the state's policy interventions.

Aim

The aim of this research is to analyze the role and involvement of Jesuit missionaries in the tribal life of Malabar from a post-colonial perspective, exploring their impact, challenges, and interactions with tribal communities

Objectives

1. To analyze the policies and initiatives of the Government of India and Kerala in addressing tribal life in the Post-Colonial Period.
2. To examine the role of Jesuit missionaries in the social development of tribal communities in Post-Colonial Malabar.

3. To assess the influence of Jesuit missionary activities on the cultural traditions and economic conditions of tribal communities in Malabar.
4. To investigate the tribal perception of Jesuit missionary interventions in their communities.
5. To identify the key challenges faced by Jesuit missionaries in engaging with tribal communities

Theoretical Approaches

This study relies on multiple theoretical approaches to understand the impact of Jesuit missionary activities on tribal communities in Malabar. The Liberation Theology approach as proposed by Gustavo Gutiérrez, are considered in this study.³⁶ He asserts that Christianity should not merely focus on spiritual salvation but should actively fight against social injustices and oppression. Gutiérrez believes that missionaries should prioritize the empowerment of marginalized groups, advocating for economic equality and political rights. In the context of Malabar, Jesuit missionaries adopted this approach by engaging in tribal welfare, land rights activism, and community development rather than solely focusing on religious conversion.

The Inculturation Theory, developed within Catholic missiology, particularly by Pedro Arrupe, is also relevant to this study.³⁷ Arrupe defines inculturation as the process by which Christianity takes root in a particular culture while respecting and integrating local traditions. It emphasizes a two-way interaction where Christian faith is expressed in indigenous forms rather than imposed externally. This theory helps explain the shift in Jesuit missionary approaches in post-colonial Malabar, where earlier strategies of direct conversion gave way to cultural symbiosis, allowing tribal

³⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, Orbis Books, New York, 1988, pp.112-163.

³⁷ Vivencio O Ballano, 'Why Is Inculturation in Catholic Theology Difficult to Operationalize?', *Missiology an International Review*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2024, pp. 279–91.

customs, languages, and social structures to be preserved alongside Christian teachings.

The Acculturation Theory, originally formulated by Melville J. Herskovits, is also used in this study.³⁸ Herskovits describes acculturation as the process of cultural exchange that occurs when two societies come into continuous contact, leading to changes in both. This theory is crucial in analyzing how Jesuit missionaries in Malabar influenced tribal communities while also adapting their own practices in response to local customs. Unlike inculturation, which focuses on religious integration, acculturation encompasses broader socio-cultural transformations, including shifts in language, dress, rituals, and social norms among both missionaries and the tribal people they engaged with.

The theory of Cultural Marxism, associated with Antonio Gramsci and later developed by the Frankfurt School, provides a critical lens for analyzing the role of missionaries among marginalized communities, including tribal groups in post-colonial Malabar.³⁹ Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony suggests that dominant classes maintain power not only through economic means but also by controlling cultural and ideological institutions such as religion and education. Early Christian missionary activities, including those of the Jesuits, often aligned with colonial interests, subtly reinforcing European cultural superiority while claiming to uplift indigenous communities. This process contributed to the displacement of traditional tribal structures, integrating marginalized groups into a colonial socio-economic framework. However, post-independence Jesuit missions in Malabar evolved from a colonial conversion model to one that embraced cultural symbiosis and interreligious dialogue, reflecting a shift from hegemonic control to counter-hegemony. The Frankfurt School theorists, such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, argue that

³⁸ George P Murdock, 'Man and His Works: The Science of Cultural Anthropology Melville J. Herskovits, New York: Alfred a. Knopf, 1948. *Science*, vol. 108, no. 2814, p. 636.

³⁹ Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci. United Kingdom, International Publishers, 1992(first edition 1971). Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*. University of California Press, Berkeley,1996, p.13.

culture is a site of ideological struggle where dominant groups impose their worldview while oppressed groups resist through their own cultural expressions. In this context, post-colonial Jesuit missions redefined their role by incorporating local languages, folklore, and socio-political concerns into their mission work, aligning with tribal aspirations rather than suppressing them. This shift positioned Jesuit missionaries as agents of cultural mediation and resistance, countering both post-colonial state policies and capitalist forces that continued to marginalize tribal populations. Through this Cultural Marxist perspective, the Jesuit transition from an inculturative approach to an interreligious and culturally integrated model can be understood as a response to tribal resistance against both state oppression and capitalist encroachments on their traditional way of life.

The Post-Colonial Theory proposed by Edward Said and later expanded by scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha, critiques how colonial structures persist in post-independence governance.⁴⁰ It argues that tribal policies in India continue to reflect colonial attitudes by enforcing top-down development models rather than recognizing indigenous agency.

The Subaltern Studies Theory developed by Ranajit Guha and the Subaltern Studies Group, focuses on marginalized groups who have been historically excluded from mainstream narratives. It argues that tribal communities in India have been represented through elite perspectives rather than their own voices.⁴¹

Contributions of Christian Missionaries

Christian missionaries have made significant contributions in various fields such as history, research, education, health, and social activities in India. Their efforts have been commendable in bringing about social reform in both India and Kerala. They played a vital role in addressing social injustices, inequalities, and backwardness, and their contributions have been instrumental in uplifting society and

⁴⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, New York, 1978, p.325.

⁴¹ Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*. Oxford University Press, 1982, p.235.

transforming the prevailing conditions. The work of the missionaries in these areas is highly praiseworthy.(Appendix-1)

Healthcare: The contributions of missionaries to the healthcare sector of the state are noteworthy. During earlier times, Christian missionaries were the primary providers of medicine for diseases like cholera, malaria, smallpox, and leprosy. It was the Christian missionaries who introduced homeopathic treatment methods in India. Jesuit missionary Fr. Taffarel⁴² popularized homeopathic treatment for various diseases among the Dalit and Muslim communities in Northern Malabar. This treatment method was known as *Dechanes* in the local language.

From the colonial period itself, Christian missionaries worked for the liberation of marginalized communities. Slavery was one of the gravest evils that denied human dignity. Until the early 19th century, Kerala had a deeply unjust social system where the privileged upper castes treated the lower castes as mere commodities, buying and selling them like animals.

In both Cochin and Travancore, Christian missionaries played a crucial role in fighting against slave trade. Due to their strong campaigns, the Travancore government abolished slavery on September 15, 1853. Even earlier, in 1847, missionaries such as Charles Smith, Charles Mault, Henry Baker, and Samuel Peter submitted a petition to the Travancore Maharaja demanding an end to slavery. Following this, in 1854, the Cochin Maharaja also issued an order completely banning the slave trade. Despite their significant contributions to social reforms across India, Christian missionaries continue to face criticism. Critics argue that their social interventions were primarily aimed at extending British rule and expanding Christianity in India, with the most common accusation being that they use social

⁴² In the autobiographical work "*Jottings of a Poor Missionary*", Fr. Taffarel describes his simple lifestyle, including his use of a *kui* (a traditional umbrella made of palm leaves) and *vasthradaranam* (clothing). This reflects his humility and commitment to living a life of simplicity and service, in line with his missionary work among the marginalized communities in Malabar. His writings provide a glimpse into his dedication to serving the poor and his efforts to integrate into the local culture while carrying out his mission (Appendix-2).

service as a means of religious conversion. However, an important question remains: if conversion is their sole motive, why are marginalized communities, including Adivasis and other socially backward groups, attracted to their work? David Martin opined, "Christian missionaries offered lower-class people a sense of community and belonging. They provided a supportive environment where individuals felt valued and accepted."⁴³

Rodney Stark commented, "The poor were more susceptible to conversion because they were more likely to experience desperation and hopelessness. Missionaries offered them a sense of hope and a promise of a better life."⁴⁴ The majority of people converted to Christianity to escape the caste system. In Kannur district, Dalit communities in areas like Mattol, Pazhayangadi, and Madayi embraced Christianity. However, Syrian Christians, who identified themselves as upper-caste Christians, were not willing to accept Dalit Christians. It was Jesuit missionary Joseph Taffreal who found a solution through the Chirakkal Mission.

Actually, this is a debatable topic. According to Frederick Down, Adivasis are drawn to the work of Christian missionaries because it helps preserve their tribal identity. There is no doubt that religious conversions took place in India during the colonial period. The mass conversion of the Paraiyar and Pallar communities in Tamil Nadu during the 18th and 19th centuries is a well-documented fact.⁴⁵ C.V. Chakkunny argues that conversions to Christianity in Kerala was not merely the result of coercive or deceptive tactics by European missionaries. Instead, he asserts that many people in Kerala converted to Christianity because they were attracted to its egalitarian message and emphasis on social justice.

Education: The role of Christian missionaries in the field of education, particularly in Kerala and among tribal communities, has been transformative and far-reaching.

⁴³ David Martin, *Conversion and Christian Missionaries*, Wiley Blackwell, United Kingdom, 1990, p.121.

⁴⁴ Rodney Stark, *The sociology of Religion*, Routledge, United Kingdom, 1983, p.56.

⁴⁵ Arvind –Pal S mandair, 'The politics of conversion: The Paraiyar Movement in colonial Tamil Nadu', *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol 47, 1988, p.8.

Historically, Kerala was a region marked by social inequalities, including caste-based discrimination and limited access to education. However, the arrival of Christian missionaries brought about an educational revolution that significantly contributed to the cultural and social upliftment of the region. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, missionaries established numerous schools, making education accessible to marginalized communities. For instance, during the era of Sir C.P. RamaswamyIyer, a prominent administrator in Travancore, nearly 80% of private schools in the region were run by Christian missionaries⁴⁶. These institutions not only provided formal education but also instilled values of equality and self-dignity among students. In Malabar, Jesuit missionaries played a pivotal role in setting up schools and vocational training centers. These institutions were designed to empower marginalized groups by equipping them with skills and knowledge. One notable example is the Carpenters' School in Pilathara, established by the Jesuits in the early 1970s, which focused on skill development and education. Later, in 1983, the Jesuits founded another school in Chemmancheri, Kasargode, specifically aimed at educating underprivileged communities⁴⁷. The impact of missionary education on tribal communities has been particularly profound. Dominic Jala, a scholar on tribal studies, observed that education is one of the most tangible contributions that missionaries have made to tribal societies. He noted that it provided tribal people with the tools to navigate and adapt to a rapidly modernizing world⁴⁸. Similarly, Kujur, a researcher on tribal development, emphasized that Christian missionaries have been unparalleled in their contributions to the progress of tribal communities. According to him, their work in areas such as education, political consciousness, and the restoration of self-dignity has had a lasting impact on tribal empowerment.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, SahityaPravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 1967, p.400.

⁴⁷ K.M George, *Christian Missionaries and Education in Kerala*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005, p.16.

⁴⁸ Dominic Jala, 'Tribal Education and Christian Missionaries', *Tribal Studies Journal*, 12(3), 1998, pp. 45-60.

⁴⁹ R. Kujur, *Empowerment of Tribal Communities: The Role of Christian Missionaries*. Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 2003, p. 23.

The Jesuit missionaries realized early on that education is one of the most powerful tools in the fight against the injustice and marginalization faced by Adivasis. They understood that without proper education, Adivasis would remain vulnerable to exploitation and social exclusion. Jesuit missionary Santhosh Minj SJ strongly believes that if Adivasis are provided with access to quality education, they will be able to secure stable jobs, live with dignity, and gradually lift themselves out of poverty.⁵⁰ Education, according to him, is the key to empowering Adivasis and ensuring their socio-economic progress. Over the years, governments have introduced several schemes and programs to promote Adivasi education. Various initiatives, such as scholarships, free education, and residential schools, have been implemented to encourage Adivasi children to continue their studies.

However, despite these efforts, the high dropout rate among Adivasi students remains a serious issue. Many Adivasi children leave school due to financial difficulties, lack of proper support, cultural barriers, and other socio-economic challenges. This persistent dropout problem is a major setback, as it prevents Adivasis from fully benefiting from educational opportunities and improving their lives. The Adivasi community has the lowest representation in higher education and government services. A significant factor contributing to the dropout rate among Adivasi students is the use of unfamiliar languages as the medium of instruction. Recognizing this challenge, Jesuit missionaries, through the TUDI institution in Eachome, Wayanad, have been addressing the issue. Since 2007, the Adivasi Indigenous Knowledge Research Centre in Wayanad has operated the Kurinjipookal Nursery School to support the education of local tribal children.

At Kurinjipookal Nursery, children receive pre-primary education in their mother tongue, the Paniya language, following the guidelines of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The curriculum incorporates traditional teaching methods and includes subjects like Malayalam, English, arithmetic, and songs. This approach not only preserves the children's

⁵⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/JesuitVocationsAustralia/videos/fr-santosh-vocation/2064751160225422/>

linguistic heritage but also facilitates a smoother transition to further education conducted in Malayalam, their second language. By learning in their native language, students gain self-confidence, making continued education more accessible and effective.⁵¹Paniya language is not a scripting language. It is a mixed language. A mixed language is called a contact language. A contact language develops when different languages come into regular interaction. Words, grammar, pronunciation, and expressions from various languages blend to form a new linguistic system. Paniya language has also evolved through such influences, incorporating elements from Malayalam and other regional languages.⁵²Some Paniya words that are similar to Malayalam words *Abhakada* Malayalam meaning *apakadam*(danger), *kuranku* Malayalam meaning *kurang*(Monkey), *Akala* meaning *Akalam*(distance)*kolu* means *kavil*(cheek).In the Paniya language, some words are very similar to Malayalam, while others are completely different. Because of this, special attention must be given to their education. Many Adivasi students drop out of school mainly because they do not understand the language of instruction.

Methodology

The methodology applied in this research is primarily descriptive, analytical, and ethnographic incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Qualitative Approach: The study primarily relies on qualitative analysis, which includes an in-depth examination of historical records, missionary reports, oral narratives, and ethnographic studies. Content analysis of primary and secondary sources, including missionary journals, government reports, and tribal accounts, helps in understanding the socio-cultural impact of missionary activities.

Quantitative Supplementation: While qualitative research forms the foundation, quantitative data is used to supplement findings wherever necessary. Statistical data on literacy rates, conversion patterns, and socio-economic indicators among tribal

⁵¹ Wayanadan Thudippu Varthapathrika (Mal.), May 2015, pp.1-4.

⁵² P. Somasekharan Nair, *Paniyar*, LBS, Kottayam, 1976, p-26.

groups before and after missionary interventions are analyzed to assess tangible impacts.

Ethnographic Methods: Ethnographic methods such as interviews with tribal and non-tribal people, church leaders, and scholars provide first-hand perspectives on missionary influence. By combining these methodologies, the research aims to present a balanced and well-supported analysis of missionary work among tribal communities, considering both its contributions and criticisms.

Sources

This present study uses different types of sources to understand the work of Jesuit missionaries among tribal communities in Post-Colonial Malabar. Since there are different opinions on their role, a variety of sources help to provide a clear and balanced picture. Archival materials like government records and church documents offer historical details about missionary activities. Government reports provide official information on tribal policies and social changes influenced by missionaries. Church records and annual reports from organizations like TUDI (Tribal Unity for Development Initiative) and AADI (Attapadi Adivasi Development Initiatives) help understand missionary-led development programs and their impact on tribal communities. The study also refers to autobiographies and letters of missionaries, which give personal insights into their experiences, challenges, and motivations. To understand the perspectives of different groups, interviews with Jesuit missionaries, tribal people, and non-tribal residents of Wayanad, Palakkad, and Kannur are included. These interviews provide firsthand stories and opinions about missionary work. During the colonial period, missionaries wrote their letters in Latin. Rev. Fr. P.V. Chacko helped the researcher in understanding the content.

Historia Domus, the house diary of Jesuit houses, is a primary source widely used in this study. Additionally, the letters and manuscripts of Jesuit missionaries preserved by Isaac Pilathara in Pilathara, Kannur, were also utilized for the research. Books, articles, magazines, periodicals, and both published and unpublished PhD theses have been used as secondary sources. *Kerala Tidings*, published by Kerala

Jesuit Monthly, is also a valuable source. Research materials have been collected from various archives and libraries, including the Kerala Regional Archives, Christ Hall Jesuit Archives, KIRTADS, C.H. Muhammad Koya Library, Calicut University Library, the History Department Library at Calicut University, the Central Library at Kannur University, and the libraries of TUDI, AADI, SamskritiPariyaram in Kannur, St. Joseph's College, Devagiri, and Malabar Christian College in Kozhikode.

During the research period, extensive fieldwork was conducted in Adivasi settlements across Wayanad, Palakkad, and Kannur, where Jesuit missionaries are actively engaged. This fieldwork provided a direct understanding of the relationship between missionaries and tribal communities. Observations were made on the daily activities of institutions such as TUDI and AADI, along with the attitudes of Adivasis visiting these centers. Special attention was given to the reception given to missionaries during their visits to tribal villages and the functioning of the tribal hostel at TUDI. These experiences and observations played a crucial role in assessing the impact of Jesuit missionary work among the tribal communities of Malabar.

Review of Literature

The Review of Literature provides an overview of existing research, theories, and scholarly discussions relevant to the study, establishing the foundation for further analysis.

Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari collaborated on the book *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Vol. I-VI), published in 1909⁵³, which serves as a significant early study on the tribal communities of South India. This work provides a comprehensive account of tribal society and culture during the colonial era. The authors conducted extensive fieldwork across South India, documenting the social structures and lifestyles of numerous tribal groups. Their ethnographic research remains a valuable resource for understanding the diverse traditions and practices of tribal communities.

⁵³ Edgar Thurston, and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol I-VI, Cosmo Publications, Delhi, 1975 (first edition 1909), pp. 160-450.

P.R.G. Mathur (1977) and Kunhaman (1981) have extensively studied the issues of land alienation and tribal livelihoods in Kerala, with Mathur analyzing the broader tribal landscape of the state and Kunhaman focusing on the tribal communities of Attappadi. Both scholars emphasize how the displacement of tribal people from their traditional lands has led to economic hardship and a forced shift towards alternative occupations that many find difficult to adopt due to socio-cultural barriers. Mathur's *Tribal Situation in Kerala*⁵⁴ links rising indebtedness among tribals to their loss of land, while also exploring incomplete land records as a factor worsening the crisis. His work is a key reference for understanding tribal society, covering aspects like cultural practices, family structures, and religious traditions, alongside a detailed account of the *Kundalpani* bonded labor system that persisted in Wayanad among communities like the Paniyans, Adiyans, Wayanad Pulayans, and Kattunaikans until the 1970s. Similarly, Kunhaman's works, including *Globalization: A Subaltern Perspective*⁵⁵ provide insights into how economic policies and globalization have influenced tribal livelihoods. Both scholars underscore how ineffective governance and flawed land policies have deepened tribal marginalization, making sustainable development a challenge for these communities.

*Keralathile Africa*⁵⁶ by K. Panoor is a significant Malayalam work that explores the lives of various tribal communities in North Kerala. The book covers groups like the Adiyas, Kurichiyas, Koragars, Paniyars, Kattunaikans, and Kurumans, portraying their struggles against poverty and exploitation. Panoor writes with deep empathy, emphasizing their hardships, but his narrative often prioritizes emotional appeal over historical precision. Some descriptions appear exaggerated to engage readers, making the work more literary than academic. Despite this, the book provides valuable insights into tribal culture, traditions, and social issues, offering a broad yet subjective perspective on their way of life.

⁵⁴ P.R.G. Mathur, *op.cit.*, pp. 60-85.

⁵⁵ M. Kunhaman, *Globalisation: A Subaltern Perspectives*, Thiruvananthapuram, 2002, pp.18-29.

⁵⁶ K. Panoor, *Keralathile Africa* (Mal.), Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd., Kottayam, 1987, pp.40- 45.

Leo D’Souza SJ, in his essay *Jesuit contributions to environmental protection*, explores the ethical and practical responsibilities of safeguarding nature.⁵⁷ He highlights Jesuit efforts in conservation, particularly through initiatives like *Tarumitra*, which integrate environmental protection with the rights of indigenous communities. His work emphasizes how government policies and deforestation threaten Adivasi livelihoods, advocating for a holistic approach that combines ecological sustainability with social justice, aligning with broader Jesuit commitments to environmental and human rights.

“TUDI: A Saga of Educational Empowerment” by Sanil Mathew Mayilkunnel and Dipal Patel Shah explores how Jesuit priests promote a cultural symbiosis between tradition and modernity among tribal communities. They note that Jesuits instill pride in tribal identity while encouraging engagement with modernity without compromising indigenous heritage. The article highlights Jesuit efforts in tribal education, emphasizing empowerment through a balanced approach that integrates cultural preservation with socio-economic progress and educational advancement.⁵⁸

Seetha Kakkoth, in her article titled “The Primitive Tribal Groups of Kerala”, emphasizes the necessity of involvement beyond just the government for the development of tribal communities.⁵⁹ Her study particularly focuses on the most socio-economically marginalized tribal groups among the 36 Adivasi communities in Kerala, highlighting their struggles and the need for broader support to improve their living conditions.

⁵⁷ Leo D’Souza, ‘Jesuit Contribution to Environmental protection’, <http://www.sjweb.info/sjs/networks/ecology>

⁵⁸ Sanil Mathew Mayilkunnel and Dipal Patel Shah, ‘TUDI: A Saga of Educational Empowerment’, *MIER Journal of Educational Studies Trends & Practices*, vol. 8, no. 1, Jan. 2021, pp.6-11.

⁵⁹ Seetha Kakkoth, ‘The Primitive Tribal Groups of Kerala: A Situational Appraisal’, *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, vol. 3, 2005, pp. 47–55.

The book *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*,⁶⁰ edited by Govind Chandra Rath, elaborates on the various challenges faced by tribal communities and the developmental strategies needed to address them. Rath emphasizes that tribal development initiatives should primarily focus on systematically integrating scientific development programs, ensuring strong leadership, and, above all, securing the interest and cooperation of tribal communities in developmental policies. He highlights how the Kani tribe in Kerala benefited from tribal development by transforming their traditional knowledge into commercial ventures, thereby improving their economic status. However, Rath also argues that within tribal communities, only the privileged sections tend to become the primary beneficiaries of development programs.

N.K. Vaid's *Who Cares for Tribal Development?*⁶¹ is a critical examination of tribal development policies in India, highlighting the systemic challenges and inequalities within these initiatives. The book provides an in-depth analysis of how government programs, despite their intentions, often fail to benefit the entire tribal population equitably. Instead, a small privileged section within the community—often referred to as the "tribal elite"—becomes the primary beneficiary, leading to socio-economic disparities within tribal societies.

Mehta observes that the government has failed to provide tribals with the fundamental means for their livelihood. Unscientific development initiatives have led to class stratification within tribal communities.⁶²

A. Prasad in "Contested Indigenities: "Adivasi" Politics Historically and in Contemporary Times", categorizes the tribal communities in India into four broad

⁶⁰ Govinda Chandra Rath (ed.), *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2006, pp.135-146.

⁶¹ N.K Vaid, *Who Cares for Tribal Development?* Mittal Publications, Delhi, 2004, pp.19-24

⁶² Balwant Singh Mehta, 'Employment and livelihoods among tribal in India', *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India* 2021, pp. 264-277.

divisions⁶³. The first group consists of the primitive tribals, who continue their traditional occupations. The second group includes those who have begun interacting with the outside world and engaging in external economic activities. The third category comprises tribals who are visibly adapting to societal changes, while the fourth group consists of those who partially maintain their tribal way of life.

Mathew Aerthayil's *Impact of Globalisation on Tribals: In the Context of Kerala*⁶⁴ examines how globalisation has affected the livelihood, employment, and socio-cultural life of Kerala's tribal communities. The book provides a detailed analysis of their economic struggles, land alienation, and organizational movements for land rights. It also explores changes in cultural and religious practices, healthcare, education, and the status of women, offering strategies to mitigate globalisation's negative effects. However, this book does not mention the Jesuits' work among tribal communities, which has played a significant role in tribal education and social upliftment. Despite this omission, the book remains a valuable resource for understanding the broader impact of globalisation on tribals in Kerala.

The doctoral thesis, *Rescuing the Identity of the Adivasis from their Invisibility: The Encounter between Jesuits and the Indigenous Peoples of India* by Carmina Peñarrocha Giménez examines the interactions between Jesuit missionaries and Adivasi communities in India. It delves into how these encounters have influenced the visibility and identity of Adivasis in the post-colonial context.⁶⁵

The article "Marxist Jesuits Are Not for Tribal Welfare"⁶⁶ by Jaithirth Rao critiques the role of Jesuit missionaries in Adivasi welfare, arguing that their efforts

⁶³ Archana Prasad, 'Contested Indigeneities: 'Adivasi' Politics Historically and in Contemporary Times', *Agrarian South Journal of Political Economy a Triannual Journal of Agrarian South Network and CARES*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2022, pp. 37–61.

⁶⁴ Mathew Aerthayil, *Impact of globalisation on tribals: in the context of Kerala*, Rawat Publications, Bangalore, 2008, pp.22-48.

⁶⁵ Carmina Peñarrocha Giménez, "Rescuing the Identity of the Adivasis from their Invisibility. The Encounter between Jesuits and the Indigenous Peoples of India", unpublished thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2017, pp.35-41.

⁶⁶ Jaithirth Rao, 'Marxist Jesuits Are Not for Tribal Welfare. India and Indian Catholics Both Must Realise That', *The Print* 15th July 2021.

are more aligned with Marxist political activism than genuine socio-economic upliftment. It questions whether Jesuit-led movements have truly benefited tribal communities or exacerbated conflicts. However, the piece presents a one-sided perspective, overlooking the contributions of Jesuits in education, healthcare, and social empowerment. While it raises concerns about ideological influence, it lacks a balanced discussion, making it a critical but incomplete assessment of Jesuit involvement in tribal welfare.

Sunny Jose's *History of Jesuits in Kerala, 1879–2000* provides a comprehensive account of Jesuit contributions to education, social reform, and religious activities in Kerala. It highlights their role in establishing schools, colleges, and welfare initiatives for marginalized communities, including Dalits and Adivasis. The book documents their impact on theological education and social empowerment but lacks critical analysis of challenges such as political resistance and globalization's effects on Jesuit missions⁶⁷

Zainab and Sofia's article "Post-colonial Trauma in the Lives of Indian Tribes" examines the lasting effects of colonial policies on indigenous communities in India. The article highlights how colonial disruptions led to socio-economic marginalization, cultural disintegration, and continued struggles under post-colonial governance. Using a post-colonial trauma framework, the study analyzes historical injustices and contemporary tribal issues, drawing from case studies and legal policies. While it provides a broad national perspective, it lacks a focused regional analysis, especially on Kerala's tribal communities. Additionally, it does not address the role of religious missions like the Jesuits in post-colonial tribal experiences.⁶⁸

Government and institutional reports provide critical insights into the socio-economic status and development initiatives concerning Kerala's tribal communities. According to the 2011 census, the *Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled*

⁶⁷ Sunny Jose, *History of Jesuits in Kerala, 1879–2000*. ATC Publishers, Bangalore, 2018, pp.64-108.

⁶⁸ Nihal Zainab. & H. Sofia, 'Postcolonial Trauma in the Lives of Indian Tribes'. *Rupkatha Journal*, 2023, pp.2-6.

*Tribes of Kerala*⁶⁹ highlights that 1,07,965 tribal families reside in 4,762 habitats, with 11% within reserve forests and 20% in adjacent areas. The *Kerala Development Report* discusses various state-led tribal welfare initiatives and challenges. The *Annual Report 2021-22* by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs outlines national schemes, including scholarships and voluntary efforts for tribal welfare.⁷⁰ Additionally, the *34th Annual Report 2021-22* by TRIFED emphasizes initiatives supporting tribal livelihoods through natural product marketing.⁷¹ The *Economic Review*, published annually by Kerala's Finance Department, provides comprehensive updates on tribal development programs, including education, employment, and land distribution.⁷² Further, state department publications like the *Pattikavibhaka Vikasana Guide* and *Pattikavargha Samudayangalude Adistana Vivarasekharanam-2008* present in-depth data on tribal socio-economic conditions.⁷³ Apart from official reports, other publications focus on specific aspects of tribal life. *Smaranika 95: Gothrasmrithi*⁷⁴ documents tribal literacy programs, social structures, religious practices, and indigenous medicine. Similarly, *Smaranika: Gothrayanam*⁷⁵, a record of the national tribal festival at Valliyoorkkave, Wayanad, explores contemporary tribal culture, and arts. These reports collectively provide a comprehensive view of the progress and challenges in tribal development.

⁶⁹ State Planning Board Kerala (SPB), *Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes of Kerala*, 2013.

⁷⁰ Ministry of Tribal Affairs, *Annual Report 2021-22*, Government of India.

⁷¹ TRIFED, *34th Annual Report 2021-22*, Government of India.

⁷² *Economic Review*, Annual Publication, Finance Department, Government of Kerala, 2021.

⁷³ *Pattikavibhaka Vikasana Guide* (Mal.), Pattikajathy Pattikavarga Vikasana Vakuppu, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, pp. 19-32; *Pattikavargha Samudayangalude Adistana Vivarasekharanam-2008* (Mal.), Kerala Institute of Local Administration, 2008.

⁷⁴ *Smaranika 95: Gothrasmrithi* (Mal.), Department of S.C. and S.T., Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp.9-16.

⁷⁵ *Smaranika: Gothrayanam* (Mal.), Department of S.C. and S.T., Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, pp.7-14.

O.A. Alphonsa's *Socio-Economic Transformation of the Parava Community in the Pearl Fishing Coast, 1500-1900* (2002)⁷⁶ is a significant research study on the impact of Christian missionaries on the Parava fishing community. The research examines the transformation of this marginalized group, focusing on their socio-economic conditions before and after missionary interventions. Alphonsa explores how Portuguese missionaries, particularly the Jesuits, influenced their livelihoods, social structures, and religious identities. While the study provides valuable insights into colonial-era missionary activities, it primarily emphasizes the Paravas' gradual integration into the colonial economic and religious framework, sometimes overlooking indigenous agency in these changes.

P. A. Chacko SJ in "Missionary of the Santhal Tribes-Fr. Anthony Debono",⁷⁷ highlights how Jesuit missionaries actively engaged in social and educational initiatives to improve the lives of tribal communities. He also sheds light on the struggles faced by the Santhals, particularly the exploitation by landlords and moneylenders. Chacko's work emphasizes the Jesuits' role in addressing these issues, focusing on education, economic support, and social justice efforts. His study provides a clear understanding of how missionary activities influenced the tribal way of life.

Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu's article, "The Contributions of South Asian Jesuits to Environmental Work",⁷⁸ explores the diverse ecological initiatives undertaken by Jesuits in South Asia. It highlights their efforts in reforestation, watershed conservation, and biodiversity preservation, along with their promotion of organic farming through biopesticides and biofertilizers. The study also emphasizes their scientific contributions, particularly in the micropropagation of rare and endangered plant species. Additionally, the article discusses Jesuit involvement in environmental

⁷⁶ O. A. Alphonsa, 'Socio-Economic Transformation of the Parava Community in the Pearl Fishing Coast, 1500-1900', unpublished Thesis, University of Kerala, 2002, pp.23-27.

⁷⁷ P A Chacko, 'Missionary of the Santhal Tribes - Fr. Anthony Debono', *Jesuits Global*, 2023, pp.23-31.

⁷⁸ Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu S.J., 'The Contributions of South Asian Jesuits to Environmental Work', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, Volume 3, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 619-644.

advocacy, policy discussions, and academic research. However, it lacks a critical analysis of the challenges faced by Jesuits in their ecological work.

In the *Travancore State Manual*, V. Nagam Aiya ⁷⁹signed that if Christian missionaries had not been present, those belonging to the lower sections of the Hindu community would have remained in the same oppressed condition without any upliftment. It was the Christian missionaries who helped these marginalized communities become aware of their rights and existence in society by reaching their living spaces and awakening a sense of dignity in them.

In the 1931 *Travancore Census Report*, N. Kunjanpilla recorded that the Christian missionary services made the upper castes realize the tragic consequences of ignoring their less fortunate brothers for generations.⁸⁰

Chapterisation

The research project is structured into an introduction, four main chapters, and a conclusion. The chapterisation outlines the structured division of the study, ensuring a logical flow of ideas and analysis. The introduction explains the need, significance, scope, objectives, and methodology of the research. It also includes a detailed review of related literature and sources, along with a brief overview of the chapters.

The first chapter titled “Evolution of Tribal life in India: Historical Developments and Policy Interventions” examines the historical transformation of tribal communities in India, focusing on socio-economic changes and policy interventions across different periods. It explores how, before British rule, tribal societies, including those in Kerala, maintained self-sustained livelihoods with minimal interaction with non-tribal populations. However, increasing land pressure from outsiders gradually pushed them into socio-economic integration. Unlike later periods, pre-colonial administrations did not implement specific policies for tribal

⁷⁹ V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*. Vol. 1, Travancore Government Press, 1906. Digitized by Harvard University, 2005.

⁸⁰ N. Kunjanpillai, *Travancore Census Report*, Travancore Government Publication, 1932, p-17.

groups, as they were not recognized as a distinct social category. The chapter highlights the colonial period as a turning point when British policies disrupted traditional tribal life. Land reforms facilitated non-tribal encroachment, leading to exploitation and displacement. The British administration largely isolated and controlled tribal regions to serve imperial interests, reinforcing tribal marginalization. In the post-independence era, successive Five-Year Plans introduced tribal welfare initiatives but largely continued colonial approaches. While schemes such as the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) and Multi-Purpose Tribal Development Projects (MTDPs) aimed at economic upliftment, their generalized framework limited their effectiveness. Later policies focused on poverty reduction, land rights, and education, but tribal communities remained marginalized due to systemic challenges. This chapter critically assesses how post-independence governance retained elements of colonial policies, highlighting persistent gaps in tribal development and the need for more comprehensive, community-driven interventions.

The second chapter “Jesuit Legacy in Malabar: From Colonial Roots to Post-Colonial period”, explores the history and evolution of Jesuit missions in Kerala, tracing their activities from the colonial period to the post-colonial era. It examines the arrival of the Society of Jesus in India, beginning with St. Francis Xavier’s missionary efforts in Goa in 1542 and his large-scale conversions among coastal communities like the Paravas and Mukkuvar fishermen. The chapter also discusses the expansion of Jesuit influence in Malabar, particularly through 20th-century initiatives such as the Chirakkal and Mattul Missions. The chapter highlights the role of Fr. Peter Caironi, who established the Chirakkal Mission in 1937, focusing on the upliftment of Dalits, particularly the Pulayas, and providing medical aid during the 1943 cholera outbreak. It also examines the contributions of Fr. John Sequeira and Fr. Joseph Taffarel in the Mattul Mission, where they emphasized education and vocational training for Dalit women. In the post-colonial period, Jesuit missionary work underwent significant transformation, expanding beyond religious conversions to include church reforms, social welfare, and interreligious dialogue. These evolving efforts ultimately led to the establishment of the Kerala Jesuit Vice-Province in 1960.

The chapter analyzes how Jesuit missions adapted to changing socio-political contexts while continuing their work in education, healthcare, and community development.

The third chapter Jesuit Intervention with Tribal communities in Post-Colonial Malabar examines the expansion of Jesuit initiatives beyond colonial-era efforts, focusing on tribal displacement, governance, and economic empowerment. The chapter discusses the establishment of the Jesuit Mission for Adivasi Integration (JEMAI) and key programs like TUDI in Wayanad and AADI in Palakkad, which promoted self-reliance through cooperative farming, self-help groups, and vocational training. The chapter also highlights Jesuit contributions to tribal education, including the takeover of Sarvodaya High School in 1990 and the foundation of TUDI in 1996 to counter high dropout rates, later expanding with international support. Cultural preservation efforts, such as the revival of *OoruUtsavam* and the documentation of folk songs in *Adivasi Pattu* by P.S. Antony SJ, are examined, along with concerns over external influences on indigenous traditions. Healthcare initiatives, including the *Adivasi Vaidyar Training Programme*, which integrates traditional and modern medicine, and advocacy through *LokManch* for tribal rights, food security, and environmental justice, are also discussed. Additionally, the chapter explores Jesuit-led protests against corporate exploitation, such as Coca-Cola's water usage, and their extensive aid efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, the chapter analyzes how Jesuit interventions continue to empower tribal communities by addressing socio-economic challenges while balancing cultural preservation with modern development.

The fourth chapter, "Perspectives and Challenges to Jesuits' Work in Tribal Malabar", examines the various challenges faced by Jesuit missionaries in their efforts to support tribal communities. It highlights the internal divisions within the Christian community, where some groups perceive Jesuit initiatives as diverting resources away from them. Additionally, the chapter discusses the opposition from powerful landowners who resist tribal empowerment, particularly in Wayanad, where the economic independence of the Paniya community threatens their access to cheap labour. The chapter also explores how access to education, government schemes, and

technology enables tribals to move away from traditional labour roles, disrupting the established socio-economic order. Furthermore, the chapter analyzes the differing perspectives within Jesuit missions—while some missionaries advocate for the integration of tribals into mainstream society, others emphasize the importance of preserving their distinct cultural identity. It also highlights the challenge posed by the declining number of missionaries willing to work in remote tribal areas, as younger priests increasingly prefer urban assignments. Despite these obstacles, the chapter underscores how Jesuits continue their mission, navigating resistance while promoting social justice and economic development. Their efforts highlight the larger challenges in India's tribal policies, where the need for development must be balanced with protecting tribal culture and rights.

The Conclusion summarizes the key findings of the study, highlighting their significance in relation to the research objectives. It also provides final insights, reflections, and potential directions for future research on the topic.

Limitations of the Study

This study critically evaluates the functions of Jesuit missionaries among Adivasis in post-colonial Malabar; however, several limitations remain.

First, while Jesuit missionaries played a significant role in addressing social issues in Malabar from the colonial period onward, their contributions have not been systematically documented. Unlike the Basel Mission, which maintained detailed records, Jesuit missionary activities—especially among Dalits and Adivasis—are primarily known through oral traditions. This lack of proper documentation makes it challenging to assess the full scope of their impact and has resulted in their contributions being largely overlooked in historical studies on the social renaissance of Northern Malabar.

Second, the study faced difficulties in gathering primary data, as some tribal individuals were reluctant to participate in interviews. Many Adivasis expressed hesitation in cooperating with the researcher, citing their past experiences with studies

conducted by outsiders that failed to bring any tangible benefits to their communities. This reluctance limited the depth of firsthand accounts in the research.

Third, while there was an initial plan to conduct a comparative study of Jesuit missionaries work among tribal communities outside Kerala, this aspect required extensive field research and a prolonged timeframe, making it impractical within the current study's scope. However, this remains an area for potential future research.

Chapter I

Evolution of Tribal Life in India: Historical Developments and Policy Interventions

India holds a unique and prominent position in the global tribal community as it accommodates a substantial tribal population within its borders.¹ The tribal communities are primarily located in specific tribal belts, coexisting with the general population. Remarkably, India boasts the highest concentration of tribal peoples globally, rivalling only the African continent in terms of population density.² According to the Census Report of 2011, there are a total of 725 tribal communities found throughout the country. Geographically, India's tribal population is divided into three distinct zones: the north-eastern zone, southern zone, and central zone. The central and north-eastern states of India have the largest concentration of tribal communities.³

The Scheduled Tribes in the state of Kerala exhibit significant heterogeneity, with each community possessing distinct traditions, social customs, beliefs, rules, and practices.⁴ There are 36 tribal communities in Kerala, collectively representing 1.45 percent of the state's total population.⁵ Wayanad stands out with the highest number

¹ Subrata Mandal, and Bipul Mandal, 'Tribals and Their Aboriginality: A Dimension of Indian Society', *Research Review Journal*, no. 9, 2020, pp. 28–33.

² K.S Singh, *Scheduled Tribes. People of India, National series Vol.III*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1992, p. 263.

³ D.N Majumdar, *Races and Culture of India*, Bombay, 1985, p.107.

⁴ Pushpangadan, P., and C. K. Atal, 'Ethnomedical and Ethno botanical Investigations among Some Scheduled Caste Communities of Travancore, Kerala, India'. *Journal of Ethno pharmacology*, vol. 16, no. 2–3, Elsevier BV, 1986, p. 177.

⁵ Census of India, 2011, Series 1, Kerala Part 11 Primary Census Abstract, Scheduled Tribe Population, Office of the Registrar General of India, New Delhi, 2011, p. 115.

of tribes, comprising 37.36 percent, followed by Idukki and Palakkad at 14 percent and 10.89 percent, respectively.⁶

This chapter explores the evolution of tribal life in India over three significant eras: Pre-Colonial, Colonial, and Post-Colonial. In addition to tracing these historical developments, it delves into the various tribal policies introduced by the central government, providing a broad overview of their impact. Special attention is given to the specific policies implemented by the Kerala government, highlighting how they have shaped the lives of tribal communities within the state.

Nomenclature, Definition and Characteristics of Tribes

The term "tribe" has been the subject of numerous discussions and debates, and its meaning can be extensively explored. The term "tribe" originates from the Latin word "tribus," denoting three divisions, and has experienced diverse changes within India's historical trajectory.⁷ Although a universally accepted definition of the term is not readily available, several expert opinions have contributed to its understanding. In Pre-Colonial times, a universally accepted term to categorize indigenous tribal communities was absent. The term "*jana*" was present but it was predominantly employed as a synonym for caste classification, lacking the expansiveness and equivalence to the tribal designation that emerged and evolved during the colonial and ensuing Post-Colonial eras.⁸ The ancient Buddhist texts indicated the people in India used the term "tribe" as based on the concept of Jana or communities of people.⁹ Tribals are known by many names in India. The terms "*Adavika*," "*Vanavasi*" (forest dwellers), or "*Girijan*" (mountain dwellers) are some of the other names used for people in India who belong to the tribal communities.¹⁰

⁶ Celine Sunny, et al., 'Janamaithri - a journal of democratic policing', Vol. 4, 2014, fire.kerala.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/janamythri-journal-4.pdf.

⁷ Rudolf C. Heredia, Rahul Srivastava. *Tribal identity and minority status: The Kathkari nomads in transition*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, 1994, p.18.

⁸ Virginius Xaxa, et. al., 'Politics of Language, Religion and Identity: Tribes in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 40, no. 13, 2005, p. 1363.

⁹ R.C Verma, *Indian tribes through the ages*. Publications Division Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, 1990, p.23.

¹⁰ N.K Bose, *Tribal Life in India*. National Book Trust, India, 2011, p. 18

However, the term "Adivasi/tribe"¹¹ specifically conveys the indigenous or native identity of the people residing in that particular region. It reflects their indigenous heritage, especially those living in the hilly or forested areas. The term "tribal" is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution of India, but it is widely used by scholars and in various texts and media to emphasize the empowerment of tribal communities regarding their cultural and social identity. The United Nations has stated that "indigenous peoples are distinct peoples with their own history, culture, language, traditions, institutions and spiritual worldview. Therefore, defining indigenous peoples must take into account their complex relationship with their traditional territories, environments and the natural world".¹² Thus the term "tribe" is defined as a social, cultural, or ethnic group characterized by shared customs, traditions, and a sense of collective identity.¹³ It is a concept that has been applied in various cultures and regions to describe social and political groupings of people who share common characteristics, including culture, language, and social organization. Certain academics use the term "Adivasis" to denote the original inhabitants of the land. In a Western context, the concept of "tribe" has been applied historically in anthropology and colonial discourse to describe indigenous or non-Western societies. Anthropologists in the 19th century, such as Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward Burnett Tylor, played a significant role in formalizing the concept of the tribe as a social and cultural category.¹⁴ They used the term "tribe"/ "gotra"¹⁵ to describe indigenous communities in India which can be traced back to the colonial period when

¹¹ The term *adivasi* means 'original inhabitant'; the researcher uses the terms tribal and *adivasi* interchangeably

¹² J. Corntassel, and M. Woons, *Indigenous Perspectives*. E-International Relations Publishing, 2017,p.131

¹³ Hari Charan Behera, et al., 'Participatory Livelihood Vulnerability Assessment of the Forest Dwellers: A Study of Fifteen Tribes and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in the Eastern Indian Region'. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, SAGE Publications, Aug. 2022, pp. 36-43

¹⁴ George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*. University of Chicago Press, USA, 1995, p.74

¹⁵ Maguni Charan Behera, *Tribe, Space and Mobilization: Colonial and Post-colonial Interface in Tribal Studies*", Springer Singapore, 2022, p4. The word 'Gotra' has different meanings in different countries. It refers to a group of people known by various names in India since primitive times such as 'Vanavasi', 'Adivasi', 'Vanyajati' and 'Adimajati'.

the British ruled the Indian subcontinent. Although the term tribe was first used in India by the British, when they started writing about India, they did not make caste-tribe distinctions. The British colonial administration categorized and classified the diverse indigenous groups in India for administrative and governance purposes.¹⁶ The formal categorization of Indian communities into “tribes” began with the introduction of the Scheduled Tribes’ list as part of the Government of India Act, 1935, which laid the foundation for independent India's subsequent policies related to tribal communities.¹⁷ Indigenous communities in India date back to the pre-colonial era and carry indigenous names that reflect their distinctive identities. Xaxa argued that the concept of “tribe” was imposed by colonial rule and persisted even after India gained independence.¹⁸ The specific terminology and classification of communities as “Scheduled Tribes” were further formalized and continued after India gained Independence in 1947. The Constitution of India, which came into effect on January 26, 1950, includes provisions for the recognition and protection of the rights of Scheduled Tribes in India, and it has continued to be a part of India's legal and administrative framework. The use of the term “tribe” and the classification of indigenous communities as Scheduled Tribes in India is a product of the colonial and post-colonial period and is primarily a part of administrative and governance structures rather than being rooted in indigenous terminology or self-identification.¹⁹ A review of various censuses shows that the criteria for identifying tribes were developed by colonial authorities during the census operations. In the 1901 census, tribes were described as groups practicing “animism” (later replaced by the term “tribal religion”). While the 1921 census referred to the “hill and forest” tribes, the 1931 census described them as “primitive tribes”; they were also referred to as

¹⁶ Anthony J. Christopher, 'Divide and Rule', The impress of British separation policies." *Area*, 1988, p-235

¹⁷ Virginius Xaxa, 'Tribes of India: An Overview'. *Anthropological Survey of India*, 2006, pp. 28-44

¹⁸ Sumit Guha, 'States, Tribes, Castes: A Historical Re-Exploration in Comparative Perspective', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 50, no. 46/47, 2015, pp. 50-52.

¹⁹ Philipp Zehmisch, 'Can Migrants Be Indigenous? Affirmative Action, Space, and Belonging in the Andaman Islands'. *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 56, no. 5, Cambridge University Press (CUP), Sept. 2022, pp. 1489-1490.

“backward tribes” (Government of India Act 1935), “tribes” (Census 1941) and finally as “scheduled tribes” (Census 1951 onwards)²⁰

Indigenous tribal populations possess a wide range of cultural diversity, which is demonstrated through the emergence of distinct languages, artistic traditions, musical forms, and oral narratives. Their cultural heritage acts as a reservoir of immense pride and inherent resilience.²¹

Experts have attempted to define tribes based on their salient features. G.S. Ghurye, a prominent Indian sociologist, stated that “the tribal communities in India possess unique identities, primarily rooted in their distinctive cultural practices, languages, and geographical isolation”.²² Verrier Elwin, a British-born Indian anthropologist and tribal rights activist, emphasized the geographical isolation of tribal communities and underscored their profound connection to the natural environment while recognizing the uniqueness of their cultures.²³ According to D.N. Majumdar, “a tribe is typically viewed as an endogenous unit, wherein its members restrict their marital relationships within the tribe. Several clans constitute a tribe.”²⁴ Consequently, the hallmark traits of a tribal group encompass not only their shared habitation and language but also their profound sense of collective identity, bonded by a common ancestor.²⁵ Jeyachandraleka defined a tribe as “an independent political division with a common culture, geographically isolated, speaking a common dialect, and having its own tribal authority and laws”.²⁶ Fredrik Barth pointed that “the

²⁰ Census report 1921,1931,1941,1951.

²¹ Jeffrey Sissons, *First Peoples: Indigenous Cultures and Their Futures*. Reaktion Books, London, 2005, pp.8-16.

²² G.S. Ghurye. ‘The Aborigines -‘so-Called’- and Their Future’, *Nature*, vol. 153, 1944, p. 668.

²³ Ramachandra Guha, *Savaging the civilized: Verrier Elwin, his tribals, and India*.University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp.88-89.

²⁴ D.N Majumdar. *Races and Culture of India*, Bombay, 1985, p.275.

²⁵ Subrata Guha. *Socio -Cultural Changes of Tribes and Their Impacts on Environment with Special Reference to Santhal in West Bengal*, 2015, p.14.

²⁶ D. Jeyachandraleka. ‘Antiquity of Paliyan Tribes in Tamil Nadu and the Relationship with Aborigines’, *Studies in Indian Place Names*, 2020, pp.787-791.

boundaries of tribal territories are often defined by natural landmarks, such as rivers or mountains, and these boundaries are important for resource management and conflict resolution”.²⁷ Ibn Khaldun described tribes as “nomadic or sedentary, depending on their historical and environmental context. Nomadic tribes often follow a pastoral or hunting-gathering way of life, while sedentary tribes may engage in agriculture²⁸”. The definitions above show that tribes have specific traits that make them unique.²⁹ Tribal societies are defined by a set of unique characteristics that create their distinct identities. These traits, including endogamy, shared habitation, collective identity, geographic isolation, tribal governance, and lifestyle patterns, collectively contribute to the rich depiction of tribal cultures and traditions.³⁰

Briefly, based on the above definitions, the common characteristics of tribals in India are as follows: a common tradition, a unique geography, a lifestyle away from mainstream society, and unique customs and beliefs.

Diversity of Tribal Communities in India and Kerala

Anthropologists, historians, and sociologists have expressed different opinions about the origin of Indian tribes.³¹ When referring to tribals in India, various classifications are used such as political, anthropological, linguistic, religious, constitutional and sociological.³² According to the Anthropological Survey of India, tribal people in India belong to four main ethnic groups. They are the Negritos (Great Andamanese, Ongus, Jarawas), Proto-Austroloids (Mundas, Orans, Gonds), Mongoloids (Northeastern tribes), and Caucasoids (Thodas, Rabaris, Gijjars). The

²⁷ Marek Jakoubek, and Lenka Budilová. 'Fredrik Barth and the Study of Ethnicity'. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries Today*, 2018, pp.6-19.

²⁸ P Von Sivers, 'Back to Nature: The Agrarian Foundations of Society According to Ibn Khaldun'. *Arabica*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1980, pp. 68–91.

²⁹ Aidan Southall, 'The Illusion of Tribe1', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 5, 1970, p. 28.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 30 -31.

³¹ Calvin Martin, 'Ethnohistory: A Better Way to Write Indian History', *Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1978, p. 41.

³² Nandini Sundar and Madan, 'The Scheduled Tribes and Their India: Politics, Identities, Policies, and Work', *@Inproceedings*, 2016, pp.17-26.

Negritos and Proto-Australoids were the first migrant races to come to India from Africa and Palestine, respectively. They were the original inhabitants and their racial features can be found in tribal groups in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.³³

The culture and lifestyle of the tribals of Kerala are not the same. Each tribe has a distinct and unique culture, lifestyle and language. Therefore, it is not possible to say that all the adivasis of Kerala have a single ancestor. As to whom the present ancestors are, there are different and disputed opinions. It is believed that the proto-astroloids, the Dravidians and the later *Madhyadharanai* formed a hybrid people and the present-day tribes are the continuation of tribes that did not belong to that hybrid people.³⁴

Continuities and Changes in Tribal Life

Tribal societies in India have experienced a complex interplay of continuity and change over time, reflecting their resilience and adaptability.³⁵ In the pre-colonial era, these communities had well-established social systems, cultural practices, and economic activities that were closely intertwined with their natural surroundings. The colonial period marked a significant turning point, as British policies imposed new administrative and economic structures, disrupting traditional tribal life.³⁶ In the post-colonial period, India's modernization and development policies brought significant changes to tribal societies. These policies offered new opportunities, such as better

³³ Carmina Peñarrocha Giménez, *Rescuing the Identity of the Adivasis from Their Invisibility: The Encounter between Jesuits and the Indigenous Peoples of India*, Department of Developmental'. *Educational and Social Psychology. The Kondhs (Odisha), The Irulas (Tamil Nadu and Kerala), The Paniyas (Kerala) They are believed to be descendants of the early Proto-Australoid inhabitants of India. The Onge, a Negrito tribe inhabiting the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.*

³⁴ P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathilesamskarikacharithram* (Mal.), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, p.77.

³⁵ Christoph von FuererHaimendorf. "Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival." University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982, p.17.

³⁶ Raid, et.al.'British colonialism and the indirect rule: a hierarchical administrative structure to control the unruly tribes'. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2021, pp. 1366–72.

access to education and healthcare, but also disrupted traditional ways of life. Although various programs were introduced to improve the lives of tribal people, many of these policies still reflected colonial ideas.

Tribal life in Pre-Colonial Era

Before the British occupation, tribal communities in India, including Kerala, led self-sustained lives with minimal contact with outsiders, mainly through their agricultural produce. However, due to increasing pressure from non-tribal populations on land resources, these tribal communities gradually began to interact with people from the plains, which ultimately gave rise to a new socio-communal lifestyle.³⁷

The tribal life in the pre-colonial period can be categorized into two distinct phases based on their social systems. The first phase revolved around a communal way of life, deeply rooted in ancestral traditions. During this period, land was not considered private property; rather, it was treated as a common resource, and individuals had the freedom to settle wherever they wished. The tribes relied predominantly on the forest for their sustenance. For instance, in Kerala, communities like the *Kurumar*, *Kurichyar*, and *Malaarayar* primarily depended on forest resources and agriculture. Forests and mountains were the life and livelihood of the *vettakurumar* and *thenkurumar*.³⁸ The socio-economic system they followed during this phase was characterized by communal sharing and cooperation among community members.

The second phase was when the territories of the free-living tribals were invaded and ruled by local kings. Again, Kerala has many examples for it. Mysore inscriptions show that Dwavarasamudra, the Hoysala king who ruled Mysore from 1104 to 1147, captured Wayanad and exiled the people there. An edict of Krishnadevaraya of 1527 records that the Vijayanagara Empire, which had defeated the Mysore kings, also dominated Wayanad. In 1610, Wayanad again came under the

³⁷ Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, *op.cit.*, pp.36-48.

³⁸ *Thenkurumar* refers to a honey-gathering tribe. *UraliKurumar* are metal workers, carpenters and cloth weavers among the tribals.

Mysore kings after the Udayar Rebellion. Before the 14th century, Wayanad had been ruled by the KudumbiyilVedar Dynasty. This tribal kingdom was known for its benevolence toward its people, which suggests a more egalitarian and community-oriented approach to land and resources. During the 14th century, the Kottayam-Kurumbanad dynasty from Thalassery conquered Wayanad and took control of the region.³⁹ This marked a significant shift in governance and social structures. The new rulers divided Wayanad into ten “*Nadus*”, or local kingdoms. This division was likely a form of administrative decentralization. It allowed the rulers to exert more control over the region by breaking it into smaller units. The introduction of the feudal system, as mentioned in Gopalan's work, implies the establishment of a social hierarchy based on land ownership.⁴⁰ In this system, there were clear distinctions between landowners and workers. With the advent of the feudal system, the working class in Wayanad became bonded labourers.⁴¹ This meant that they were tied to the land they worked on, and often had limited rights and mobility. Their livelihoods were dependent on the landowners. The changes in the social and economic structure, as well as the imposition of bonded labour, led to migration of people from the region. Those who could no longer sustain their traditional way of life or were looking for better opportunities likely left their ancestral lands. The *Paniyas*, in particular, were greatly affected by this transformation. They had lost access to the land that they had previously considered a common resource. The few landowners who seized control of the land required the Paniyas to work for them, essentially making them labourers on their own ancestral lands. The Paniyas, like many other tribal communities, traditionally viewed land and resources as communal property, shared collectively by the community. However, with the introduction of private land ownership, their

³⁹ Sanil Mathew Mayilkunnel, and Dipal Patel Shah, 'TUDI-A Saga of Educational Empowerment', *MIER Journal of Educational Studies Trends and Practices*, 2018, pp.114-116.

⁴⁰ C. Gopalan Nair, *Wynad: Its Peoples and Traditions*. FB&C Limited, Madras, 2018, p.11.

⁴¹ K. Divya, 'Development Experience of Adivasis: Case Studies from Kerala', *Indian Journal of Sustainable Development*, 2016, p.37.

The name of bonded labour was *Oozhiyam*.

traditional way of life was significantly disrupted, forcing them to adapt to a system that restricted their access to ancestral lands and altered their long-standing communal practices.⁴²

In ancient times, the administration of India did not formulate different policies for tribal communities.⁴³ This absence may have arisen from the perception among the rulers that there was no need to classify the tribes living in dense forest areas as a separate social class. Both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* highlight the frequent interactions between rulers and tribal groups during that period, often in the context of war and hunting. The tales from the *Mahabharata* vividly illustrate that the Pandavas established matrimonial alliances with people living in the forest.⁴⁴ The Asoka's rock edicts are one of the pieces of evidence that validate the fact that the kings used to interact with the forest dwellers in ancient times.⁴⁵ During the Mauryan period special attention was paid by the crown prince to the tribal welfare and there was a separate minister in the cabinet known as the "*Ant Mahamatya*".⁴⁶ However, these interventions did not lead to the formulation of specific policies addressing tribal issues, as tribal issues remained largely peripheral to the governance discourse of the time. Medieval Indian rulers followed a similar approach to tribal communities as the ancient rulers, although there were distinct variations in their interventions and policies. In medieval times, kings, especially the Muslim kings, sent tribals into forests and such areas to capture inaccessible territories.

⁴² N.R Nithya, 'Land Question and the Tribals of Kerala', *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, Vol. 2, Issue 9, 2013, pp. 102-110.

⁴³ M. Romesh Singh, 'Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate', *Social Change*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2006, pp. 151-52.

⁴⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandava>. *Bhima married Hidimbi, a Rakshasi (demoness) from the forest, and they had a son named Ghatotkacha. Arjuna married Uloopi, a Naga princess, and they had a son named Iravan.*

⁴⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm, 'Review of *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* by Romila Thapar', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 1963, pp. 327-28.

⁴⁶ S.R. Bakshi and Kiran Bala. *Social and Economic Development of Scheduled Tribes*, New Delhi, 2000, p.106.

Tribal life in the Colonial Era

The post-Industrial Revolution era witnessed the expansion of British influence across the globe, initially driven by commercial pursuits.⁴⁷ However, a strategic reorientation occurred in Afro-Asian territories, prompting a shift from trade-centric objectives to the consolidation of political supremacy. This transition catalyzed the imposition of a centralized administrative framework by the British, resulting in the systematic marginalization of local artisans and agrarians within colonial territories. The British interaction with tribes in India was characterized by a distinct approach in both its nature and depth.⁴⁸ In the Madras presidency, the colonial authorities practically ignored tribal development, maintaining no direct contact with the tribes.⁴⁹ Their administration lacked a consistent policy for tribal improvement. They disregarded Malabar's traditional structure, viewing it as outdated, which displeased both the local population and the British Raj.⁵⁰

However, in Malabar, colonialism significantly transformed the socio-economic aspects of tribal society.⁵¹ The colonial administration introduced various policies and programs within tribal regions, representing a departure from the pre-colonial historical context.⁵² This transition marked the inception of substantial challenges encountered by tribal people. Notably, the execution of land reform initiatives by colonial authorities facilitated the influx of non-tribal populations into these areas, culminating in the severe exploitation of tribal communities. The British colonial approach to the governance of tribal and other territories was fundamentally

⁴⁷ Willie Thompson, *Global Expansion Britain and its Empire, 1870-1914*. Pluto press, 1999, pp.15-17.

⁴⁸ S.P Sinha, 'Tribal Development Administration – A historical Overview in LP Vidyarty', *Tribal Development and Its Administration*, New Delhi, 1981, p.68.

⁴⁹ A. Aiyappan. *Report on the Social Economic Condition of Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras, Madras*, 1948, p.31.

⁵⁰ Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest – Transition to British Rule in Malabar – 1790 – 1805*, New Delhi, 2003, p.98.

⁵¹ Thomas W. Shea, 'Barriers to economic development in traditional societies: Malabar, a case study', *The Journal of Economic History*, 1959, pp. 504-522.

⁵² Velayutham Saravanan, 'Colonial Agrarian Policies in the Tribal Areas of Madras Presidency: 1872–1947', *South Asia Research*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2006, pp. 63–85.

driven by political considerations rooted in their imperial interests. The British Government's tribal policy was characterized by an isolationist stance.⁵³ In the colonial era, tribal communities were solely driven and dominated by the overarching colonial goals of the British, which isolated and exploited them.

However, from the 19th century onwards, numerous records in colonial archives detail interactions with various "lineages" that extended their influence into the sphere of interior administration under British rule. During the 19th century, the British government moved into tribal areas with the primary objective of expanding and controlling their policies. Subsequently, Christian missionaries also entered these regions with the dual mission of service and conversion. However, the colonial rulers' tribal policy paved the way for miscreants like the zamindars, landlords, forest contractors, and moneylenders to exploit and inherit tribal lands and forests which were the bedrock of the tribal economy. The colonial policy of neglect, coupled with encroachments on tribal land and forest rights, resulted in widespread encroachment into tribal areas, leading to the catastrophic collapse of the tribal economy that plunged tribal communities into poverty and misery. The *Poonjar dynasty* grabbing the forest lands of the indigenous tribes in blatant violation of their fundamental rights and then giving these areas to John Daniel Munro is such an instance.⁵⁴ Several laws were made to justify such encroachment. According to the order issued by the Travancore Authority in 1911, the tribals had no right over the forest land. As a result, due to systemic vulnerabilities and the imposition of colonial power, tribals and their properties were easily subjugated and buried under the fold of colonial rule. Furthermore, during that time, no one spoke up for them, especially since they were illiterate.

⁵³ Sanjukta Das Gupta, 'Imagining the 'tribe' in colonial and post-independence India', *Politeja-Pismo Wydziału Studiów Międzynarodowych i Politycznych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, 2019, pp. 107-121.

⁵⁴ Velayutham Saravanan, 'Colonial commercial forest policy and tribal private forests in Madras Presidency: 1792-1881', *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 40.4, 2003, pp. 403-423.

Such policies that turned a blind eye to, and sometimes even encouraged encroachment of tribal lands and forests, led to an increasing destruction of forests in Kerala. The table below (see table 1) illustrates the declining trend of forest cover in Kerala from 1905 to 2023, highlighting significant reductions due to colonial exploitation, post-independence land reforms, and industrial expansion.

Table 1

Forest Area in Kerala from 1905 to 2023

Year	Forest Area in Kerala (percentage)
1905	85%
1950	44%
1973	34%
1985	32%
1995	30.5%
2023	29.65%

Source: Forest Survey of India (FSI), State of Forest Reports (Various Years).

In the early 19th century, the colonial authorities had limited knowledge about tribal communities. For instance, W.K. Firminger's 1811 Fifth Report of the House of Commons portrayed Indian tribes as savages who greatly differed in appearance, religion, language, and behaviour within Hindustan.⁵⁵ Similarly, the British Magistrate of Ramgarh district depicted the Ho tribal people as dreadful pests and deemed them as lower-class Hindus.⁵⁶ It was clear that until the first half of the 19th century, the colonial administration lacked an understanding of the tribal communities as an inherent ethnic group. But from the mid-nineteenth century, the attitude of the colonial authority towards the tribal groups changed significantly. Instead of being stamped as rebels and savages, the tribal people started to be recognized as the “weak” people of India. Moreover, the British authority presented itself to them as the

⁵⁵ Sanjukta Das Gupta, ‘Indigeneity and Violence: The Adivasi Experience in Eastern India’, *International Review of Sociology*, vol. 30, no. 2, Informa UK Limited, 2020, pp. 232–248.

⁵⁶ ..., ‘Colonial Representations of Adivasi Pasts of Jharkhand, India: The Archives and Beyond’, *Presses de l’Inalco eBooks*, 2020, pp. 353–62.

liberators of the people who were being exploited by the non-tribals. Since the colonial period, rulers have implemented administrative policies for tribal communities, following a segregationist approach that kept them isolated from the wider population. Their tribal administration primarily focused on maintaining law and order rather than addressing the community's welfare. This policy of segregation not only facilitated exploitation and served colonial interests but also deepened the divide between tribal groups and the rest of India, reinforcing their marginalization. The pre-Independence approach to tribal development was mainly ameliorative in nature. Of course, some programmes were introduced to mitigate their sufferings. However, there was no elaborated attempt to strengthen the economic base of these downtrodden backward communities. A few missionaries and voluntary organizations carried out welfare activities despite their limited resources. Among them, the Jesuit missionaries and Basel missions were prominent Christian groups that addressed these issues during the colonial period.⁵⁷

British rule ushered in profound changes in the trajectory of tribal communities. It not only induced structural changes within these communities and altered their long-standing occupations, but also sought to exploit tribal life for colonial profit. Their policies consolidated tribes into centralized areas and streamlined administrative control. Furthermore, the traditional authority of tribal chiefs underwent considerable influence and modification under colonial rule, further reshaping the structure of tribal leadership. Verrier Elwin said, “the fate of the tribal people under British rule was one of oppression and exploitation. Merchants and liquor-vendors swiftly descended upon them, using cunning tactics to deceive and swindle these unsuspecting communities, gradually eroding their vast lands. Consequently, many of them fell into the enduring poverty that persists among them

⁵⁷ Jayaprakash Raghaviah, ‘Conversion, Industrial Development and Social Engineering: Basel Mission in Malabar during the Nineteenth Century’, *Salesian Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 2017, p- 60.

to this day, a tragic consequence of exploitation and manipulation in their simplicity and lack of awareness”.⁵⁸

Tribal Experiences in Colonial Malabar

The British approach to dealing with tribes in India, particularly within the Madras Presidency, reflected remarkable indifference.⁵⁹ The colonial authorities not only neglected tribal development but also maintained a deliberate absence of direct interaction with these communities.⁶⁰ There was a lack of consistent policy aimed at enhancing the welfare of the tribes.⁶¹ Their disdain extended to their rejection of the traditional Malabar structure, not to mention considering it as an outdated system. This also led to a rift between the authorities and the common people of Malabar. Tribal mobilization was a new emerging space during the colonial period by the British as tribes had independent village autonomy.⁶² It is argued that colonialism brought about significant social and economic changes in the tribal communities of Malabar.⁶³ In Malabar, a significant proportion of the agricultural labourers belonged to the lower castes and tribes, who were often tied to the landlords. Edgar Thurston called them “men of *jenmies*” [sic].⁶⁴ William Logan pointed out that the Malabar landlords (*jenmis*) enjoyed extensive privileges under the British rule rather than that of Travancore.⁶⁵ William Thackeray, a British colonial officer and Collector of Malabar under the East India Company in the early 19th century, observed that the *jenmis*- primarily Brahmins and other privileged castes- exercised absolute control

⁵⁸ J. E Woolacott, *British rule in India*, Anmol publications, New Delhi, 1986, p.18-19.

⁵⁹ A. Aiyappan, *Report on the Social Economic Condition of Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras*. Madras, 1948, p.31.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² MaguniCharan, Behera, *op.cit.*, p.6.

⁶³ Prema Kurien, ‘Colonialism and Ethnogenesis: A Study of Kerala, India’. *Theory and Society*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1994, pp. 397.

⁶⁴ Edgar Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*. New Delhi, 1975, p. 446.

⁶⁵ As quoted in A.K. Gopalan, *Manninuvandi*, Trivandrum, 1975, p.6

over the land, reinforcing their power and status.⁶⁶ Among these elites, the Namboothiris were the prominent *jenmis*. Despite facing hardships under the Mysore rule, the Hindu elite, particularly the *jenmis*, aligned themselves with the British, strengthening colonial rule in Malabar. Recognizing their loyalty, the British formulated policies that protected the *jenmis'* land ownership rights, ensuring their continued dominance. In return, the *jenmis* supported British administration, which helped the colonial government maintain control over the region. However, this alliance came at the expense of tribal communities, who were pushed into marginalization and exploitation. The *jenmis*, with British backing, imposed high rents, restricted access to forest resources, and displaced indigenous groups from their ancestral lands, reducing them to bonded labourers or forcing them into extreme poverty. The British, prioritizing revenue generation and political stability, ignored the struggles of the tribal people, allowing their exploitation to continue unchecked under the oppressive feudal system.⁶⁷

In Malabar, the fusion of feudal practices with the onset of colonial rule exacerbated the challenges encountered by agricultural labourers and tribal communities. The impact of colonialism on these marginalized groups was largely indirect, as colonial policies and economic changes did not directly target them but still altered their traditional way of life. Only a small segment, such as those who managed to secure jobs in the colonial administration or adapt to the new economic system, experienced any benefits, while the majority faced displacement, loss of land, and deepened socio-economic marginalization. Interestingly, these segments have seen comparatively more progress in contrast to several upper-caste factions. Throughout history, land ownership remained concentrated within the upper-caste echelons, leaving the majority of lower caste individuals and tribes—excluding the *Kurichyars* and *Kurumans*—trapped in poverty as landless agricultural labourers.⁶⁸ These marginalized communities often settled in close proximity to the estates owned

⁶⁶ William Thackeray – Report on the Revenue Affairs of Malabar

⁶⁷ K. Panoor, *Keralathile Africa* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1963, p. 21.

⁶⁸ M.R. Pankajakshan, *Wayanattile Adivasikalude Pattukal*, Thrissur, 1998, p.229.

by the *jenmis*, serving as labourers and caretakers of the paddy fields. This socioeconomic structure was well-documented in the 1817 Census Report, underscoring the existence of distinct landholders among various tribes and the compensation provided for safeguarding these landholders' crops from wildlife. This entrenched servitude gradually evolved into a system of slavery, where tribal communities were not only bound to the land but also subjected to severe exploitation under the colonial agrarian economy.

Life of Slavery in Malabar

Slavery in Malabar, especially among the tribal communities, had deep historical roots and was strongly supported by colonial powers, including the Portuguese. For instance, in 1798, the Bombay Government established a plantation at Anjarakandy to cultivate pepper and coffee, appointing Murdock Brown as the overseer. Brown requested permission from the government to buy slaves to work on the plantation.⁶⁹ These slaves were agrestic, meaning they were tied to agricultural labour and worked primarily on farms and plantations.⁷⁰ Slavery in Malabar and Wayanad, as highlighted in Sullivan's 1841 report, was among the worst in India, with tribal communities and lower castes facing extreme exploitation, forced labour, and severe physical abuse under a rigid caste-based agrarian system. In contrast, slavery in Bengal and Bihar was tied to the *zamindari* system, where bonded labourers suffered perpetual servitude but were not always subjected to the same level of brutality. In the Madras Presidency, caste-based slavery was widespread, with enslaved people working on plantations and in households, though some had limited opportunities for mobility. The Deccan and Central India saw slavery linked to military service and feudal control, where some enslaved people could attain minor administrative roles. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, war captives and debt slaves had more

⁶⁹ Tanika Sarkar, *Patterns of institutionalized servility: the case of 19th century Malabar*, Sangram Books, London, 1985, pp. 1–4.

⁷⁰ The term "agrestic slaves" is frequently used by colonial scholars like William Logan in his *Malabar Manual* (1887) and Edgar Thurston in *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909) to describe individuals who were primarily engaged in agricultural labour in Southern India.

chances for social mobility compared to Malabar, where the system was highly oppressive and hereditary. Unlike North India, where indentured labour sometimes replaced slavery, Malabar's enslaved people had no paths to freedom, making their suffering uniquely severe under colonial rule. The report described the harsh living conditions, intense exploitation, and regular abuse faced by enslaved individuals. Colonial authorities often ignored these issues, focusing more on their economic interests than on improving the lives of the enslaved. This made it very difficult to bring about real change and alleviate the suffering of these communities. Contemporary writings, such as colonial ethnographies and reports, consistently highlighted the existence of an entrenched slave system in Wayanad taluk under British rule. Although the 1871 census claimed that "slavery no longer exists in the eye of the law," it admitted that, in practice, the inferior tribes of Malabar remained in bondage to their masters.⁷¹

In 19th century Malabar, the trade of slaves was conducted in various ways, similar to how land transactions occurred, with almost identical fees charged between the parties involved. Buchanan noted three methods of transferring the rights to use slaves in Malabar.⁷² The first, known as "*janmam*", involved the complete transfer of the slave to a new owner, with the original owner receiving the full value of the slave. The second method was through "*kanam*" or mortgage, where the owner received a loan amounting to about two-thirds of the slave's value. The owner also received a small annual amount of rice as a symbol of retaining some rights over the slave. Upon repayment of the loan, the owner could reclaim the slave. The third method, called "*pattam*", involved the owner leasing the slaves to another person in exchange for an annual fee, with the borrower responsible for their upkeep.⁷³ These categories of agricultural slave labourers continued to form the backbone of bonded labour in

⁷¹ Census Report of Population of 1871, Government Gazette Press, Madras, 1874 (Malabar part).

⁷² Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011. Originally published in 1807, p. 370.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

Wayanad even after the colonial period. Initially, these terms were used exclusively in the context of slave transactions, but after the prohibition of the slave trade, they became associated solely with land transactions.

Colonial Approach toward Slavery

The British colonial government's stance on slavery in Malabar was inconsistent.⁷⁴ While there were proclamations against the sale of slaves, these measures were largely superficial and did not address the root causes of servitude. The government's reluctance to interfere in the relationship between slaves and their masters allowed the continuation of exploitation. For instance, the government declared that it would not force a slave to leave one master for another, nor would it investigate claims of ownership over slaves. Despite the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in 1843, largely influenced by Christian missionaries,⁷⁵ the practice persisted in various forms, especially among the tribal communities of Wayanad. The abolition contributed to some social mobility among the slave communities, but it did not significantly impact the entrenched servitude among the tribes. According to Logan, even though slaves were officially allowed to be freed, the buying and selling of the *Cherumars* still took place secretly in 1852 and 1855, with the consent of those involved.⁷⁶

Religious Conversions and Social Mobility

The influence of the Mysorean power in Malabar led to the conversion of some agrestic slave castes to Islam as a means of escaping their bondage. By the early 19th century, some *Cherumans* and *Nayadis* had adopted Islam to free themselves from

⁷⁴ Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, 'The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India - Two Contrasting Cases.' *African and Asian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2011, pp. 59-70.

⁷⁵ The Christian Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society in Travancore, and the Basel Mission, and Jesuit Missionaries in Malabar actively supported abolishing slavery. They aimed to civilize the country and attract more followers to the church. However, their efforts to end slavery were primarily focused on converting oppressed communities, rather than fully abolishing the practice.

⁷⁶ C. H. Jayasree, 'Colonial Perceptions of an Indian Reality: official constructions of Slavery in Malabar', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. Vol. 67. Indian History Congress, 2006, pp.582-591.

servitude. However, this form of social mobility did not extend to the tribal communities, who remained largely untouched by such conversions. The 1871 census recorded that the Mappilas, a mixed Muslim community in Malabar, were growing in number due to conversions from slave castes. This conversion had a significant impact on freeing these castes from their former burdens, though it did not affect the tribal populations to the same extent.

Practice of Slavery

Despite official proclamations against slavery, the practice persisted in Malabar, particularly in connection with the Valliyurkavu temple in Wayanad. Here, a significant number of slaves were dedicated to the temple as offerings, a practice that was deeply ingrained in local traditions. During the temple's annual festivals, these slaves, often from the *Cherumar* caste, were either sold or auctioned to the highest bidder, effectively continuing the slave trade under the guise of religious custom. This system allowed the slave trade to flourish even after legal bans were put in place, highlighting the limitations of colonial policies in eradicating deeply rooted social practices.⁷⁷ Investigations into slavery in the early 19th century revealed that tribes such as the *Mavilan* and *Karimbalan* were still being sold as part of land contracts. Even as late as 1938, reports indicated that these tribes were being sold for meager amounts of grain. The persistence of slavery, and servitude among tribal communities in Wayanad extended into the post-colonial period, with remnants of these practices lingering into the 1970s. The colonial administration's failure to effectively abolish slavery and its continued tolerance of these practices underscore the enduring exploitation of tribal communities in Malabar.

The Christian missionaries played a vital role in the abolition of slavery in Kerala, beginning with their advocacy for the Slavery Abolishing Act of 1843. General Cullen, the British Resident, supported their efforts, leading to the passage of the Caste Disabilities Removal Act in 1850, which ensured that conversion to Christianity would not strip individuals of their property rights. The missionaries'

⁷⁷ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I. (1887). Government Press, pp. 138-140.

work led to the liberation of slaves on Munro Island in 1835, marking Kerala's first charter of freedom for slaves.⁷⁸

In 1847, the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) jointly petitioned for the abolition of slavery, followed by another in 1848, citing that slavery had been abolished in British India. Their efforts led to a Royal Proclamation in 1853 that aimed to free children born to government slaves, though it only impacted a small number. Persistent advocacy eventually resulted in the complete abolition of slavery in Kerala in 1855, including agrestic slavery and oppressive feudal practices.⁷⁹ The missionaries also secured inheritance rights for converted Christians in 1815 and fought for the dignity of women from slave castes, leading to reforms that allowed them to cover their breasts and gain employment, significantly improving their social and economic status.

Tribal life in Post-Colonial India

After independence, policymakers adopted three development approaches for tribal communities: isolation, assimilation, and integration.⁸⁰ The initial policy of isolation, once endorsed by the British, sought to maintain a distinct social life for tribals by segregating them from non-tribal populations. A proposal by Verrier Elwin in 1934 even suggested the creation of national parks or human zoo-like environments to minimize external interactions.⁸¹ Despite its initial implementation, this method was short-lived, giving rise to the assimilation strategy that promoted the integration of tribal communities with non-tribal neighbors. G.S. Ghurye supported the assimilation theory, advocating for the integration of tribal communities into

⁷⁸ Ayyappan, Balakrishnan, 'The role of the London Missionary Society and Church Missionary Society in the abolition of oozhiyam (bonded labor service) in Kerala.' *Journal for the Study of Religion* vol.33.no.2, 2020, p.14.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Prafulla Chandro Mohapatro *Economic Development of tribal India*, Ashish Publishing House New Delhi, 1987, pp.158-190.

⁸¹ Ramachandra Guha. *Savaging the civilized: Verrier Elwin, his tribals, and India*. University of Chicago Press, 1999, p 4.

mainstream Hindu society to promote national unity.⁸² As a result, various tribal groups across India gradually embraced Hindu culture.

The Report of the Committee on Special Multi-Purpose Blocks stated thus:

The past experience of the policies of isolation and assimilation forced the planners to take the middle way between the two, which is called the integrationist approach. This approach was largely the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru. The policy of integration consists of two types of measures for tribal development such as Protective and Promotional measures. The former consists of land policies, forest policies and the policies to protect tribal culture and traditions, while the latter is the same as development and welfare programmes undertaken by the government through the plans and other voluntary agencies to make the tribal life better through the integrationist approach.⁸³

As acknowledging the limitations of isolation and assimilation, policy makers, under the significant influence of Jawaharlal Nehru, vigorously endorsed the integrationist approach.⁸⁴ This approach aimed to intricately balance the preservation of tribal autonomy while actively facilitating their seamless integration into the broader societal framework. After independence, the central and state governments launched various programs aimed at the comprehensive welfare and development of tribal communities, enabling their participation in nation-building. Nehru's "Tribal Panchsheel Strategy",⁸⁵ articulated in 1952, sought a balance between integration and isolation. The strategy's five principles included allowing tribals to develop according to their own abilities, respecting their land and forest rights, training tribal teams for administration and development, preserving tribal social and cultural institutions, and using quality of life as the measure of development. Nehru emphasized respecting

⁸² Virginius Xaxa. 'Tribes as Indigenous People of India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 34, no. 51, 1999, pp. 3589-3595.

⁸³ Verrier Elwin (ed.), Report of the Committee on Special Multi-Purpose Blocks, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, 1960, p.64.

⁸⁴ M.N. Srinivas, Collected Essay, OUP, New Delhi, 2002, p. 87.

⁸⁵ De Debasree. 'Nehruvian vision of sustainable development for tribals in India: A critique', *South Asia Research* 34.1, 2014, pp. 1-18.

tribal life, culture, and institutions, aiming for their upliftment while ensuring integration with the broader society.

Over the subsequent years, the integrationist approach evolved into a cornerstone for tribal development policies, emphasizing a collaborative and culturally sensitive method to ensure the comprehensive development of tribal communities. This shift represented a departure from earlier strategies, highlighting a commitment to preserving tribal identities while fostering their meaningful participation in the larger social context.

Constitutional Provisions for Scheduled Tribes

In post-colonial India, the government has introduced various safeguards to ensure the educational level and socio-economic development of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities (Appendix-3).⁸⁶ These safeguards collectively aim to address the multi-faceted challenges faced by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, promoting their holistic development, preserving their cultural identity, and empowering them in various spheres of life.

Along with constitutional protection, tribal development programs have been included through different Five-Year Plans in various government schemes. During the First Five Year Plan (1951-56), the central and state governments had taken measures to implement various special programmes for addressing tribal life.⁸⁷ It emphasized the 52 provision of additional financial resources through a community development approach to address the problems of tribal people rather than evolving a clear-cut tribal development strategy. Towards the end of the plan (1954), 43 Special Multipurpose Tribal Development Projects (MTDPs) were created. These MTDPs could not fully serve the interests of the tribal people since the schemes were numerous and of a general nature. This approach continued during the Second Five

⁸⁶ P.L Mehta, *Constitutional Protection to Scheduled Tribes in India. Retrospect and Prospect*, Delhi, 1991, pp.59-60.

⁸⁷ Planning Commission, Government of India, First Five Year Plan, (1951 - 1956), New Delhi, pp.636 -640.

Year Plan (India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2011). During the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61), the Government of India gave priority to launching multi-purpose projects specifically designed for tribal areas. These initiatives aimed at comprehensive development with a focus on agriculture, irrigation, health care and education. The project emphasized building dams and canals for irrigation, increasing agricultural productivity and mitigating the impact of erratic rainfall. In addition, health care facilities, educational institutions (Appendix-4) and infrastructure projects were established for the upliftment of tribal communities. Efforts were made to preserve tribal cultures and social welfare programs reflecting a holistic approach to development were implemented to address the unique needs of these communities. In the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66), a strategic tribal development block system was introduced for decentralized tribal development. This system organized the tribal areas into different blocks, promoted regional planning and implemented suitable initiatives in the areas of education, health and infrastructure. The aim was to empower tribal communities and address their unique socio-economic needs through a more localized and community-based approach. The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) included initiatives such as comprehensive land plans to resolve land tenure problems and secure agricultural resources. The formation of cooperatives was aimed at promoting economic self-sufficiency among tribals through community-based initiatives. In addition, the Forest, Excise and Revenue Departments have granted concessions to ease the financial burden and improve the socio-economic conditions of the tribal people.⁸⁸ The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) introduced the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), based on the 1972 recommendations of the Dubey Committee for Comprehensive Tribal Development.⁸⁹ Rooted in an integrative approach, the scheme focused on protecting and promoting tribal people through welfare schemes, development schemes and conservation laws. It aims to significantly reduce poverty and unemployment, create productive assets and ensure human resource development

⁸⁸ Government of India, Fourth Five Year Plan: 1969-74, Planning, Commission, 1969-74, New Delhi, 1969, p.167.

⁸⁹ Dr. Devath Suresh, 'Tribal Development Through Five Year Plans In India An Overview.' *The Dawn Journal* vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp.794-813.

of tribals. Combined with the Annual and Five Year Plans, the Tribal Sub-Plan is a fund with budgetary provisions classified into Central and State sponsored schemes emphasizing comprehensive tribal community welfare. The Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85), aimed at helping 50 percent of the families belonging to the Scheduled Tribes cross the poverty line, emphasizing poverty alleviation as a key development objective. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) gained momentum for tribal development strategies and intensified efforts to address the socio-economic challenges faced by tribal communities. Educational development took center stage in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97). The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) introduced legal provisions to prevent alienation of tribal lands and facilitate their restoration.⁹⁰ The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-2007) emphasized improving educational standards and addressing issues related to land alienation, and formulated a national charter that prioritized social justice for disadvantaged groups, especially the Scheduled Tribes.⁹¹ The Eleventh Plan (2007-2012) emphasized inclusive growth and aimed to bridge the gap in human development indicators between tribal and non-tribal populations through targeted programs in education, healthcare, and infrastructure.⁹² The Twelfth Plan (2012-2017) continued this focus, with specific strategies to improve tribal livelihoods, ensure land rights, and enhances access to quality education and health services. Both plans recognized the need for a more participatory approach in development, involving tribal communities in planning and implementation processes.⁹³ Throughout these projects, the government indicated a high level of concern and commitment to the overall welfare of the Scheduled Tribes, reflecting a sustained effort to address their unique challenges and promote holistic development.

⁹⁰ Government of India, Approach Paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan: 1997-2002, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1997, p.94.

⁹¹ Government of India, Tenth Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, 2002-2007, New Delhi, 2001.

⁹² Government of India, "Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012)", Planning Commission, Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁹³ Government of India, "Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–2017)", Planning Commission, SAGE Publications, 2013.

While scrutinizing the effectiveness of Five-Year Plans in addressing tribal life in India, limited participation of tribal groups in decision-making processes and delays in plan implementation can be noted. The predominant focus on quantitative objectives, such as economic indicators, obscures the qualitative aspects of development and risks neglecting the holistic well-being and cultural preservation of tribal communities. Inadequate resource allocation within the overall budget for tribal development was identified as a constraint affecting comprehensive implementation of projects. Persistent challenges include land expropriation and lack of effective defense mechanisms, resulting in constant displacement and livelihoods of tribal communities. Addressing these concerns requires a shift to a more participatory, culturally sensitive and flexible approach to planning and implementing development strategies for tribal communities.

The Government of India has initiated numerous employment schemes and developmental programs for tribal welfare, including the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Prime Minister's Roger Yojana (PMRY), and the Training for Self Employment for Rural Youth Programme. These schemes, managed by District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) and banks, aim to support both rural and urban youth, particularly those below the poverty line. For instance, PMRY, launched in 1993, addresses educated unemployment by promoting self-employment in industries and services, reserving 22.5% of opportunities for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 27% for Other Backward Classes.⁹⁴

During the 1980s, special programs such as the Asset Programme and the Employment Programme were launched to improve tribal economic status. The Asset Programme aimed at poverty alleviation by providing productive assets directly to the poor, while the Employment Programme offered jobs during non-agricultural seasons to address persistent poverty due to lack of employment opportunities.⁹⁵ The

⁹⁴ Anil Thakur, *Employment Schemes in India: Policy, Performance and Challenges*. Gyan Publishing House, 2011, p.18.

⁹⁵ Gyanendra Pandey, *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States*. Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2015, pp.21-22.

Panchayat Extension Act (PESA), enacted in 1996, promoted grassroots democracy and tribal administration. The Act emphasized self-rule for tribal people through Panchayats and Gram Sabhas, following guidelines set by the Indian Constitution's Fifth Schedule, which includes grants for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.⁹⁶ Joint Forest Management and PESA have enhanced tribal inclusion in education, social systems, and development schemes, driving development goals effectively.⁹⁷

Development Initiatives and Programmes for Scheduled Tribes in Kerala

In the post- colonial era, the Kerala government has been showing a deep concern for the welfare of the tribal people. The government launched several policy initiatives and developmental programmes for their upliftment. These initiatives include fully subsidized education, land settlements housing and healthcare facilities, allocation of surplus land and subsidies for agricultural development.⁹⁸The educational projects comprise construction, renovation and management of nursery schools, medical residential schools, hostels for boys and girls, vocational training institutions, and tutorial schemes for school going students and failed students. The system of peripatetic education launched by the governments facilitates the education of tribal children, in which a teacher goes about visiting tribal colonies and teaching them. In Kerala, the Scheduled Tribes Development Department, along with Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) and “*Oorukoottams*”⁹⁹implements tribal welfare programs. Established in 1980, the department operates through multiple project offices and tribal development offices, managing around 47 projects focused on education, healthcare, social upliftment, cultural development, and other areas.

⁹⁶ M. R Baiju, *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*. New Century Publications, Delhi, 2011, pp.12-36.

⁹⁷ Ranjit Mohapatra, *Development and Tribal Identity*. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2015, p.37.

⁹⁸ M Kunhaman, et al. "The Tribal Economy of Kerala: An Intra-Regional Analysis." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 20, no. 11, 1985, p.466.

⁹⁹ **Oorukoottams** is a Malayalam term referring to traditional village assemblies or tribal councils that make collective decisions on social, cultural, and land-related matters within Adivasi communities. Ooru" = village or settlement (especially used for tribal hamlets)"Koottam" = gathering or assembly.

Kerala boasts an overall literacy rate of 93.91%, yet the literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes (STs) remains significantly lower at 75.81% (Table 2). However, this figure is still higher than the national average for ST literacy, which stands at 59% (Census of India, 2011) (Table 3)

Table 2

Literacy of Scheduled Tribes and General State Average

Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
General Literacy	55.08	69.75	78.55	89.81	90.92	93.91
ST Literacy	17.26	25.72	31.79	57.22	64.35	75.81
Gap in Literacy	37.82	44.03	47.06	26.57	32.59	18.1

Source: Census of India 1961-2011

Between 2001 and 2011, male literacy among STs saw an increase from 70.8% to 80.76%, while female literacy showed even greater progress, rising from 58.1% to 71.08%.¹⁰⁰ Despite these improvements, tribal literacy levels remain well below the general literacy rate in Kerala for both men and women.

Furthermore, data from 1961 to 2011 consistently highlights a significant gap between the literacy rates of the general population and Scheduled Tribes, emphasizing the persistent disparities in educational attainment (Appendix- 5).

Table 3

Comparative literacy rate SC, ST, and General population (1961-2011) India

Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
General	28.3	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	72.99
SC	10.27	14.67	21.38	37.41	54.69	66.07
ST	8.53	11.3	16.35	29.6	47.1	58.96

Source: Registrar General of India

¹⁰⁰ Census of India 2011.

Implementation of Five-Year Plans in Kerala

The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) has been a key component in addressing the socio-economic disparities among tribal communities in Kerala. According to the TSP guidelines, Union and State Ministries are required to allocate budgetary provisions proportional to the tribal population in the respective state or country. However, since the 12th Five-Year Plan, Kerala has allocated nearly 3% of its budget towards the TSP annually, despite its tribal population being only 1.45% of the total population.¹⁰¹ With the establishment of the NitiAayog in 2015, significant changes were introduced at the central level in the pattern of fund allocation, affecting both Plan and Non-Plan schemes. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA) updated the guidelines for Central Schemes under the TSP in June 2017.¹⁰² These changes modified how funds were distributed during the Annual and Five-Year Plan periods. Despite these shifts, the Kerala government has continued to follow its existing budget allocation system, retaining both the Annual and Five-Year Plan structures.

The major tribal development programmes in the State under the Five-Year Plans divide into three phases, and each phase includes four Five Year Plan periods. The phases are:

- a) Phase- I: First Five Year Plan (1951-56) to Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)
- b) Phase- II: Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) to Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97)
- c) Phase- III: Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) to Twelfth Five Year Plan (20012-17)

In the First Phase of the Five-Year Plan, the Government of Kerala formulated and executed various schemes and programmes for the backward communities through the Harijan Welfare Department. Initially, it started many schools in the tribal regions, particularly residential schools for the educational empowerment of tribal

¹⁰¹ Kerala Economic Review, 2017, p.11.

¹⁰² Rekha Ajitha, 'Tribal development: Issues of Tribal Sub Plan allocation and utilization in Kerala', *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 2020, pp.4-7.

students. Moreover, the department implemented notable interventions in tribal areas such as the provisions for mobile medical units, construction of houses, the establishment of colonies or settlements, started functional Industrial training centres and production-cum-training centres, etc. In 1972, the State government started the Pre-Examination Training Centre at Ernakulam, and the Tribal Research and Training Institute at Kozhikode.¹⁰³ The important landmark in the development activities of backward communities was the opening of the Harijan Development Corporation for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Kerala. In the second phase, the Union Ministry introduced the Tribal Sub-Plan for the tribal development programmes to the overall development of the tribal communities. Moreover, in 1975, the Government of Kerala formulated the Directorate of Tribal Welfare for the promotion of the welfare of the tribal communities in the state. Furthermore, the Union Ministry selected Attappady for opening ITDP (Integrated Tribal Development Programme) in Kerala, for the direct control of the tribal development activities. The Government of Kerala started seven ITDPs in all over the state during the period 1975-1980. Besides, the state government conducted a Socio economic survey about tribal communities in 1979.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the State Government started the Girijan Service Co-operative Society in 43 tribal regions to protect the tribal communities from the exploitation of contractors or middlemen in the collection and marketing of forest produces. Also, for the promotion of the tribal health sector, the government started ayurvedic and allopathic dispensaries, mid-wife centres, and mobile medical units in the tribal areas. Furthermore, the Scheduled Tribe Development Department in Kerala launched a Special Tribal Literacy Programme to the tribal communities for reducing the illiteracy among the tribal communities. In the third phase, the Government of Kerala executed the Democratic Decentralization program, which has revolutionised the history of tribal developments in the state. Through the People's Plan Campaign, enabled local self-governments to plan and implement need-based projects with active

¹⁰³ C.Krishnan, *Awareness and Utilisation of Educational Development Schemes by Tribesfolk of Wayanad, Kerala*. Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development, Centre for Development Studies, 1999, p.47.

¹⁰⁴ Jayalakshmi Menon, *Educational status of adivasi students in wayanad district, kerala*. Diss. University of Calicut, 2019, pp.39-45.

tribal participation. This shift to a bottom-up approach ensured better fund allocation, transparency, and empowerment of tribal communities in decision-making processes.¹⁰⁵ Subsequently, the government has been allocating a part of the TSP funds for the LSGIs. Moreover, like *Gramasabha*, *Oorukoottam* has been functioning in the tribal areas for conveying the information, and the formulation and implementation of various tribal developmental schemes. The special projects like the Sugandagiri Cardamom Project, Priyadarshini Tea Estate, Pookkod Dairy Project, etc. started in this period under the Tribal Development Department for the rehabilitation of tribal communities in the State.¹⁰⁶ The Maithry scheme for housing construction was implemented during the period 1999-2000 and also distributed 2862 acres of land to the landless tribes in the eight districts under the scheme “Tribal Mission Rehabilitation Programme”.¹⁰⁷ Also, the government has been implementing several schemes like education, health, and livelihoods, etc. in the tribal areas for the overall socio-economic development of the tribal population.

Initiatives for Tribal Land Rights

By the late 1950s, tribal communities in Kerala had realized the value of their land. Once they lost their traditional land, they lost their culture and it negatively affected their very existence. Most of the tribals in Kerala were not aware of land ownership, but the realization of the value of land in the post-colonial period forced them to maintain tribal land titles. Following the recommendations of the 1949 Congress Agrarian Reform Committee Report¹⁰⁸ and the Central Directives on Land Reforms, the first state government of Kerala introduced a unified land reform in 1957. While many Congress governments in other parts of India were reluctant to introduce such land reform laws, the communist government of Kerala, after

¹⁰⁵ T M Thomas Isaac and S M Vijayanand, *People's Plan: Democratic Decentralisation in Kerala*, Penguin Random House, 2020, p.21.

¹⁰⁶ Darley Jose Kjosavik, and Nadarajah Shanmugaratnam, 'Integration or Exclusion? Locating Indigenous Peoples in the Development Process of Kerala, South India', *Forum for Development Studies* 3, 2004, pp. 231-273.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ All India Congress Committee. *Report of the Congress Agrarian Reform Committee*. Internet Archives, p. 8, 1949.

independence, passed the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act, 1959.¹⁰⁹ But it could not be effectively implemented due to various reasons. Subsequently, the coalition government that came into power revised the Bill in 1960. The state government enacted the revised Act in 1969, and it came into force on January 1, 1970.¹¹⁰ The Land Reform Act of 1970 aimed to redistribute land from large landowners to the landless. This law ended the long-standing landlord-tenant system and set limits on land ownership, although it excluded plantations and private forests. The Act gave tenants ownership rights to the land they worked on and protected them from eviction. Many saw this law as a major move to help the landless, especially the tribal communities. However, the implementation of the law has been less effective. The goal was to distribute surplus land to the landless poor, but even today, many people in Kerala remain without land because the law has not been fully enforced.¹¹¹ (Appendix-6). The Kerala Assembly in 1975 had passed another Act, the KST (Kerala Scheduled Tribes Restriction on Transfer and Restriction on Alienated land) Act for the land alienation issues in Kerala.¹¹² The majority of the tribal populations in Kerala had been unaware of individual land ownership.¹¹³ The realisation of the value of land forced them to retain their tribal land titles. However, by that time they had already lost an opportunity to claim the ownership of their land.

According to the KST Act, alienated tribal lands were termed as “stolen property” and guaranteed restoration of their tribal lands from January 26, 1960, in addition to voiding any tribal land deal after 1960.¹¹⁴ More than 8000 applications were made to recover the lost land. Political insistence and pressure from non-

¹⁰⁹ B.A. Prakash, ‘Changes in Agrarian Structure and Land Tenures in Kerala: A Historical Review’, *State and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1984, p. 27.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹¹¹ Ronald J. Herring, ‘Abolition of Landlordism in Kerala: A Redistribution of Privilege’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 15, no. 26, 1980, p. 60.

¹¹² Act 31 of 1975, Kerala Legislative Assembly (1975), “The Kerala Scheduled Tribes Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands Act 1975”, Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Legislative Assembly.

¹¹³ N.R Nithya, *op.cit.*, p-103.

¹¹⁴ Mariamma J Kalathil, ‘Withering Valli: Alienation, degradation and enslavement of tribal women in Attappady’, *Discussion Paper, Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram* (2004). p.33.

authentic tribals forced the ruling party to freeze the law for over twenty-five years. In 1988, NallaThampiTera petitioned the Kerala High Court to implement the 1975 Act.¹¹⁵ In 1993, the High Court ordered the government to implement the special law within 6 months. However, the government sought extension of time for implementation.¹¹⁶ The court set a final deadline of September 30, 1996 for implementation. By then, the laws and regulations for restitution of alienated land had changed from 1960 to 1986. However, most of the tribal people were dispossessed of their land before 1986.¹¹⁷

Since independence, the process of land transfer and land alienation has intensified (Table 4). The use of land for various types of cultivation has exacerbated the problem. Despite efforts by the State and Union Territories, the trend of alienating tribal land in favour of non-tribal people has not been completely halted.¹¹⁸

Table 4

Land Transfer from Tribal to Non-Tribal Individuals in Kerala (1966-1976)

Mode of Land Transfer	Percentage of Cases	Percentage of Area
Leases	29.1%	27.4%
Sales	44.7%	42.1%
Mortgages	16.1%	18.8%
Oral Transfers	1.7%	1.6%
Usufructuary Mortgages	2.2%	3.1%
Other Means	6.2%	7.0%

Source: Report on Socio-economic Survey of Tribals in Kerala 1976-78, Trivandrum, 1979, pp. 33-34.

¹¹⁵ *The Hindu*, 24 November 2007.

¹¹⁶ Out of 140 MLAs in the Kerala Legislative Assembly, 139 supported the Bill.

¹¹⁷ C. R. Bijoy, 'Adivasis Betrayed: Adivasi Land Rights in Kerala', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 34, no. 22, 1999, p.1330.

¹¹⁸ M.A Oommen, *Essays on Kerala Economy*. New Delhi, 1993, p. 10, *The Hindu*, 9 Dec. 2009.

The manipulation and inadequacies in land records have significantly contributed to the problem of tribal land alienation.¹¹⁹ Historically, tribals were not legally recognized as landowners despite their cultivation of the land. The legacy of unsystematic land records from the pre-colonial and colonial eras persisted under subsequent rulers. Many tribes lacked proper revenue documentation due to their geographical isolation and disinterest in integrating into the mainstream revenue system, as well as their lack of understanding regarding the importance of title deeds for land used in shifting cultivation.¹²⁰ This deficient land record system, coupled with widespread illiteracy, poverty, and ignorance, facilitated the continuous transfer of resources from tribals to non-tribals over several decades.¹²¹

Village heads often exploited the absence of accurate land records, appropriating compensation meant for the tribes.¹²² Additionally, land alienation was exacerbated by “*benami*” transactions, wherein land was transferred illegally or through proxy transactions.¹²³ A 1975 study team report by the Union Home Ministry highlighted the extensive illegal and collusive transactions that resulted in the transfer of adivasi lands, leaving the original owners reduced to the status of sharecroppers.¹²⁴ Similarly, a research project by the Ministry of Environment and Forests reported that many tribal households had alienated more than half of their land even before the settlement of migrants.¹²⁵ A simplified representation of how this land was alienated is given below (Table 5)

¹¹⁹ Hari Charan Behera, and A. P. Singh, ‘Land Reforms and Record Management in Tribal Areas: Pertaining Issues and Prospects’, *SSRN*, 2009, p.183.

¹²⁰ P.R.G. Mathur, *Tribal Situation in Kerala*, Kerala Historical Society, 1977, p.12.

¹²¹ Kailas Sarap, ‘Erosion of Access to Resource, Poverty and Public Action in the Tribal Belt of Central India’, *Sociological Bulletin*, 2017, p.28.

¹²² Anna Lora-Wainwright, ‘Grassroots perspectives on relocation: threats and opportunities’, *positions: east asia cultures critique* 22.3, 2014, pp.661-689.

¹²³ A. Aiyappan, "Tribes in South India", in Devendra Thakur, et al., (eds.) *Tribal Life in India*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 93.

¹²⁴ Devleena Ghosh, *The Bones of Our Mother: Adivasi Dispossession in an Indian State*. 2021, Routledge, pp.443-463.

¹²⁵ Elizabeth Edison, and Rugmini Devi. ‘Tribal land alienation, agricultural changes and food culture transition in Attappady’, *South Asia Research* 39.1 2019, pp.61-64.

Table5*Modes of Land Alienation in Wayanad*

Mode of Land Transfer	Percentage of Land Alienated
Cash Sales to Settlers	39.52 %
Mortgages to Settlers	28.23%
Illegal Encroachments by Settlers	20.97%
Sharecropping	2.42%
Sales to Non-Settlers or Non-Tribals	3.22%

Source: Report of the Research Project by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, 1975

Although lease-based land transfers were less extensive compared to sales, they covered significant areas in districts like Trivandrum, Quilon, and Palakkad, while sales were more prevalent in Kottayam, Idukki, North Wayanad, and Malappuram. The practice of oral land transfers was notably problematic in the Wayanad taluks, with many Kurichia *tarawards* experiencing land alienation through informal leases.¹²⁶ Post-independence wildlife and forest regulations further pressured tribals to abandon traditional shifting cultivation practices, pushing them into leasing their land to non-tribals.¹²⁷ Tribal lands were often leased on stamp paper worth just Rs. 50, violating land transaction laws. A. Aiyappan remarked that a comprehensive review of land dealings in tribal areas would reveal distressing outcomes.¹²⁸

Forest Rights Act and its Implications

The forest has always been central to the lives of tribal people, providing them with everything they needed to survive. They built their homes from materials found in the forest, gathered food from it, and used its resources in their rituals and customs. Many aspects of the forest, like stones, plants, and animals, became sacred to them.

¹²⁶ Interview with Sebastian, Non tribal person, Nadavayal, Wayanad, 5th May 2019.

¹²⁷ Elizabeth Edison and Rugmini Devi, *op.cit.*, p.68.

¹²⁸ N.R Nithya, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

The tribes' economy was closely tied to the forest, and they saw themselves as its rightful guardians while also feeling deeply connected to it.¹²⁹

However, the arrival of colonial rule marked a significant shift in the management and use of forest lands. The colonial government prioritized the exploitation of forests as a resource for state revenue and the expansion of agricultural land, often at the expense of local communities.¹³⁰ During the colonial period, laws like the Indian Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878, and the Forest Rights Act of 1927, were used to take control of forests and push adivasis off their ancestral lands. These laws prioritized government control and commercial interests over the rights of adivasi communities, leading to their widespread displacement.¹³¹

After Independence, the Indian government continued this approach with new laws like the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980. These laws further limited adivasi access to forests, continuing the colonial-era pattern of placing conservation and state interests above the needs and rights of adivasis.¹³² Despite these challenges, the symbiotic relationship between forests and forest-dwelling communities continued to be acknowledged in various policies, including the National Forest Policy of 1988.¹³³ The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) also sought to protect the cultural identity, traditions, and resources of tribal communities. PESA aimed to empower local governance structures, such as Gram Panchayats, by requiring mandatory consultation in matters

¹²⁹ C. Madegowda, and C. UshaRao, 'Impact of forest policies and the economy of the soliga tribal's in biligirirangaswamy temple wildlife sanctuary, South India', *Journal of Historical Archaeology & Anthropological Sciences*, 2017, p.115.

¹³⁰ Velayutham Saravanan, 'Economic Exploitation of Forest Resources in South India During the Pre-Forest Act Colonial era, 1793-1882' *International Forestry Review*, 2008, pp.65-73.

¹³¹ Prakash Tripathi, 'Tribes and Forest: A critical appraisal of the tribal forest right in India', *TIJ's Research Journal of Social Science & Management*, 2016, pp.7-11.

¹³² Pernille Gooch, 'Victims of conservation or rights as forest dwellers: Van Gujjar pastoralists between contesting codes of law', *Conservation and Society*, 2009, p-241.

¹³³ Dinesh Pratap, 'Community Participation and Forest Policies in India', *Social Change*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2010, pp. 235-56.

of land acquisition and the resettlement of displaced persons.¹³⁴ Yet, these measures fell short of addressing the historical injustices faced by tribal communities.¹³⁵ The need for a more comprehensive approach led to the enactment of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.¹³⁶ This landmark legislation was designed to rectify the long-standing denial of land rights to tribal communities and to restore their traditional rights over forest lands.

The Forest Rights Act of 2006 (FRA 2006) marked a significant change in governmental policy. Unlike earlier forest regulations, this Act, introduced by the Indian Government, recognized the historical wrongs suffered by adivasis under both colonial and post-independence administrations.¹³⁷ The FRA was designed to confer both individual and collective rights to forest lands to adivasis and other forest residents who have lived there traditionally.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, as discussed by scholars such as Rangarajan, Gadgil, and Datta, the FRA is also connected to ongoing debates about conservation in India.¹³⁹ It is suggested that the Act could potentially reconcile conservation goals with sustainable resource use, aiming to achieve both objectives.¹⁴⁰

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 was widely seen as a response to the longstanding demands of Adivasis, driven by political mobilization and activism.

¹³⁴ Yatindra Singh Sisodia, 'Implementation of PESA and Status of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Fifth Scheduled Areas of Indian States', *Routledge eBooks*, 2021, pp. 122–34.

¹³⁵ Yatindra Singh Sisodia, and Tapas K. Dalapati. 'Decentralised Governance and Implementation of Pesa in Tribal Areas.' *Routledge eBooks*, 2018, pp. 332–47.

¹³⁶ Sai Abhipsa Gochhayat, 'Project on FRA ACT 2006: The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006.' *Social & Political Philosophy e-Journal*, 2011, pp.9-13.

¹³⁷ Indrani Sigamany, 'The Indian Forest Rights Act (2006) and International Legal Regimes', *Routledge eBooks*, 2021, pp. 244–56.

¹³⁸ Hitabhilash Mohanty, and Sonali Singh. 'Recognition of Forest Rights of Scheduled Tribes: In Context of Community Forest Rights', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2020, pp.6-7.

¹³⁹ David Ludden, "Book Reviews: Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992, pp.12-25.

¹⁴⁰ Rajesh S Kallaje, 'Implementation of Forest Rights Act in India: A Review Article', *Indian Forester*, 2022, pp.20-21.

However, it is crucial to note that this Act was enacted nearly fifteen years after India began adopting neoliberal economic policies.¹⁴¹ These policies have made land and resources more accessible to both international and domestic capital. The struggles of Adivasis for land and forest rights, along with the pressures of competitive electoral politics, have also played a significant role in shaping the FRA. On one hand, the FRA can be seen as legislation aimed at addressing the development and rights issues of Adivasis across India. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as part of a broader neoliberal strategy that ultimately frees up the majority of Adivasi land and forest resources for use by the private sector and conservation efforts. While the FRA grants legal rights to limited areas of land, often capped at 4 hectares per household, it restricts larger claims and limits access to forests through regulations. The provision for Community Forest Rights (CFR) assigns conservation responsibilities to Adivasis but places restrictions on their use of forest resources.¹⁴² The FRA, while legalizing some property rights for Adivasis, may also facilitate the alienation of larger tracts of their ancestral lands for other uses, potentially curtailing further claims. The Act's focus on conservation and development could be seen as serving state and private sector interests while offering only limited appeasement to Adivasis.¹⁴³ Additionally, the FRA does not address intergenerational claims, leaving future generations without clear rights to ancestral lands.¹⁴⁴ The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has issued guidelines for implementing the FRA, but the application of its provisions varies widely across different states and regions, as seen in Kerala.¹⁴⁵ Adivasi communities in India are not

¹⁴¹ Kaveri Gill, Rajesh Bhattacharya Snehashish Bhattacharya, *The Political Economy of Capitalism, 'Development' and Resistance: The State and Adivasis of India*. Oxfam India, 2015, p.18.

¹⁴² Suparna Sanyal Mukherjee, and Saikat Kumar Basu, 'The forest dwelling tribes and community forest resources (CFR) contradict forest Governance', *International Journal on Biological Sciences*, 2023, p.7.

¹⁴³ Antje Linkenbach, and Vidhu Verma, 'State, Law, and Adivasi: Shifting Terrains of Exclusion.' *SAGE Publications eBooks*, 2022, pp.17-31.

¹⁴⁴ Bijayashree Satpathy,'Forest Rights Act Implementation in Odisha', *South Asia Research* 37 2017, pp.259-276.

¹⁴⁵ Jyotsna Krishnakumar, V. Anitha and Rajeev Balakrishnan, Community participation in Natural Resource Conservation: Forest Rights Act Among The Kadars In Kerala, India.*semantic scholar*, 2015, p.16.

uniform in their relationship to land and forests, livelihoods, or cultural practices. These historical and regional differences affect how much the FRA can genuinely benefit Adivasis in reclaiming their ancestral lands.¹⁴⁶ At first glance, the Forest Rights Act (FRA) looks like a big step towards fixing past wrongs and giving Adivasis their due economic, social, and political rights. The preamble of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, passed on December 15, 2006, points out that the rights of people living on forest land were not properly recognized during both colonial times and in independent India.¹⁴⁷ This lack of recognition led to unfair treatment of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers that are essential for maintaining healthy forest ecosystems.¹⁴⁸ However, while the FRA seems fair in its general ideas, problems arise when looking at the specifics. The details about how land rights are restored and the limits on claims, like the amount of land and the cut-off date, can be restrictive. Implementation of the FRA has faced various legal and bureaucratic hurdles, which has made it less effective and left Adivasis at a disadvantage, as shown by studies from different states.¹⁴⁹ The Act recognizes the rights of those who were on the land before the December 2005 cut-off date, but does not address broader issues like large-scale displacements and the loss of land and livelihoods that many Adivasis have suffered. Thus FRA has fallen short in delivering justice to many Adivasis who have been historically dispossessed. Access to land is crucial for the socioeconomic stability and development of these Adivasis, who are severely affected by neoliberal exclusion.¹⁵⁰ As a result, in Kerala, the FRA cannot be viewed as a means to address

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Shomona Khanna, 'Historical wrongs and forest rights', *India's Scheduled Areas*, 2019, p.9.

¹⁴⁸ K.S. Venkateswara Kumar, 'Tribal culture, Traditional Knowledge and Forest Management in India: An Environmental Justice Perspective on Forest Rights Act.' *Indian Forester*, 2022, pp.8-14.

¹⁴⁹ Rajesh S. Kallaje, *op.cit.*, p.23.

¹⁵⁰ Virginius Xaxa, 'Isolation, Inclusion and Exclusion', *Adivasi Rights and Exclusion in India*, Routledge India, 2018, p.11.

historical injustices by granting land to all landless Adivasis or those who have historically lost their access to land and forests.¹⁵¹

In recent years, Kerala has embarked on extensive infrastructure development, including ports, hydroelectric projects, metro lines, and gas pipelines. These projects frequently overlook the interests of communities whose lives depend on forest resources. Despite forests being vital for biofuels, tourism, timber, and other economic activities, a significant portion of the population relies on these areas for their livelihood. The central question addressed is whether the state's development initiatives align with the needs of indigenous people or contribute to their landlessness through forced evictions and delays in the implementation of FRA.

It can be noticed that land distribution for Adivasis in Kerala is severely inadequate. Interviews with Adivasis revealed that the state often provides minimal land titles, such as just 25 cents per family, which is insufficient for their needs related to cultivation, animal rearing, and gathering forest produce. For example, families from *ChengaraSamaram* were allotted only 25 cents each, which does not support sustainable livelihoods.¹⁵² Furthermore, much of the allocated land is uncultivable, making the distribution both unfair and impractical. The study also found that the Supreme Court's February 13, 2019, order for the eviction of approximately 10 lakh forest-dwelling communities due to rejected FRA claims has exacerbated the challenges faced by Adivasis.¹⁵³ This decision underscores the systemic issues impacting Adivasis, who are frequently marginalized and lack necessary resources. Interviews with Adivasis and their advocates revealed that nonviolent protests are a key method for reclaiming land rights.¹⁵⁴ These protests are supported not only by

¹⁵¹ Ursula, and Suma Vishnudas, 'In the Jungle of Law: Adivasi Rights and Implementation of Forest Rights Act in Kerala', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 19, 2012, pp. 41.

¹⁵² Failure to implement Chengara package raises concerns: Kerala HC. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/failure-to-implement-chengara-package-raises-concerns-kerala-hc/article65211201>.

¹⁵³ D. Kalathingal, 'Voluntary Relocation and the Violation of Forest Rights in Kerala', *Economic and Political*, 2019, p.18.

¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth Edison, and Rugmini Devi, *op.cit.*, pp. 75–77.

social action groups and human rights organizations, but also by Christian missionaries, including Jesuits, who have played a significant role in advocating for Adivasi rights. Their involvement highlights a broader network of support for the Adivasi struggle, despite the lack of political backing.

The following case studies illustrate the diverse and complex issues faced by these communities, revealing systemic inefficiencies and ongoing struggles in the application of the FRA. The Adivasis of Maniyankinar hamlet in Thrissur district faced eviction threats and land denial in the 1980s, which led to widespread dissent and a protracted struggle for land rights. Their nonviolent protest in front of the Thrissur collector's office, lasting three months, culminated in a partial victory with land reclamation. The Adivasis received land but lacked formal titles, leaving them vulnerable to potential eviction. Despite their success in reclaiming land, the absence of land titles has created ongoing insecurity and anxiety. The state's apathy towards recognizing and formalizing their rights underscores a persistent issue in the implementation of the FRA. The Adivasis of Maniyankinar continue to fight for comprehensive recognition and secure land tenure.

Another stark example of this issue can be seen in Nelliampathy, Palakkad district, where Adivasi communities engaged in a prolonged struggle for land reclamation after learning about the Forest Rights Act (FRA) through organizations like the Adivasi AikyaVedhi.¹⁵⁵ Despite their efforts, including five years of advocacy and reclaiming 750 acres of land, the Adivasis have yet to receive formal land titles. Rajan, an Adivasi leader from Nelliampathy, highlighted the ongoing difficulties in securing land rights due to inactive Forest Rights Committees (FRCs) and a lack of awareness about FRA among the community, raising concerns about who is responsible for effective implementation and education in regions with low literacy levels. The Forest Rights Act (FRA) in Wayanad is meant to help Adivasi and other forest-dependent communities secure rights to their ancestral lands. However, the way

¹⁵⁵ Darley Jose.Kjosavik, 'Politicising Development: Re-imagining Land Rights and Identities in Highland Kerala, India', *Forum for Development Studies* 37, 2010, pp. 243-268.

the FRA is put into practice in Wayanad has led to many problems for these communities. Although the Act is supposed to protect them and ensure they have access to land and resources, it often falls short, leaving them vulnerable to displacement and unfair treatment.

The forced displacement of Adivasi communities in Wayanad exposes the deep flaws in the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and the persistent structural inequalities that govern tribal land rights. Between 2022 and 2023, several families reported being coerced by forest officials into signing blank documents, which were later manipulated to justify their eviction.¹⁵⁶ The supposed rehabilitation measures, including a compensation of INR 15,00,000 per family, were inadequate, as the land allocated—approximately 15 cents per household—was subject to severe restrictions on farming and livestock rearing. These limitations not only disrupted their traditional subsistence economy but also forced them into precarious wage labor, undermining their autonomy and perpetuating economic marginalization. Instead of ensuring the security of Adivasi livelihoods, the FRA, in practice, appears to have failed as a protective mechanism, allowing state authorities to use legal loopholes to displace indigenous communities under the guise of conservation and development.

The selective enforcement of land rights further reveals the arbitrary and exclusionary nature of the FRA's implementation. In another tribal hamlet in Wayanad, while a small number of families received land titles, the majority remained without any legal proof of ownership, making them vulnerable to eviction. Despite their long-standing dependence on forest resources such as medicinal plants, honey, and small-scale farming, many were denied their rightful claims. Reports indicate that forest officials deceived several families into signing blank documents, which were later manipulated to suggest voluntary relocation due to threats from wildlife. This deliberate misrepresentation not only reflects systemic administrative malpractice but also highlights the continued subjugation of Adivasi communities through bureaucratic manoeuvring. The state's failure to uphold the FRA in both letter and

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Rajan, Wayand, 7th may 2019.

spirit demonstrates how indigenous rights are often compromised by legalistic justifications that prioritize state control over tribal agency, reinforcing historical patterns of dispossession and marginalization.

The facts mentioned above show that among Adivasis from different panchayats across several districts, only a few have official land titles. Most of them have only “*record of rights*” (possession certificates), and some do not have any land at all, living instead in rented houses or huts. While many see the FRA as a key tool for reclaiming land rights, there are some concerns that it might keep Adivasi communities tied to traditional ways of life, possibly holding them back from broader development opportunities.¹⁵⁷ The Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2006, acknowledged the tribes as the guardians of the forest. Sadly, though tribes have been granted rights over the forest in most of the states in India, the Act has still not been implemented completely in Kerala.

History shows that the tribal people in Kerala had been fighting for their land since 1950. After many decades, land fights by tribal people forced the government to provide the available alternative land for them. Kerala was the first State to implement the Forest Act in 2006. This scheme was first completed in Kollam district. However, despite having a “record of rights,” it did not confer full ownership of the land. The land could be passed down through generations but cannot be sold or transferred. Additionally, restrictions prevent them from cutting trees, including the branches of the silver oak trees in coffee plantations, which contradicts the provisions of the FRA that allow for the cutting of up to 75 trees per hectare for housing and related needs. Financial institutions and banks also refuse to accept the “record of rights” as valid collateral. The Adivasi community, which is highly organized, remains resolute in their fight to gradually secure more rights. One elderly member

¹⁵⁷ Rajshree Chandra, ‘India’s Forest Rights Act’, *Routledge eBooks*, 2019, pp. 230–52.

expressed, “Our journey has been long and exhausting, but we must continue to push forward to secure the rights that are rightfully ours”¹⁵⁸.

Conclusion

The government is now more involved in improving the lives of Adivasi communities than it was in the past. However, even though special programs and policies have been introduced to support them in areas like education, healthcare, and employment, these efforts have not brought much real change. The impact remains small because of issues like poor implementation, lack of proper resources, and policies that do not fully address their actual needs.¹⁵⁹ However, the policies exhibit a clear continuation of colonial practices, focusing on superficial solutions like constructing homes, providing cooked food, and offering financial assistance for education. These measures, as observed by Ameerudheen,¹⁶⁰ mirror the colonial government's tactics and fail to address the deeper, more pressing issues such as land rights, protection against the authority's dominance, rebuilding economic infrastructure, and integrating Adivasis into modern educational disciplines. This reveals a continuation of colonial tendencies in post-colonial policies, where the real needs of the tribal communities remain largely unaddressed. This gap allowed Christian missionaries to step in and provide services that the government could not. While their efforts brought some benefits, they also led to changes in the socio-economic life of the tribal people. The following chapters will explore how the Jesuit missionaries worked with the tribal communities in Post-Colonial Malabar, focusing on how they tried to address the challenges and backwardness faced by these people.

¹⁵⁸ Bella Yulidiningrum, and Pra Adi Soelistijono, ‘The Resistance of Adivasi Adhikar Samiti (AAS) Against Forest Development Corporation (FDC) in Chhattisgarh India’, *Journal of Feminism and Gender Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2023, p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ *Kerala Report on the Socio-economic Condition of SC/ST*, Trivandrum, 1983, p.9.

¹⁶⁰ T A Ameerudheen, A lifeline for the poor in Kerala’s Adivasi belt, community kitchens face threat of closure, *The Scroll*, Available at: <https://scroll.in/article/874447/a-lifeline-for-the-poor-in-keralas-adivasi-belt-community-kitchens-face-threat-of-closure>, 2018, pp.13-15.

Chapter II

Jesuit Legacy in Malabar: From Colonial Roots to Post- Colonial Period

The Society of Jesus, one of the major religious orders within the Catholic Church, was established by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1534. The term “Jesuit” was first used in Germany around 1550, as an adjective with derogatory connotations.¹ The term had a complex history dating back to the fifteenth century. The term “Jesuit” was initially an insult referring to individuals who frequently used or misused the name of Jesus, and between 1542 and 1544, critics applied it derogatorily to the newly formed Society of Jesus.² The Society of Jesus is the largest male religious order of the Catholic Church. Interestingly, the Society's founder never adopted the term himself. However, as time progressed, members and supporters of the Society began to embrace the name “Jesuit” in a positive light. This shift in perception transformed the once-pejorative term into a badge of honour.³

In modern times, the Society of Jesus has reinterpreted the term “Jesuit” to emphasize their close relationship with Jesus. They often describe themselves as “the vehicle of Jesus” or “men who live in friendship with Jesus”, directly connecting their name to their spiritual mission.⁴ This connection is further reflected in the letters “SJ” (standing for “*Societas Jesu*”, the Latin name for the Society of Jesus) that members

¹ Michael B. Gross, ‘The Jesuit Specter in Imperial Germany (Review)’, *the Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 2, pp. 383–84.

² Gary W. Jenkins, ‘Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period, 1540-1640’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2008, pp. 553–55.

³ Alexandra. Walsham, ‘This Newe Army of Satan’: The Jesuit Mission and the Formation of Public Opinion in Elizabethan England’, *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks*, 2009, pp. 41–62.

⁴ Borys Hod, et al., ‘The youth policy humanistic relevance of the society of jesus in the early modern period: newest navigation of foreign historiography’, *Східноєвропейський Історичний Вісник*, 2020, pp. 179–91.

add after their names. The Society of Jesus was officially recognized by Pope Paul III in 1540, with Ignatius serving as its first Superior General.⁵ From its inception, the order was designed to be different. Unlike monastic orders that secluded themselves from the world, the Jesuits were meant to be active in society, serving “with one foot raised” - always ready to go where the need was greatest.⁶

From its earliest days, the Society of Jesus had a global vision. Jesuits were sent on missions around the world, from Asia to the Americas. They were instructed to learn local languages, adapt to local customs, and find ways to communicate their message effectively in diverse cultural contexts. This approach, known as “inculturation”, was revolutionary for its time and remains a hallmark of Jesuit missionary work. The Jesuit mission encompassed not only evangelization but also scientific research, exploration, and diplomacy.⁷ Jesuits like Matteo Ricci in China and Roberto de Nobili in India became cultural bridges, facilitating exchange between the East and the West. This global engagement broadened the Society's perspective and contributed to its reputation for learning and adaptability.⁸

Early Jesuit Missions to India

The primary objective of the Society of Jesus was the propagation and consolidation of the Catholic faith across the globe.⁹ To achieve this, Ignatius Loyola dispatched the early Jesuits to both Catholic and newly colonized non-Christian regions.¹⁰ In Catholic countries, the Jesuits aimed to counter the spread of

⁵ Robert. Danieluk, ‘Jesuits and the Church in Light of the Society’s Roman Archives’, *The International Symposia on Jesuit Studies*, no. 2022 Symposium, 2023, p.1.

⁶ Markus Friedrich, and John Noel Dillon, *The Jesuits: A History*. Princeton University Press, 2022, pp.56-59.

⁷ Steven J. Harris, ‘Jesuit Scientific Activity in the Overseas Missions, 1540–1773’, *Isis*, vol. 96, no. 1, 2005, pp. 71–79.

⁸ Francis X. Clooney, ‘Roberto De Nobili, Adaptation and the Reasonable Interpretation of Religion’, *Missiology an International Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1990, pp. 25–36.

⁹ Bronwen Catherine McShea, ‘Introduction: Jesuit Missionary Perspectives and Strategies’, *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2014, pp. 171–76.

¹⁰ J. Ryan, ‘An Examination of the Achievement of the Jesuit Order in South Africa, 1879’, *Semantic Scholar*, 1990, p.13.

Protestantism, while in newly colonized lands, their mission was to lay the foundations of Christianity. One of Ignatius' first companions, St. Francis Xavier, was sent to India, arriving in Goa on May 6, 1542.¹¹ His efforts marked the beginning of the Jesuit Indian Mission, which operated under the patronage of the Portuguese colonial powers in Goa.¹² During his time in India, Francis Xavier endeared himself to the lower classes by adopting their language and customs. He learned Tamil and shaped his religious teachings to resonate with the cultural concepts of the local people. By choosing to dress as a humble priest and live among the poor, he fostered a deep connection with them. Moreover, his fearless stance in criticizing the abuses of Portuguese officials towards the marginalized further solidified the affection and trust he gained from the lower classes, as he prioritized their welfare over pleasing the colonial authorities. K.M. Panikkar observed: "Xavier's mission is of particular interest because he may be considered to be the first missionary, in our modern sense."¹³

Not only Francis Xavier, but many other Jesuits also embraced Indian languages and supported the process of "inculturation". For instance, Roberto de Nobili, an Italian Jesuit and nobleman, played a pivotal role in this effort. He became the first European to master Sanskrit and deeply study the Vedas. De Nobili went further by adopting Hindu customs and practices, allowing certain traditions and rituals that he did not view as idolatry. This marked the beginning of the inculturation efforts of the Jesuits, where they sought to integrate local traditions and cultural practices into their missionary work to make their message more accessible and

¹¹ Antoni J. Üçerler, M., "The Jesuit Enterprise in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-century Japan". *Cambridge University Press eBooks*, 2008, pp. 153–68.

¹² Glenn J. Ames, 'Serving God, Mammon, or Both?: Religious Vis-à-vis Economic Priorities in the Portuguese Estado Da India, C. 1600-1700', *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 86, no. 2, 2000, pp. 193–216.

¹³ K.M Panikker, *A History of Kerala, 1498-1801*. Annamalai University, 1960, p.168.

meaningful to the indigenous communities.¹⁴ Following his lead, hundreds of Jesuits expanded the mission, which gradually spread across the subcontinent.

In 1552, the year Francis Xavier died, there were already 64 Jesuits working in India, including 19 priests.¹⁵ Initially, the Jesuit mission was divided into two provinces: the North and the South, with Goa and Cochin serving as the main centers of their activities.¹⁶ As they expanded their reach, territories were organized, and during the period between 1552 and the annexation of Portugal to the Spanish Crown in 1580, the Jesuits, along with the Franciscans, became the only stable Catholic religious orders in both urban and rural areas. During this time, they established the first schools, hospitals, and welfare centres, which played a crucial role in their growing influence.¹⁷ By the 1570s, as Cohen, noted, the Jesuits' perspective on indigenous religions began to change, showing a stricter approach towards idolatry, as seen in the diocesan councils in Goa.¹⁸

However, despite their efforts, the Jesuits faced numerous challenges. Many of them lived in isolation, far from the communal life they were accustomed to in Europe. Yet, they continued their work, which included religious duties, catechizing adults and children, performing baptisms, and managing social services like hospitals. Their tasks also extended to caring for the terminally ill, prisoners, and travellers, while engaging in political and diplomatic efforts with local rulers.¹⁹ Despite these

¹⁴ Carmina Peñarrocha Giménez, *Rescuing the Identity of the Adivasis from their Invisibility. The Encounter between Jesuits and the Indigenous Peoples of India*. Unpublished thesis, pp. 38-67.

¹⁵ Henry James Coleridge, 'The life and letters of St. Francis Xavier', *Semantic Scholar*, 1998, p.11.

¹⁶ H. Hosten, 'The Marsden Mss. And Indian Mission Bibliography', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1923, pp. 129–50.

¹⁷ In and Antonio Vico, *Catholic Missionary Healing in Early Modern South Asia*, *Semantic Scholar*, 2007, pp.4-13.

¹⁸ Paul Cohen, *Christianity and Colonialism in India: Missionary Encounters in Colonial South India*. Oxford University Press, 2012. Ines G. Županov, 'Antiquissima Christianità: Indian Religion or Idolatry?', *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 24, no. 6, 2020, pp. 471–98.

¹⁹ Thomas V. Cohen, and John W. O'Malley, 'The First Jesuits', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 5, 1994, p. 1676.

contributions, the Jesuits began facing criticism. It was rumoured that many Indians converted to Christianity not out of faith, but for economic and social advantages. The Jesuits were accused of conducting mass baptisms without proper religious instruction, and this criticism marked the beginning of the order's challenges in India.²⁰

However, two major events in the late 16th century changed the course of Jesuit missions in India. The first was the arrival of Alexander Valignano, a visitor from Rome, and the second was the Jesuit embassies to the court of Akbar the Great. These events were pivotal in expanding the reach of the Society of Jesus in India and beyond, to the Far East. Valignano, who worked in Asia for 33 years, was instrumental in reorganizing the work that Francis Xavier had begun. Known for his wit, insight, and pragmatism, Valignano quickly understood the pressing need for more missionaries. He continuously wrote to the General Superior, Claudio Aquaviva, requesting reinforcements. Moreover, he strengthened the Jesuits' efforts in education and promoted inculturation in evangelization. Valignano also defended the need for missionaries to adapt to local customs, including their dress and rituals, to better integrate the Gospel into indigenous cultures.²¹

The Jesuit missionaries aimed to convert Akbar, the Great Mughal, to Christianity, believing that his interest in religious matters indicated a willingness to embrace their faith.²² Akbar, however, admitted the Jesuits to his court not for conversion, but for his eclectic purpose of creating a universal religion, known as the “Divine Faith”, blending elements of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and other

²⁰ Brian K. Pennington, ‘Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India. By Ines G. Zupanov’ New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 61, no. 3, Aug. 2002, pp. 1099–101 (book review).

²¹ Liam Brockey, ‘Alessandro Valignano S.I., Uomo Del Rinascimento: Ponte Tra Oriente E Occidente.’ *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 1, 2010, pp. 134–35.

²² Pierre De Jarric, and C. H Payne, *Akbar and the Jesuits, an account of the Jesuit missions to the court of Akbar*, Harper & Brothers, New York, London, 1926 Pdf. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, pp.26-32.

religions.²³ Despite the Jesuits' failure to convert Akbar, their time at his court was not without advantage. Their relationship with the Mughal Empire enabled them to expand their influence northward across the Indian subcontinent, gaining access to new regions and peoples, including Tibetan Buddhists and Sikhs.

In a letter to the Superior General, Jesuit Rudolf Acquaviva expressed admiration for Akbar, describing him as “a man of great judgement” who was inclined toward good and maintained a particular friendship with Christians, welcoming them into his court.²⁴ Although Akbar’s true intention was to establish his eclectic creed rather than convert, the Jesuits' time in his court allowed them to study the region and gain political ground, ultimately aiding the broader evangelizing mission of the Society of Jesus.

Portugal, which initially played a crucial role in facilitating Jesuit missionary activities in India, later became one of the leading forces in suppressing their influence.²⁵ This shift was driven by various factors, primarily due to growing tensions between the Jesuits, and both Portuguese authorities and the broader Catholic Church. At the core of this opposition were concerns that the Jesuits had deviated from their religious mission, prioritizing strategic alignments over strict adherence to Catholic

²³ *Ibid.*

Akbar invited Jesuit missionaries from Goa to his court primarily for intellectual and theological discussions rather than for conversion. His aim was to explore different religious philosophies and incorporate various elements into his vision of a universal faith, known as Din-i-Ilahi (Divine Faith). This syncretic religion blended aspects of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and other traditions. While the Jesuits hoped to convert Akbar, he was more interested in their theological knowledge and the broader principles of Christianity to refine his own religious philosophy.

²⁴ John Correia-Afonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court: The first Jesuit Mission to Akbar, 1580-1583*. Institute of Jesuit Sources, *Bombay*: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1981 (2nd edition), pp.20-84.

²⁵ David Block, and Dauril Alden, ‘The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond, 1540-1750’, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 103, no. 1, 1998, p. 204.

doctrine. Three key issues emerged as major points of contention, leading to increasing restrictions on Jesuit activities:²⁶

1. **Endorsement of the Indian Caste System:** One of the most serious criticisms against the Jesuits was their perceived accommodation of the Indian caste system. Unlike other Catholic missionaries who sought to challenge social hierarchies, Jesuits were accused of integrating themselves into the existing social order, particularly by forming close ties with the upper castes. This approach was seen as contradictory to their fundamental mission of serving all people, especially the marginalized. Church authorities viewed this as a betrayal, arguing that Jesuits were more interested in maintaining favorable relationships with the elite than in uplifting the lower castes and the poor.
2. **Disregard for Papal Instructions:** Another significant issue was the Jesuits' alleged failure to comply with papal decrees. The Catholic Church had issued strict instructions prohibiting missionaries from accommodating local customs and religious practices that were deemed incompatible with Catholic doctrine. However, Jesuits in regions such as Malabar and China were accused of disregarding these directives, opting instead for a more flexible approach that allowed for the incorporation of certain indigenous practices into Christian worship. This strategy, though aimed at easing conversions, was seen as a deviation from orthodox Catholic teachings, leading to accusations of disobedience.
3. **Portuguese Political and Religious Control:** As Portugal sought to strengthen its dominance over its colonial territories; the Jesuits' growing autonomy became a source of concern. The Jesuits, who operated relatively independently, were sometimes viewed as undermining Portuguese political and religious control in India. Their increasing influence in local affairs, particularly in Goa, challenged the authority of both the colonial administration and the Church. This led to heightened tensions, with Portugal

²⁶ Carmina Peñarrocha Giménez, *op.cit.*

eventually taking steps to curb Jesuit activities, culminating in their expulsion from its territories in the mid-18th century. The so-called “Malabar Rites” controversy became a focal point of criticism, as Jesuits were charged with adapting too freely to local religious practices in an effort to convert more people. The third factor was political rather than theological. Portuguese authorities grew increasingly concerned about the economic and political influence that the Jesuits were amassing in the territories they evangelized. The rulers feared that the Jesuits, through their extensive trade networks and missionary settlements, were consolidating wealth and power in ways that threatened Portuguese control. This concern was heightened after the crises in the Jesuit-controlled missions in Paraguay and Brazil, where the Jesuits' influence over local economies and populations became a point of contention. For effective administration, the global network of Jesuits is divided into geographic regions known as "*assistancies*."²⁷ Within each *assistancy*, Jesuit communities are systematically organized into provinces. Currently, the Society of Jesus is structured into ten distinct regional *assistancies* worldwide, facilitating localized governance and coordination across diverse cultural and national contexts.

Jesuit Influence in Kerala

The Jesuit presence in Kerala began with St. Francis Xavier, the first disciple of St. Ignatius and a key figure in the founding of the Society of Jesus. He arrived at Venad in 1544.²⁸ His entry coincided with his successful efforts to prevent an invasion²⁹ by the Vijayanagara forces. Grateful for his intervention, the ruler of Venad, Unni Kerala Varma, granted Xavier permission to carry out conversion work

²⁷ Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 21.

²⁸ STEPHEN NEILL, *A History of Christianity in India 1707-1858*, Cambridge university press, 1985, p.29.

²⁹ accounts suggest that Xavier, with the assistance of local communities such as the Paravars and Padayatchi Nadars of Kottar, successfully repelled the invasion at Vadasery.

along the Venad coast.³⁰ In the last months of 1544, Xavier baptized over ten thousand Mukkuvas across thirteen villages, establishing the foundations of the Jesuit Mission in Kerala.³¹ The Maharaja of Travancore was greatly pleased with Francis Xavier for his valuable services and, in recognition, bestowed upon him the title of “*Valia Padre*”, meaning the “great priest”. In addition, the Maharaja vowed to safeguard the interests of the Christian community under his rule. Xavier, in his writings, highlighted the Raja’s favorable attitude toward the Christians, stating that “they (the King) are all so well disposed towards the affairs of the Christians” and fully endorsed any initiative that would benefit them. Furthermore, the King generously contributed two thousand fanoens (panams) to Xavier for the construction of churches in the region. This shows the close and supportive relationship between Francis Xavier and the Maharaja of Travancore, rooted in mutual respect and cooperation for the promotion of Christianity.³²

Following Xavier’s initial efforts, Jesuits continued their work along the Venad coast, reaching as far as Vizhinjam. One of his successors, Francis Perez S.J., reported that by 1568, around five thousand Christians lived in scattered villages, including five hundred in Mampalli, where he had conducted baptisms seven years earlier. In 1569, he built the first church between Quilon and Trivandrum in Mampalli, which later became a Jesuit residence overseeing surrounding areas like Anjengo and Pudukurichy. Other notable developments included the establishment of churches at Rajathura (modern Valiathura) and multiple other locations along the coast, such as Veticaru, Tumba, and Vizhinjam, showcasing the expansive reach of the Jesuit mission. Tanur was another significant site for Jesuit activity, particularly due to the local Raja's amicable relations with the Portuguese, unlike the Zamorins of Calicut.

³⁰ <https://blesseddevasahayampillai.blogspot.com/>

³¹ Different versions exist regarding St. Francis Xavier's intervention, with Mansilhas claiming he "miraculously stopped the army" (D. Ferroli, *Jesuits in Malabar*, 1, p. 114), Joseph Costellore suggesting he received timely assistance from the Portuguese governor in Travancore (Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier), and Ibrahim Kunju asserting that Xavier mediated between the conflicting parties to reach a settlement (A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Medieval Kerala*, p. 112).

³² Letter of Francis Xavier 7 April 1545 to Fr. Fransisco Mansilhas, cited in Joeph Costelloe, p.125.

The conversion of the King of Tanur to Christianity was a complex and strategic process, driven as much by political survival as by religious transformation. Tanur, a small kingdom squeezed between the hostile Zamorin of Calicut to the north and a Portuguese fortress in Chale, found itself in a challenging position. The King of Tanur, seeing an opportunity to strengthen his political position, expressed interest in Christianity, both as a faith and as a means to gain Portuguese support.³³

In 1545, the king approached the Portuguese, showing signs of goodwill and curiosity about their religion. He requested a priest to teach him the Christian doctrine and even asked for one to stay in Tanur. This was significant for the Jesuits, as converting a local king was not only spiritually rewarding but also politically advantageous.³⁴ A conversion could solidify Portuguese influence in the region and demonstrate their power and reach. By 1549, António Gomes, a Jesuit priest known for his fervor, was sent by Bishop Juan de Albuquerque of Goa to lead the conversion effort.

However, the King of Tanur had his conditions. He insisted that his conversion be kept secret to avoid any backlash from his people and to protect his honour and caste. He also wanted to retain certain traditional symbols of his status, such as the Brahmanical thread, and his cultural customs.³⁵ For him, conversion to Christianity was more about forming a political alliance than a complete abandonment of his identity and traditions. He perceived Christianity as a complementary addition to his belief system, aligning himself with the Portuguese without entirely giving up his native practices. Initially, this approach troubled the Jesuits, who saw such “dissimulation” as contrary to Church teachings. However, they eventually adapted, hoping the King’s gradual acceptance of Christianity might encourage deeper faith

³³ D. Ferrolì, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, Bangalore, 1939, pp-33-36.

³⁴ Joseph Wicki, S.J., (Ed.) *Documenta Indica*, Volume 4, Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1956, pp.12-17.

³⁵ Ines G. Županov, ‘One Civility, But Multiple Religions’: Jesuit Mission Among St. Thomas Christians in India (16th-17th Centuries)’, *Journal of Early Modern History* 9, 2005, p-293.

among his followers. The Bishop of Goa permitted Gomes to proceed discreetly, so the king's baptism and other Christian rites were conducted in secrecy.

The king's conversion, although hidden, was marked by certain symbolic acts: a crucifix was hidden under his Brahmanical thread, and his wife was baptized as Dona Maria, with their marriage blessed by Christian rites. This cautious and pragmatic approach allowed the King of Tanur to navigate the tensions of religious transformation while securing his alliance with the Portuguese.³⁶ In doing so, he played a delicate double role, maintaining his power among his people while subtly aligning with the European newcomers. His conversion thus marked an early example of “accommodation” – a mutual adjustment between the cultural and religious expectations of both the Portuguese and the local rulers of the Malabar Coast.

In 1577, the Jesuits established a house at Vaipincotta near Kochi, which later developed into a full-fledged seminary comparable to similar institutions in Europe, offering courses in philosophy, theology, and Latin. Until 1601, the Jesuit Society had a single province in India, headquartered in Goa. As a result, the missions in the southern regions were managed jointly with those in the north. However, starting in 1601, the Jesuit missions in India were divided into separate provinces. This division was necessitated by several factors, primarily the vast scope of missionary activities across India. Goa served as the central hub, from which missionaries travelled to regions such as Malabar, the Fishery Coast, Malacca, the Moluccas, Pegu, Bengal, the Mughal capital, Tibet, and even Abyssinia. Managing these widespread communities from Goa became increasingly challenging due to the unique needs of each region. Regular visits by provincial superiors were nearly impossible, and there were imbalances in the distribution of resources and missionaries, affecting the effectiveness of their work. Jesuit establishments in the South included locations such as Cochin, Vaipicota, Cranganore, Calicut, Quilon, Tuticorin, Punicale, Mylapore,

³⁶ Joseph wicki, *op.cit.*

Bengal, and extended to Malacca and the Moluccas.³⁷ In December of that same year, Manuel Viega, S.J., became the first Vice-Provincial of Malabar.

By 1603, the Malabar vice-province established its own novitiate and scholasticate in Cochin, where Jesuit recruits received training in philosophy, theology, and humanities. In 1605, the status of Malabar was elevated from a vice-province to a full province, with Alberto Laerzio appointed as its first Provincial.³⁸ Over the years, around forty Jesuit Provincials oversaw the Malabar Province, which continued until the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773. Notably, most of these Provincials were Portuguese, reflecting the influence of Portuguese control over ecclesiastical appointments in their territories, particularly through the *Padroado*.³⁹ It was a system established through agreements between the Portuguese monarchy and the Catholic Church, granting Portugal the authority to oversee and manage Catholic missionary activities in its colonies. Under this system, the Portuguese monarchs had the exclusive right to appoint bishops, missionaries, and other ecclesiastical officials in their overseas territories, including India. This arrangement ensured that most of the Provincials (regional heads of Jesuit missions) in India were Portuguese, as their selection was heavily influenced by the Portuguese Crown rather than by the Vatican.

The number of Jesuits in the Malabar Province was initially around ninety-seven, consisting of sixty-four priests and thirty-three brothers and scholastics. The province saw steady growth, peaking at 180 members by 1632. However, discussions about possibly merging the Malabar Province back with Goa started as early as 1630, primarily due to limited resources and personnel in Malabar. In 1698, during a Jesuit General Congregation, Joao da CostaSJ, a representative of Malabar, presented arguments for this reunion. Though initially resisted by Rome, the proposal found

³⁷ D. Ferroli, S.J., *op.cit.*, p. 269.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.279.

³⁹ Prior to their suppression, the Jesuits operated under the *Padroado* system, aligning them with Portuguese ecclesiastical jurisdiction. However, upon their return to Mangalore in 1879 and subsequent mission efforts in North Kerala, the Jesuits were placed under the *Propaganda Fide*. Meanwhile, Jesuits from the Goa mission, still governed by the *Padroado*, received an invitation to serve in Cochin.

some support, but ultimately the Jesuits in Malabar overwhelmingly opposed it, and the merger idea was abandoned.

Two major events in the mid-17th century significantly impacted the Malabar Province: the “Coonan Cross Oath” of 1653⁴⁰ and the Dutch conquest of Cochin in 1663. As a response to the Coonan Cross Oath, Pope Alexander VII intervened in 1656 by appointing Joseph of St. Mary (Sebastiani), a Carmelite missionary, as Apostolic Commissary to restore order. Sebastiani took temporary control of the Cranganore Diocese, curtailing Jesuit influence in the region. Following the death of Bishop Francis Garcia, S.J., Sebastiani served as Vicar Apostolic, effectively halting the Jesuit succession in the diocese for a time. The Dutch capture of Cochin in 1663 severely impacted the Malabar province. The Dutch destruction of Jesuit houses, churches, and libraries, along with the loss of revenues and diminished labor force, greatly restricted their activities.⁴¹ Major institutions such as the Mae De Deus College in Cochin and the colleges in Quilon and Cranganore were razed, while the seminary at Vaipincotta was repurposed as a leper asylum. Consequently, the number of Jesuits in Kerala plummeted from seventy-eight in 1654 to just fifteen in 1667. The Jesuit provincial headquarters had to be relocated multiple times for safety, first seeking refuge in Ambazhakad and later moving to Topo, Colechel, and Rajakkalmangalam, ultimately struggling to maintain their influence in the region. Despite these challenges, the Jesuits attempted to recover by establishing a new college and residence in Ambazhakad in 1664,⁴² which served as a training center for both Jesuits and local Syrian Christians. However, the expulsion of Portuguese Jesuits and

⁴⁰ Ines G Županov, *op.cit.* p-The Coonan Cross Oath was a 1653 revolt by the Thomas Christians against Jesuit control, rooted in tensions dating back to 1605 between Bishop Francisco Roz and Archdeacon George. The arrest of Bishop Athalla by the Portuguese intensified the conflict, leading the Thomas Christians to swear independence from Jesuit authority at the Coonan Cross in Mattancherry. This oath split the community into Syrian Catholics and Syrian Orthodox, weakening Jesuit influence significantly.

⁴¹ Maxmilian MuUbauer, Hzston, *The Catholic Missions in the East Indies*, Munchen, 1851, pp. 287-88.

⁴² Ines G Županov, *op.cit.*, p.288.

subsequent destruction during Tippu Sultan's invasion in the late 18th century further diminished their presence and influence in Kerala.⁴³

The Jesuits returned to leadership in the diocese in 1701, with John Ribeiro, S.J., being appointed as Bishop of Cranganore. However, the region remained challenging for the Jesuits, as opposition persisted, and the Dutch authorities, who were strongly against Portuguese influences, restricted Ribeiro's movement, forcing him to reside in various locations under local protection. Following him, other Jesuit bishops continued to lead, though with similar difficulties. The last Jesuit Archbishop of Cranganore, Salvador dos Reis, served until the universal suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1773. Even after the suppression, he continued his duties, sheltering former Jesuits who wished to stay in Malabar, witnessing the end of an era for the Jesuit mission in the region. The restoration of the Society of Jesus in 1814⁴⁴ facilitated the return of Jesuit missionaries to India in 1834. However, they arrived in Kerala much later, in 1879.⁴⁵

Jesuit Presence in Malabar*

Jesuit missionaries arrived in North Kerala as early as the 16th century. Though the Zamorin was the most powerful king of Kerala and his kingdom the largest in the sixteenth century, Calicut was one of the last places Jesuits entered. Francis Xavier traveled by ship though the Calicut Coast several times and once even landed so close to Calicut as Cannanore, but he never set foot on the Zamorin's territory during the ten years (1542-1552) of his Indian Mission. The main reason seems to have been the

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.289.

⁴⁴ After the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1814, the Congress of Vienna restored much of Europe's traditional political structure. Pope Pius VII, taking advantage of the more stable climate and the fall of anti-Jesuit monarchs, formally restored the Society of Jesus. At their first general congregation post-restoration, the Jesuits chose to retain their original organizational structure from before the 1773 suppression.

⁴⁵ P.T. Mathew, S.J. and Dominic Joseph, S.J., *A saga of service, history of Jesuit institutions and houses in Kerala Province*, Yaatra publications, Kochi, 2021, p.13.

*In this context, the term *Malabar* refers specifically to North Kerala, which historically included areas under the influence of the Zamorin and stretched along the northern coastal regions of Kerala.

almost perpetual state of war between the Zamorin and the Portuguese, as also the opposition of the Muhammadans to European traders and missionaries. The first mission of Jesuits at the court of the Zamorin took place as late as 1597. It comprised of Francis Roz S. J. and Francis da Costa S. J. They were sent at the invitation of the Zamorin to negotiate an alliance with the Portuguese in the context of the growing threat from the KunhaliMarikkars. Though the immediate purpose of eliminating the Kunhali with the help of Portuguese was accomplished, the Zamorin continued to keep Jesuits in Calicut. Since then, one or two Jesuits were permanently stationed in Calicut. The Zamorin showed support by supplying timber for a large cross and offering stones from a demolished pagoda. This allowed the Jesuit Fathers to establish a church and residence in the area.⁴⁶ Roz never resided in Calicut. After him, FenicioS. J. was the one who gained considerable influence over the Zamorin on account of his diplomatic acumen, deep knowledge of the language and customs of Malabar and his learning and science. He stayed in Calicut for about seventeen years (1602-19). He undertook a number of diplomatic missions.⁴⁷ He has been called the founder of Calicut Mission.⁴⁸

Following the restoration of the Jesuit order, members from the Venetian province arrived in northern Kerala in 1879, extending their mission activities from Mangalore. They initially set up centers in Kozhikode, Kannur, and Thalassery, laying the groundwork for Jesuit engagement in the region. By 1923, the mission's headquarters relocated from Mangalore to Kozhikode, marking a new phase as the Calicut Mission. In 1933, a *novitiate*⁴⁹ was founded at Christ Hall in Kozhikode.⁵⁰ Their dedicated efforts in Wayanad and Chalakkal later contributed to the formation of the dioceses of Calicut and Kannur. Meanwhile, Jesuits from the Goa mission

⁴⁶ D. Ferroli, S.J, *op.cit.*, p.266.

⁴⁷ The Zamorin encouraged his cousin UmaraCharareEradi to convert to Christianity to strengthen ties with the Portuguese.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ A novitiate serves as a training center where individuals aspiring to join the Jesuit order undergo their initial formation, typically over two years, focusing on spiritual development, theological studies, and community life.

⁵⁰ <https://www.jesuit.global/2024/02/26/the-kerala-jesuit-province-a-brief>

arrived in Cochin in 1892, invited by the local Bishop, where they settled in Cochin and Alappuzha. By 1951, these two Jesuit groups were unified under the Madurai Jesuit Province. In 1955, the Calicut Mission was reorganized, creating the Karnataka vice-province, while the Jesuits working in northern Kerala were integrated into the Madurai Province.⁵¹ A dedicated Kerala Jesuit region emerged in 1956 under the Madurai Province, with its base in Ernakulam and Fr. J.B. de Roton appointed as the regional superior. In 1960, the Kerala region was elevated to an independent vice-province, with Fr. J.B. de Roton initially serving as the interim vice-provincial. Later that year, in December, Fr. Joseph Edamaram succeeded him as the first official vice-provincial, marking a new chapter in the Jesuit presence and organizational structure in Kerala. At its inception, the vice-province was limited to certain areas of Kerala, excluding North Malabar. Italian Jesuit missionaries were especially active in the Chirakkal mission and Wayanad regions. Over time, they shifted their focus to serving the spiritual needs of settlers from Travancore, establishing new churches to support these communities. After the Tellicherry Diocese was established in 1953, these parishes were transferred to its administration. In the early years, the new province focused on establishing several educational institutions across Kerala. However, its financial situation was challenging, and the costs of training young scholastics added to the strain. The main goal was to create centers for spiritual support, youth guidance, and personal development.⁵²

Jesuit Activities in Colonial Malabar

The activities of the Jesuits included education, religious outreach, and social initiatives along with women empowerment. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Educational Initiatives

The Jesuits have historically positioned education as a cornerstone of their mission, with their first school being established in 1548. Their commitment to

⁵¹ P.T. Mathew, S.J. and Dominic Joseph, *op.cit.*, p.13.

⁵² Jesuits Global. *The Kerala Jesuit Province: A Brief Sketch*. Jesuits Global <https://www.jesuits.global/2024/02/26/the-kerala-jesuit-province-a-brief-sketch>, p.16.

intellectual formation was not merely an educational endeavor but a strategic means of shaping individuals who could assume leadership roles in various spheres of society. By integrating liberal arts, natural and social sciences, performing arts, and interdisciplinary studies, the Jesuits cultivated a holistic approach that aimed to produce not only scholars but also social reformers and administrators capable of influencing political and cultural landscapes. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, the Jesuits emerged as the “school masters of Europe,” a title that reflects both their expansive network of institutions and their contributions as scholars and scientists. However, this dominance in education was not without its complexities. While Jesuit schools were renowned for their academic rigor, they were also instrumental in reinforcing Catholic ideology, often aligning their curricula with the broader objectives of the Church. The *Ratio Studiorum*, the Jesuit educational framework formalized in 1599, emphasized discipline, rhetorical excellence, and philosophical inquiry, but it also maintained atheological orthodoxy that sought to counter the rise of Protestant and secular intellectual traditions.⁵³

Despite these ideological underpinnings, the Jesuits were key players in the advancement of knowledge. Over the course of their first two centuries, they established over 740 educational institutions, producing thousands of textbooks and scholarly works. Their engagement with astronomy, mathematics, linguistics, and the natural sciences positioned them as intellectual leaders, yet their scholarship was frequently shaped by ecclesiastical priorities. This dual role—as both educators and agents of Catholic expansion—raises critical questions about the extent to which their pedagogical model fostered independent inquiry versus religious conformity.⁵⁴

The Jesuit educational legacy, therefore, is one of paradox: while their institutions advanced intellectual rigor and contributed to the European Enlightenment, their education system remained deeply rooted in Catholic doctrinal

⁵³ Paul F. Grendler, ‘The Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum*: 400th Anniversary Perspectives’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2001, pp. 1166–67.

⁵⁴ “Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters.” *The MIT Press eBooks*, 2002, pp.14-17.

imperatives.⁵⁵ A closer examination of their curricula, pedagogical strategies, and institutional networks reveals that Jesuit education was not merely about knowledge transmission but also about cultural and ideological influence, ensuring that education remained a potent tool in shaping both minds and societies.⁵⁶

Missionary intervention extended beyond the realm of religion and had an important bearing on education, including women's education, shaping individual perceptions of sanity, morality, and hygiene, leading to the reconfiguration of social and community relationships.⁵⁷ Jesuit missionaries have played a pivotal role in shaping the culture of Kerala, particularly through their contributions to education. Establishing theological institutions and seminaries in places like Kodungallur, Angamaly, and Vaipicotta,⁵⁸ they laid a strong foundation for learning. The Jesuits also founded Kerala's first European-style school in Kochi, marking a significant chapter in the region's educational history. Additionally, they set up schools in Varapuzha and Kollam, where subjects such as Latin and Portuguese were introduced.

The Jesuits prioritized youth education as a key strategy, which proved remarkably effective. Although education is not explicitly emphasized in the Society's constitution created by its founder Ignatius, the Jesuits became widely recognized for their educational efforts.⁵⁹ Felix Raj, S.J., in *Men on the Mission*, suggests that “some of the best education in India is imparted by Jesuits”, with most of their institutions

⁵⁵ Daniel Tröhler, ‘Globalizing Globalization: The Neo-Institutional Concept of a World Culture’, *Teachers College Record the Voice of Scholarship in Education*, vol. 111, no. 14, 2009, pp. 29–48.

⁵⁶ Maurice Whitehead, ‘To Provide for the Edifice of Learning’: Researching 450 Years of Jesuit Educational and Cultural History, With Particular Reference to the British Jesuits’, *History of Education*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2006, pp. 109–43.

⁵⁷ Burton Cleetus, ‘Education and Womens Identity: Missionary Initiatives and State Intervention in Early Twentieth Century Kerala’, *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2023, p.88.

⁵⁸ John W. O'Malley, ‘How The First Jesuits Became Involved in Education’, *BRILL eBooks*, 2013, pp. 199–215.

⁵⁹ Paul F. Grendler, ‘Jesuit Schools in Europe. A Historiographical Essay’, *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2013, pp. 7–25.

ranking among the nation's finest.⁶⁰ The Jesuits established seminaries and colleges, particularly along Kerala's western coast, offering education to students of all religions, languages, and castes. Across the East, especially among Christian communities, education became the Jesuits' most influential legacy, an impact that remains strong today.⁶¹

The Jesuits initiated their educational mission in Kerala by establishing Salvator College in Kollam in 1549. Proposed initially by Gaspar Barzaeus in 1548 and further encouraged by Francis Xavier, Nicolas Lancillotto set up the college in Thankassery. Salvator College began with around fifty resident students, offering courses in Latin, Greek, and Portuguese, aiming primarily to prepare young men for priesthood.⁶² With Antony Gomes supporting educational expansion, promising students from Salvator College were given opportunities to continue their studies at renowned institutions like St. Paul's College in Goa or at Coimbra.

In 1552, with contributions from the local community, Lancillotto expanded the college, adding a beautiful church, and enrolment reached 70 by year 1558, attracting students from noble families in Kollam and the Fishery Coast. Following Lancillotto's passing, the college added a printing press, which further strengthened the Jesuit influence and marked a significant step in spreading education and faith in Kerala.⁶³ After establishing the Salvator College in Kollam, the Jesuits continued to build educational institutions that solidified their impact on Kerala. Madre de Deus College in Kochi was founded in 1550, following a request from local leaders, including Pedro Gonçalves, the Vicar of Cochin, who had appealed to Francis Xavier

⁶⁰ Felix Raj, S.J., *Men on the Mission: A History of Jesuits in India*, Kolkata: St. Xavier's College, 2013, p.185.

⁶¹ Ambrose, Pinto, S.J., 'The Achievements of the Jesuit Educational Mission in India and the Contemporary Challenges It Faces', *International Studies in Catholic Education*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2014, pp. 14–32.

⁶² István. Perczel, 'Accommodationist Strategies on the Malabar Coast: Competition or Complementarity?', *BRILL eBooks*, 2018, pp. 191–232.

⁶³ E. T. Mathew, *Growth of Literacy in Kerala: State Intervention, Missionary Initiatives and Social Movements*. Centre for Development Studies Monograph Series, Thiruvananthapuram: Centre for Development Studies, 1999, pp.18-35.

for Jesuits to educate the children of Cochin. In response, Xavier directed Antony Gomes, the Rector of St. Paul's College in Goa, to send Jesuits to Cochin. Antony Gomes appointed Baltazar Gago as the first Superior of the Cochin residence, and the College was started with the support of Bishop Albuquerque. The Jesuits soon gained control of the Madre de Deus Church, which had been in existence for 40 years, and built the college adjacent to it.

In 1549, Francisco Henriques began construction on a college modeled after Salvator College, on a site along the sea purchased by Governor Cabral for 600 pardaus. By 1552, Madre de Deus College had about 150 students, and it quickly became a major centre for educating students who later joined the Society of Jesus. In ten years, the college expanded, with around 250 students in primary classes covering reading, writing, and arithmetic. By 1571, it offered humanistic studies for 50 students, and in the following year, it introduced more advanced courses and moral theology, particularly aimed at local clergy.

Another prominent Jesuit institution was the Vaipicotta Seminary, established near Kochi in 1577. Known as the College of Santa Cruz, it was a full-fledged seminary intended to educate the Thomas Christians according to Roman Catholic principles. Directed by Fr. John Comporei, it offered courses in philosophy, theology, Latin, Portuguese, and Syriac. This college was founded with support from the Portuguese King and the Pope, highlighting the Jesuits' influential role in religious education in Kerala.⁶⁴

The Jesuits further extended their educational reach by founding the College of Angamaly in 1586, which received financial support from Philip II of Spain. It later became associated with Dom Luis Cerqueira, a Jesuit appointed Archbishop of Angamaly after Mar Abraham's death in 1598. In 1663, following the destruction of the Jesuit establishment at Vaipicotta, the Jesuits established St. Paul's College at Ambazhakkad. This institution became an esteemed center for Oriental studies,

⁶⁴ Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India, Vol. II: From the Middle of the Sixteenth to the End of the Seventeenth Century (1542–1700)*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1988, p.32.

known for its printing press and prominent scholars, such as John de Britto, Joseph Constantius Beschi, and Robert de Nobili. Many missionaries who served in Kerala and Tamil Nadu received their Dravidian cultural and linguistic training here, marking St. Paul's College as a foundational institution in Jesuit education and scholarly contributions to the region.

The Jesuit missionaries were passionate about offering education to everyone, and they made a special effort to focus on North Kerala. They set up colleges and seminaries in the region, aiming to reach more students and provide both religious and academic training. This showed their belief in education as a way to support people's spiritual and intellectual growth, especially in North Kerala.⁶⁵ Formal schooling in Malabar was historically limited, with education primarily based on traditional indigenous systems rather than structured institutions. The region had various learning centres that catered to different communities and knowledge traditions (see table 6).

Table 6

*Types of Indigenous Educational Institutions in Malabar*⁶⁶

Type of Institution	Significance
Gurukulas	Traditional Hindu learning centers where Brahmin scholars taught Vedas, Sanskrit, and philosophy to upper-caste students.
Madrasas	Islamic institutions providing religious and Arabic language education
Kalari	Centers for martial arts (Kalaripayattu), also imparting basic literacy and local governance training
Ezhuthupalli	Informal primary education centers run by ezhuthachans (local teachers), where children learned Malayalam, basic arithmetic, and scriptures

⁶⁵ Burton Cleetus, *op.cit.*, p.94.

⁶⁶ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Government Press, Madras, 1887, pp.123-253; A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*. India, S. Viswanathan, 2006; K. K. N. Kurup, *The Legacy of Islam in Kerala*, Samayam Publications, Kannur, 2006, pp.85-90; S. N. Sadasivan, *A Social History of India*, APH Publishing, New Delhi, 2000, pp.325-330; T. K. Ravindran, *Aspects of Kerala History and Culture*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1976, pp.112-118.

In Malabar, the Jesuit missionaries laid the foundation for their educational initiatives through the establishment of St. Joseph's Boys' High School in Calicut. St. Joseph's Boys' School traces its origins back to 1793, located on the eastern side of *Silk Street*.⁶⁷ Initially, it operated as a parish school primarily serving Portuguese and local Christian communities. The school was founded by Fr. Gabriel Gonsalves, the priest in charge of the *Mater Dei* Church, which was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Kodungallur Vicariate. Fr. Gonsalves established two separate schools: one for European students and another for Indian students. His aim was to provide educational opportunities and spiritual support to the children of Christian parents employed in various companies.⁶⁸ In 1861 the Carmelite fathers⁶⁹ took over the administration of the church and the school. They managed the school from 1861 to 1879. The Jesuits of the Venice Province reached Kozhikode in 1879 soon after they landed in Mangalore in 1878. Kozhikode became part of their missionary activities in the colonial Malabar. The Carmelites handed over the administration of the parish to the Jesuits and left the place. But the De la sale brothers had been managing the school for a few years, and there was concern about the poor performance of the school under them. Perhaps because of the dwindling number of brothers and the decline in their quality as teachers, they withdrew from the school in 1884. As a result, the school also was taken over by the Jesuits. Fr. A Muller, SJ was the first Jesuit manager of the school. Along with academics, this school also placed significant emphasis on sports. For instance, Fr. J.M. Vergotini, SJ, affectionately known as the “Football Achan of Kozhikode,” was a teacher here. Under his guidance, the school's football team rose to become one of the best in South India.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Historian M.G.S. Narayanan, in *Calicut: The City of Truth*, notes the historical association of Silk Street in Kozhikode with the Chinese silk trade. Although no Chinese inscriptions have been discovered in this area, it is believed that some form of silk trade took place, as Kozhikode is listed among three locations referenced in Chinese documents related to silk commerce.

⁶⁸ Since there are no authentic records available about the school from 1793 to 1860, controversy persists regarding the exact founding year of St. Joseph's Boys' School.

⁶⁹ *The Carmelite fathers*, a Catholic religious order.

⁷⁰ P.T. Mathew, S.J. and Dominic Joseph, SJ, *op.cit.*, p.21.

Another key contribution by the Jesuits to education in Malabar was the establishment of the St. Michael's Anglo-Indian School. The school's early history is somewhat obscure, with initial records dating back to the 1850s. At that time, a garrison school operated in Kannur under the leadership of Mr. Henrique La Port. Alongside this, a Roman Catholic Parochial School was situated near the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Burnacherry, offering instruction in Malayalam.

In 1862, Rev. Father Martelli, OCD, then Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, successfully brought in the Irish Christian Brothers to improve the school's standards, entrusting them with teaching responsibilities.⁷¹ That same year, the school was relocated to a 24-cent plot near the Holy Trinity Church. With the arrival of the Christian Brothers, English instruction was introduced, transforming the institution into a flourishing Anglo-Vernacular school. Their presence brought greater organization and discipline to the school environment.

In 1887, the Irish Christian Brothers departed, and the Jesuits took over the school's administration, maintaining its Anglo-Vernacular curriculum. Under Jesuit leadership, the school was elevated to the status of a European middle school, bringing significant changes, including the hiring of new staff and the notable addition of competent lady teachers—a progressive move at the time. However, the nearby textile mill disrupted school activities, prompting the Jesuits, under the guidance of Fr. D. Gordon, the Provincial of Madurai, to relocate the school to a new site closer to the military grounds in Kannur.⁷² Initially, the school primarily served children of European descent and Anglo-Indian families. After independence, it focused mainly on educating the Anglo-Indian community. However, as the Anglo-Indian population in Kannur began to decrease over time, the school gradually opened its doors to the wider public.⁷³

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.32.

From 1879 to 1923, Jesuit missionary activities in the Malabar region were under the Mangalore Province. However, as the Jesuits discovered more mission locations in Malabar and more missionaries came forward with readiness to serve in the region, the Mangalore Province was divided into two. This division led to the creation of the Calicut Diocese to centralize and strengthen Jesuit activities in the Malabar area.⁷⁴ The establishment of the Calicut Diocese on 12 July 1923 was crucial for the advancement of missionary activities in Malabar. While under the Mangalore Province, the necessary resources were insufficient to support extensive missionary work. Financial constraints and the limitations on available funds posed significant challenges for the Mangalore Province in addressing the needs of the Malabar region.⁷⁵ These factors led to the decision to divide the Mangalore Province. Consequently, the formation of the Calicut Diocese enabled Jesuit missionaries to focus more effectively on educational initiatives and other developmental efforts in the region. With the shifting of the headquarters to Kozhikode, the mission was called the Mangalore-Calicut Mission. From 1928, it came to be known as Calicut Mission encompassing all the areas under Karnataka and British Malabar.⁷⁶

The establishment of Jesuit schools was driven by an awareness of the educational needs of specific regions. For instance, when the Chundel School was initiated in 1924, it was recognized that there were no educational institutions available for the children of plantation workers. This understanding of local needs was a key factor in the Jesuits' motivation to open schools in various areas, including Payyanur and Madayi.

⁷⁴ apostolic letter *maximum illud* of the supreme pontiff Benedict xv to the patriarchs, primates, archbishops and bishops of the catholic world on the propagation of the faith throughout the world”*Wherever the local clergy exist in sufficient numbers, and are suitably trained and worthy of their holy vocation, there you can justly assume that the work of the missionary has been successful and that the Church has laid her foundations well”*

⁷⁵ P.T Mathew, S.J and Dominic Joseph, S.J, *op.cit.*, p.37.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.38.

Religious and Social engagements

The Jesuit missionaries in Colonial Kerala were keenly focused on promoting religious conversion and pastoral work, alongside their contributions to the field of education. The concept of “conversion” in Christian history has taken on various meanings, but it generally encompasses two main forms: first, the conversion of non-Christians to the Christian faith, and second, shifts within Christianity, such as conversions from Catholicism to Protestantism or vice versa.⁷⁷

The religious work of the Jesuits in colonial Kerala was significantly influenced by the support of the Portuguese monarchy, particularly under King Dom Manuel (1495–1521) and his successor, King John III (Dom João III) (1521–1557). These kings demonstrated a keen interest in promoting the evangelization of the Christian faith both within Portugal and in its overseas territories. Under their reigns, Portugal experienced a period of relative peace and prosperity, which facilitated the expansion of missionary activities. King John III and his successor, King Sebastian (1557–1578), maintained strong friendships with the Jesuits and actively encouraged their presence in India, urging governors and officials to support their pastoral initiatives. This royal patronage played a crucial role in establishing Jesuit missions in Kerala, shaping the landscape of Christianity in the region.⁷⁸

The Jesuits significantly benefited from the support of King John III of Portugal in their evangelization efforts. A clear illustration of this is found in a letter written by St. Francis Xavier from Kochi on January 20, 1545. In this correspondence, Xavier urged King John III to enhance the subsidies provided to India, highlighting the rapid growth of the Roman Catholic population due to the vigorous evangelization efforts undertaken by the Jesuits. After Francis Xavier, Jesuit missionaries took on significant responsibilities in both conversion efforts and pastoral activities. Father Antonio Criminali S.J. was a prominent leader among the early Jesuit missionaries dedicated to leading conversion efforts in the coastal regions. He was an Italian, and

⁷⁷ A.F. Walls, ‘Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church’, *International Bulletin Of Missionary Research*, 28(1), 2004, pp-2-6.

⁷⁸ Innasi, *op.cit.*, p.28.

joined the Society of Jesus in 1542 and arrived in India in 1545. He was subsequently elected as the Superior of the Fishery Coast to coordinate the pastoral work of Jesuit missionaries in the area. However, in June 1549, at the age of 29, he fell victim to a *Badaga* raid on a village near Vedalaialong the Fishery Coast.⁷⁹Criminali is commemorated as the first martyr of the Jesuits. After the death of Father Antonio Criminali in 1549, Father Henrique Henriques took charge of the Fishery Coast mission. To effectively communicate with the local people, he dedicated himself to learning Tamil and, within six months, had mastered both spoken and written forms, impressing the local community with his fluency. Henriques placed a strong emphasis on education and religious instruction: he taught Christian doctrine to children every morning, girls each afternoon, women every Saturday, and men every Sunday. His mission focused on building a strong Christian foundation among the young, selecting promising students from noble families and sending them to Kollam and Goa for further education. Henriques also expanded infrastructure, establishing churches, a retreat house, and a hospital along the coast. In his pastoral work, he relied on three main strategies: offering spiritual guidance to devout followers, who later formed the confraternity of charity; administering the sacrament of penance, initially limited due to a lack of Tamil-speaking priests; and enlisting dedicated lay helpers.

Although Jesuit missionaries primarily focused their conversion work along the Fishery Coast during this period, people from other areas were also converted to Christianity. For instance, Peter Luis, the first Indian Jesuit, was the son of a Brahmin who had been converted by Nicolo Lancilotto. Born around 1532 in the Kollam district, he became a Catholic at the age of fifteen and provided invaluable support to the missionaries, serving as both a companion and interpreter. The lives of those who converted to Christianity were often unsafe. The *Menology of the Society of Jesus*

⁷⁹ The Badagas are an agricultural community from the Nilgiri Hills in southern India. Historically, some groups engaged in raids on coastal villages during conflicts or resistance to foreign influences, including missionary activities. Thurston, Edgar, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909) offers detailed insights into the Badagas, their culture, and historical activities.

contains a reference to this situation.⁸⁰ Peter Aloysious, a Brahmin convert to Christianity, was attacked by some Hindus while he was engaged in preaching the Christian faith and speaking against unjust practices, leaving him near death from their assault.

Another Missionary was Roberto de Nobili, an Italian Jesuit missionary, who came to South India in the early 17th century with a unique approach to spread Christianity. Unlike many Western missionaries, de Nobili understood that to connect with Indians meaningfully, he had to respect and adapt to their traditions. To immerse himself in local culture, he took on the role of an “Aiyer”, a term traditionally used in South India for Brahmin or high-caste Hindu priests.⁸¹ By assuming this title, de Nobili indicated his intention to present himself as a person of learning and wisdom within Indian social structures, respecting the hierarchy and values deeply embedded in Indian society. As part of this commitment, de Nobili adopted various cultural practices associated with high-caste Hindus. He wore the sacred thread known as the “*poonool*”, a mark of Brahmin identity, which allowed him to engage in spiritual discussions with local scholars and Brahmins, who might otherwise have dismissed a foreigner’s teachings.⁸² His wardrobe consisted of saffron robes and simple wooden sandals, similar to those worn by Hindu ascetics. Moreover, he adhered to strict vegetarianism and even observed dietary restrictions in line with Brahmin customs, avoiding certain foods to maintain ritual purity.⁸³

De Nobili's immersion went beyond appearances. He refrained from the common practice of using Western furniture, choosing instead to sit cross-legged on the ground during meals, which was customary for Brahmins. He also drank water in a specific way—pouring it from a height without allowing his lips to touch the vessel—following traditional Hindu purity practices. These small acts of respect for

⁸⁰ Jesuit Fathers (ed.), *The Menology of the Society of Jesus*. London: Burns and Oates, 1880, p.22.

⁸¹ Vincent Cronin, *A Pearl to India, (the Life of Roberto de Nobili)*, New York, 1959, p. 20.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

cultural norms further solidified his acceptance among the locals, as they viewed these gestures as genuine respect for their customs.⁸⁴

Notably, De Nobili learned Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit, immersing himself in local languages to communicate in a way that made the Christian message relatable and comprehensible to the people. His dedication earned him respect and a new title, “*Raja Sannyasi*”, or royal ascetic.⁸⁵ De Nobili’s approach demonstrated that bridging cultural gaps through respect and understanding could foster genuine connections, earning him the trust and admiration of the people he sought to reach. The successors of de Nobili, particularly the Brahmin missionaries, carried forward his mission with dedication, shaping their work to respect local customs and extend Christianity’s reach among various social groups. This strategy became a foundation for their pastoral efforts, especially among non-Brahmins and lower castes, groups often marginalized by traditional religious structures.

To expand their impact, de Nobili’s successors established a new order of missionaries called the Pandaraswamis, who, like the Brahmin Sannyāsis, were highly influential. The first of these, Fr. Balthazar da Costa, began his work around 1640, drawing hundreds—and later thousands—to the faith with his fervent preaching.⁸⁶ The Pandaraswamis, along with the Brahmin priests, were integral to the mission’s growth, with da Costa and his followers gaining widespread respect and acknowledgment for their dedication.

For over three centuries, these Brahmin priests served as the core strength of the mission, respected for their knowledge, commitment, and the authority they held among new converts. By the time of de Nobili’s death in 1656, the mission was even recognized by the state as a legitimate Indian institution. Brahmin converts, having followed their “Sannyāsis” to places like Thiruchirappalli or Sathyamangalam, spread throughout the mission’s territories, strengthening its reach and influence. Meanwhile,

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.48.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.49.

⁸⁶ <https://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/nobili.htm>, Roberto de Nobili: Case study in cross-cultural accommodation

the “Old Church” of Fr. Gonçalo Fernandes, originally established by a Portuguese (referred to as a “*paranghi*”), continued to serve lower-caste Christians. Its leader, Fr. Emmanuel Lopes, dressed in traditional Portuguese clerical attire, worked with this lower-caste congregation, though he faced challenges in advancing their social standing. This dual approach of targeting both higher and lower caste communities showcased the adaptability and dedication of de Nobili’s successors in their pastoral work, ensuring the mission’s enduring legacy across various societal levels. During the colonial period, Jesuit missionaries actively sought alliances with local rulers to secure essential support and resources. In Kozhikode, Fr. Barreto observed that Jesuit efforts were initially fruitful, yet conflicts between Portugal and the Zamorin forced them to leave. Once peace was restored, they returned to rebuild the church. On the day of its blessing, the Zamorin expressed his desire to enter the church riding an elephant, but the structure proved too small. He then suggested, “Build another, and a much larger one, at my expense.” Fr. Barreto observed that the Zamorin was quite favourable toward the Jesuits and often showed interest in embracing Christianity, reflecting the missionaries' successful integration into the local cultural fabric.

However, support for missionary work was not consistent across Kerala. While South Kerala rulers like Rama Varma and MarthandaVarma of Travancore eventually allowed conversions to secure Portuguese military assistance against the Pandya kings, rulers in North Kerala took a firmer stance against conversions. The Kolathiri Raja of Cannanore, for instance, conveyed his disapproval of conversions to the King of Portugal as early as 1507, reaffirming this position in 1512. Unlike the South, these restrictions remained firmly upheld in North Kerala, limiting the missionaries' reach in those regions.

In 1701, the Provincial of the Malabar province expressed concern that evangelization efforts were largely confined to the coastal areas, neglecting the interior regions. In response to this issue, a group of Jesuits disguised as “*Pandaraswamis*” traveled to a village called Nemom, located six kilometres

southeast of Thiruvananthapuram. Their dedication and selfless actions led to the conversion of thousands of high-caste Hindus to Christianity.⁸⁷

Under the Mangalore Mission, the Jesuit missionaries did not actively engage in conversion or pastoral work in Malabar until 1923. For the first four decades, their efforts and resources were heavily focused on Mangalore and South Canara, leaving Malabar largely overlooked. Many other factors also caused this: the rate of conversion in North Malabar remained limited despite Portugal's ambitious goals for trade and evangelization in the region. By 1923, when the Diocese of Calicut was officially established, the Catholic population across the six civil districts of Malabar was only around 6,000. This number included migrants from Travancore and Mangalore, highlighting minimal success in local conversion efforts. This slow pace can be attributed to a combination of socio-political, economic, and logistical factors.

Missionaries arriving with the Portuguese were burdened by multiple responsibilities, which hindered their focus on evangelization. As Ferroli records,⁸⁸ these missionaries served as military chaplains, tending to Portuguese troops and addressing disciplinary issues, and they also provided spiritual guidance to the personnel stationed in forts and factories. This left them with little time for converting the local population. By 1514, Cannanore had only 340 Catholics, most of whom were labourers associated with the Portuguese, including a small number of converts from Islam, the Nair community, and other lower castes. The missionaries' limited time and resources restricted outreach to local communities.

Local resistance further obstructed missionary efforts, with testimonies describing the dangerous environment in which the missionaries operated. The Muslim community was particularly hostile to conversion, as exemplified by the martyrdoms of several missionaries. Fr. Martin da Guarda, for example, refused to renounce Christianity and was executed, and others, including Fr. Francisco Estevan,

⁸⁷ Mark Netto, *The Diocese of Trivandrum in Christian Heritage of Kerala* (ed.), K.J. John, Cochin, 1981, p. 377.

⁸⁸ D.Ferroli, *op.cit.*, p.83.

were killed along the Malabar Coast. Such violent outcomes not only highlighted the risks but likely deterred further missionary zeal.

Portuguese trade in North Kerala also diminished, weakening missionary presence in the area. Due to the Zamorin's alliances with Muslim trading communities, the Portuguese had limited economic influence in the north. According to a report from 1574, Cannanore played only a minor role in Portuguese trade, contributing small quantities of goods like ginger. This minimal economic engagement meant that fewer resources and personnel were dedicated to North Kerala, with Portuguese interests instead shifting to the South where trade was more lucrative and the Syrian Christian community was more prominent.⁸⁹

The Portuguese also faced significant logistical challenges in transporting missionaries and resources from Europe to North Kerala. Given the vast distance and perils of maritime travel, the steady supply of personnel and materials necessary for sustained missionary work was inconsistent.⁹⁰ The Portuguese faced challenges along their trade routes in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, and shifting control over spice trade weakened their hold on commerce in the region, further undermining their ability to support large-scale evangelization efforts. Additionally, economic motivations often took precedence over religious ones, further limiting conversion efforts. While the Portuguese arrived in Kerala with the dual motives of trade and evangelization, the economic interests often overshadowed their religious aims. Their primary focus was on the St. Thomas Syrian Christian community, a powerful force in Kerala's trade network, particularly in Travancore. This focus on existing Christian communities, where conversions were less controversial, resulted in a relative neglect of Malabar for missionary efforts.⁹¹ The social structure in Malabar also posed obstacles to evangelization. Early Christian converts were reluctant to serve as evangelists within their own communities, partly due to stringent social stratifications and prevailing

⁸⁹ <https://kannurdiocese.com/catechism/>

⁹⁰ James John, *The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in Kerala*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 2020, pp.11-14.

⁹¹ Binu M. Varghese, 'Christianity in India: The Anti-colonial Turn by Clara A.B. Joseph.' *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2020 (book review), pp.1-5.

cultural taboos.⁹² Historian Sreedhara Menon notes that Portuguese ecclesiastical authorities enforced policies of strict segregation, prohibiting Christians from using the services of non-Christian doctors and barbers.⁹³ Portuguese forts further segregated Christian converts, creating exclusive colonies where those who refused to convert were expelled. In this socially divided environment, early converts did not foster the evangelical momentum needed for wider outreach.

Furthermore, converts received inadequate pastoral care due to language barriers, leaving them with only superficial understandings of their faith. Jesuit priest Padre Giacomo Fenicio noted in 1607 that the Christian community in Cannanore lacked religious instruction because few priests spoke the local language, Malayalam. Converts therefore often only practiced Christianity in name. Fenicio observed that they attended confession but left without engaging in the sacrament's spiritual intent. This lack of religious education left the early Christian community without a solid foundation, thereby limiting their influence and further evangelistic drive within the region.

Following the formation of the Calicut Diocese, Jesuit activities in Malabar flourished significantly. This growth is reflected in the renaming of their mission to the Calicut Mission, marking a renewed focus and commitment to their work in the region. The Jesuit mission in Mangalore had limited opportunities for conversions, given the already substantial Christian population supported by a solid group of skilled secular priests. In contrast, Malabar, with its comparatively smaller Christian population, offered a more promising field for the Jesuit mission to expand its work.⁹⁴

Despite their efforts to convert lower-class individuals, Jesuit missionaries experienced a lower conversion rate compared to Protestant missionaries in Malabar.

⁹² Robert Deliège., 'Untouchability and Catholicism: The Case of the Paraiyars in South India', *Comparative Studies of South Asia Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1998, pp. 30–34.

⁹³ A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*. Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 1967, p.101.

⁹⁴ P.T Mathew, S.J and Dominic Joseph, S.J, *op.cit.*, p.38.

One significant reason for this disparity lies in the perception of the conversions within the existing Christian community.⁹⁵ Many of the lower-class converts to the Catholic faith faced a lack of recognition from the Syrian Christians, who had migrated from southern Kerala and maintained a more established presence in the region. In contrast, the Basel Mission successfully converted a considerable number of lower-class individuals to Protestant Christianity. This success can be attributed to the Basel Mission's more inclusive approach, which resonated with the social and cultural needs of the lower classes. By providing educational and social support, the Basel Mission created an environment that encouraged conversions, effectively addressing the concerns and aspirations of marginalized communities.⁹⁶ During the 16th to 19th centuries, various missionary groups, including the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, and Basel Mission, worked in Kerala with distinct approaches. While Franciscans and Dominicans focused on mass conversions and rigid European doctrinal practices, the Carmelites primarily mediated between the Roman Church and Syrian Christians with minimal social impact.

The Jesuits stood out for their inculturation strategy, adapting to local culture, engaging in education, literature, and political alliances. However, their elite-focused approach and theological rigidity sometimes alienated local rulers and indigenous Christians. In contrast, the Basel Mission (Protestant) prioritized economic upliftment, establishing industries, vocational training, and employment opportunities for lower-caste converts.⁹⁷

While Basel missionaries empowered communities economically, the Jesuits left a lasting intellectual and cultural impact through higher education, literature, and religious scholarship. Their legacy remains complex, balancing intellectual progress

⁹⁵ Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700–1900*. Cambridge university press, 1989, pp. 21-29.

⁹⁶ Parinitha Shetty, 'Missionary Pedagogy and Christianisation of the Heathens', *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2008, pp. 509–51.

⁹⁷ Jayaprakash Raghaviah, 'Conversion, Industrial Development and Social Engineering: Basel Mission in Malabar During the Nineteenth Century', *Salesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2017, pp. 59–70.

with social limitations compared to the Basel Mission's practical economic contributions.⁹⁸

Kolayad Mission

The establishment of the Calicut Diocese in 1923 marked a significant milestone in the expansion of Jesuit missionary work in Malabar. Bishop Perini, upon assuming leadership on November 7, 1923, was supported by a dedicated team of twelve Jesuit priests and four diocesan priests. The newly formed diocese faced considerable financial constraints, requiring innovative solutions for sustainability. Recognizing these challenges, the Jesuits took a strategic approach by acquiring the Muttill Estate in Wayanad, a vast tract of land designated for the cultivation of coffee, pepper, and cardamom. This initiative not only provided economic support for the mission but also underscored the Jesuits' pragmatic approach in integrating agriculture with missionary activities, ensuring the long-term viability of their religious and social outreach.

One of Bishop Perini's key efforts in Wayanad was to establish a strong mission presence, including opening a mission station at Kolayad specifically for outreach to the Kurichia and Paniya communities.⁹⁹ He appointed Paul Rosario Fernandez as the missionary for this station and secured 300 acres of land for the mission's development. Further strengthening the diocese, Perini supported initiatives like St. Vincent's Industrial School, founded by Spinelli in 1927, and acquired the Chellotte Estate in Wayanad as an additional financial resource for the diocese's work.¹⁰⁰ Through these initiatives, Perini's efforts in Wayanad laid a strong foundation for the Jesuit mission under the Calicut Diocese. After the period of Perini, many Jesuit missionaries paid special attention to Wayanad. Lombardini was the first Jesuit missionary to settle in the region, establishing himself in Manantoddy, where

⁹⁸ www.bmarchives.org.

⁹⁹ The first Catholic priest to arrive in Wynaad was a French Grandmottest, who served as chaplain to the French forces allied with Tipu Sultan during the late eighteenth century when their relationship was cordial.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.calicutdiocese.org/>

the Catholic population at that time numbered about eight hundred. Following his lead, other Jesuits arrived and spread their activities across various centers in Wayanad. Notable figures included Romeo Porta at Kaniambetta, Edward Beretta at Vayittiri, John Coelho at Meppadi, and Paul Fernandez at Kannothe.

These missionaries set up mission stations and engaged in conversion work, mirroring the famous “Paraguay Reductions” of Jesuits in Latin America. The superiors recognized Lombardini's suitability for the area, as he had missionary experience in Burma before joining the Society of Jesus. The mission station in Vayittiri was initiated in the 1870s by French Fathers of the Foreign Mission Society of Paris, who constructed a small church and periodically visited from Mysore to conduct Mass for the local Catholics.

The Kaniambetta settlement was expanded through the cultivation of several hundred acres of land with help from the Mission. The missionaries found this model of agricultural settlements to be one of the most effective means for conversion. A report from one of the missionaries in 1926 noted that this approach suited the local context, leading them to contemplate a vast scheme with government assistance. The late collector of Malabar, Mr. Thorne, supported their initiative by granting five thousand acres of government land for the establishment of settlements aimed at uplifting depressed classes and enhancing their economic conditions to encourage conversion.

As a result of these initiatives, new parishes emerged throughout Wayanad, including Our Lady of Lourdes Church, St. Jude's Shrine, Holy Cross Church, and several others. Educational institutions, such as the R.C. School in Chundale, were also established to uplift the local population. This school began in 1924 with just 47 students and evolved into a complete educational institution through the efforts of Edward Beretta and his successors. The pioneering Jesuit missionaries, including Lombardini, Edward Beretta, John Coelho, and others, significantly influenced the spiritual and social landscape of Wayanad. Their dedication and initiatives not only fostered religious conversion but also facilitated educational development, leaving a lasting impact on the region.

Chirakkal and Mattul Mission

Historian Stanly Patric described the Jesuit missionaries of the late 1930s as key figures in helping Dalit communities gain freedom from caste oppression.¹⁰¹ Similarly, in the local history of Kunju Kutty Kozhuvanal, the baptism of Pulayas¹⁰² in the village of Anikkad is seen as an important moment that helped these people escape caste-based discrimination. The Jesuit-led conversions offered Dalit communities both spiritual and social liberation, granting them dignity and a sense of equality in society.¹⁰³

Under the patronage of Bishop Leo Proserpio, in 1937 Fr. Peter Caironi S J established the Chirakkal Mission, marking a pivotal moment in the spiritual and social transformation of Kannur's Dalit community.¹⁰⁴ Caironi was deeply shocked by the plight of the Pulayas, which ignited in him a strong determination to advocate for their rights and fight against injustice, even at great personal risk. (Appendix-7) Recognizing the need to fully understand their situation, he spent several days studying their circumstances.¹⁰⁵ As a trained missionary, he understood that gaining the trust of the Pulayas was essential for any meaningful change. To achieve this, he immersed himself in their daily lives, eating their food, sleeping under trees, or in vacant shops. His willingness to embrace them and share in their hardships soon won their hearts. Caironi's compassion, unwavering zeal, spirit of sacrifice, and humility

¹⁰¹ Stanly Patric, *Malabarile Dalit Christava Charithravum Varthamanavum*, Viani Printings, Kochi, 2014, p.107.

¹⁰² Gandhiji addressed them as Harijan, It should be noted that Fr. Joseph Taffrael raised his voice for the Pulaya people of North Malabar the same time as Gandhiji fighting for the rights of the Harijan community and temple entry as part of the national movement.

¹⁰³ P. Sanal Mohan, 'Emotions in the context of Caste Slavery, exploring the missionary writings on Kerala', *The Politics of Belonging in Contemporary India: Anxiety and Intimacy. India*, Taylor & Francis, 2019, pp.10-17

¹⁰⁴ Letter of Caironi to Provincial (Pietro dalle Nogare), Madayi, February 7, 1953

¹⁰⁵ Isaac Pilathara, *Fr. Joseph Taffrael S.J., orupavam missionaryude ormmakkurippukal*. Kannur: Bethel Publications, 2014, p-62. Most Pulayas live in poor mud huts provided by their masters, who require them to guard the property and renew the grass thatching each year, which often forces them into debt for materials. To find work, many men travel to the hills, where they risk contracting diseases like malaria, leaving their families in desperate situations when they cannot return home.

helped him forge a strong bond with the Pulayas, who began to confide in him about their struggles and the exploitation they faced from the caste Hindus and Moplahs (mappilas).¹⁰⁶

Caironi recognized that the Pulayas' social liberation was crucial but believed it could only be achieved through their religious emancipation. The Pulayas were deeply entrenched in superstitions, worshipping a variety of idols and engaging in rituals led by witchdoctors rather than seeking medical help. He was convinced that Christianity could be the key to freeing them from these age-old beliefs.¹⁰⁷ His commitment to their cause culminated on October 28, 1938, when he baptized the first group of twelve Pulayas in Vadakkebhagam.¹⁰⁸ His reputation among the Pulayas grew, particularly during the cholera outbreak in Malabar in 1943.¹⁰⁹ While the British government failed to address the epidemic, Caironi remained steadfast in his dedication to the Pulayas, even risking his safety to help them. Despite being ordered to internment due to the war, Caironi wrote to the Queen of England, pleading to stay closer to the people he served. The Queen granted him permission to reside in the Jesuit residence in Cannanore, where he continued to care for the cholera-affected villagers. He provided food, medicine, and burial assistance, regardless of caste or religion. His selfless actions endeared him to the Pulayas and sparked one of the most significant mass conversion movements in modern Kerala, extending to neighboring areas such as Kizhara, Padiyil, and Payyanur.¹¹⁰

Caironi's mission went beyond mere conversion. He sought the comprehensive liberation of the Pulayas, which included economic independence and social emancipation. He treated them as equals, often challenging the norms that enforced untouchability. His public displays of affection toward the Pulayas and their families,

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.116.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.83

¹⁰⁹ P. Priya. 'Malabar Famine of 1943: A Critique of War Situation in Malabar (1939-45)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 75, 2014, pp. 628–38.

¹¹⁰ Isaac Pilathara, *op.cit.*, p.127.

such as kissing their babies, were acts of defiance against the caste system. By actively engaging in their community, he empowered the Pulayas to assert their dignity and reject the imposition of untouchability.

Recognizing the need for more support, Caironi asked for additional missionaries. The first to respond was John Sequeira, a native Jesuit who arrived at Chirakkal in 1938 and started the Mattul mission station. Shortly after, Leo Lombardini and Anthony Zearo joined him, overseeing the Pazhayangadi and Payyannur centers, respectively.¹¹¹ Joseph Taffarel also contributed significantly to the mission's development, serving in various roles from 1944 onwards.¹¹² Measuring the impact of the Chirakkal Mission is difficult due to limited statistics. Before 1937, there were no Catholics in the area. By the start of World War II in 1940, the mission had welcomed 805 new members and 124 individuals preparing for baptism across its main stations: Cherukunnu, Mattul, Pazhayangadi, and Payyannur. By 1953, the number of new converts had increased to 2,500, leading to the establishment of ten churches and chapels to support the growing community.

Mattul is another region where Jesuit missionaries worked among the Pulaya community in Kannur district. Fr. Sequeira founded the Mattul Mission in 1938. Taffarel who played a major role in the development of the Mission came in 1944.¹¹³ Mattul is a land where the sea and rivers intertwine, creating a rich coastal ecosystem. There were no proper roads or facilities for the rivers and their surroundings. There were no hospitals or dispensaries available. The nearest hospital was in Kannur, but reaching there was extremely difficult. In this region, the three-tiered patriarchal system exploited the Pulaya community. They were the landlords, money lenders and merchants.¹¹⁴ The history reveals that the Pulaya people faced humiliation and oppression in this place. Fr. Taffarel taught the Pulaya community

¹¹¹ Isaac Pilathara, *Pangalude Zuholachan* (ed.), Bethel Publications, 2015, p.69.

¹¹² Shiny K. Mathew, Godwin Sam Raj D.P., 'Fr. Joseph Taffrael and North Malabar: Religious and Social Changes among the Depressed Classes', *Int. Res. J. Social Sci.*, Volume 13, Issue (1), 2023, pp. 11-14.

¹¹³ Isaac, Pilathara, *op.ci.t*, p.32.

¹¹⁴ Fr. Joseph, Taffrel. *Jottings of a poor missionary*. manglore city press, 1950, pp.28-34.

about their social and legal rights with the help of a retired tahsildar. Fr. Taffarel remarked that to transform the Pulayas into good Christians and respectable citizens, it was essential to help them achieve several goals.¹¹⁵(Appendix-8). He emphasized the importance of providing them with decent housing and a small piece of land, which would serve as the foundation for their gradual ascent in social status.¹¹⁶

Empowerment of Women

The Jesuits took significant steps to empower women from marginalized communities who suffered due to extreme poverty and lack of basic necessities, such as clothing. The Jesuits aimed to uplift women from marginalized communities by addressing their extreme poverty and deprivation. Their primary focus was on economic empowerment, ensuring that women had access to livelihood opportunities to sustain themselves and their families. They concentrated on vocational training, education, and skill development, enabling women to engage in income-generating activities.¹¹⁷ Additionally, they emphasized self-sufficiency through cottage industries, small-scale agriculture, and other sustainable employment avenues. Their intervention was not merely charitable assistance but a structured effort to eradicate poverty, ensuring long-term stability and independence for marginalized women. Recognizing the dire conditions of Pulaya women in Mattul—left destitute as men traveled to Coorg for work—the Jesuits sought to alleviate their hardships.¹¹⁸ They partnered with the Ursuline and Canossian nuns, who established essential institutions to support these women. The Ursulines opened an orphanage and a girls' school in Payyanur, and the Canossians dedicated themselves to assisting the elderly, the sick, and children, conducting home visits, and teaching catechism across various centers.¹¹⁹ Together, they built a network of support that included the St. Martin de

¹¹⁵ The Catholic Worker, Vol. XIII. No. 8, October 1946.

¹¹⁶ Shiny K Mathew, Dr. Godwin Samraj D. P. *op.cit.*, p.16.

¹¹⁷ Ines G. Županov. "Compromise: India", in *A Companion to the Reformation World*, ed. by R. Po-chia Hsia, Blackwell Publishing, USA 2004, p. 22.

¹¹⁸ Isaac, Pilathara, *Fr. Joseph Taffrael S.J, orupavam op.cit.*, p.79.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.119.

Porres Hospital, a leprosy hospital, a crèche, a home for the elderly, and vocational schools for weaving and tailoring. The Jesuits actively encouraged women from marginalized communities to take on roles as local evangelists, teachers, and support staff after they studied in their missionary schools. For instance, Devayani, a young girl from the Thiya community in Mattul, completed her education at a missionary school and then secured a teaching position there. Her engagement with the school and the supportive atmosphere of the missionary community inspired her to embrace Christianity.¹²⁰ Every Sunday, the Jesuits distributed a set amount to impoverished women to ease their struggles, while hospitals and convents provided them with additional support. Their efforts created a foundation of dignity and security for women who had previously been left in vulnerable and unbearable conditions. Uma Chakravarty stated that “women were desperate in breaking their prison-houses largely through missionary education that provided the converts, particularly from the lower castes, with a means to access employment opportunities”.¹²¹ The Jesuits supported women through the establishment and operation of St. Vincent's Home for Women and Girls, a comprehensive institution dedicated to providing essential services for women and children in need. Founded in 1923, St. Vincent's began as a refuge for orphans under the care of the Sisters of Charity, quickly expanding to include destitute women. Recognizing the challenges faced by these vulnerable groups, the Jesuits initiated various programs aimed at empowerment and support.

Under the leadership of Spinelli in 1924, the institution introduced a technical school for boys and a laundry service for girls, emphasizing vocational training as a means to enhance their skills and increase their independence. By 1934, the girls' section evolved into a hand-embroidery School, receiving government recognition and State support. This expansion laid the groundwork for a dressmaking section, further broadening the vocational opportunities available to the women.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.83.

¹²¹ Uma Chakravarti, *Gendering Caste through a Feminist Lens*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2018, pp.112-13.

In 1955, the Jesuits established a foundling home for abandoned babies, ensuring that these children received the care and support they desperately needed. As the children grew, St. Vincent's developed a crèche and nursery school to promote their education and well-being. The dedicated staff educated the girls to the best of their abilities, offering craft training in areas such as hand and machine embroidery, tailoring, and dressmaking. This training empowered the women to earn the Kerala Government Training Certificate, giving them the skills needed for sustainable employment.

Residents of St. Vincent's Home could stay until they secured stable futures, reflecting the institution's commitment to fostering independence and dignity. By 1930, the home housed fifty-seven inmates, illustrating its role as a haven for women and girls from diverse backgrounds. The Jesuits' multifaceted approach not only provided immediate support but also transformed the lives of countless women, empowering them to rise above their challenging circumstances and pursue brighter futures. Through education, vocational training, and compassionate care, the Jesuits made a lasting impact on the lives of these women, helping them break free from the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

Transition and Adaptation: Jesuits in Post-Independence Malabar

With the end of colonial rule in India, the Jesuits in Malabar underwent a significant transition in their mission and focus.¹²² Free from colonial oversight, they became more active in socio-religious activities, prioritizing the empowerment of marginalized communities, particularly tribal groups. They also fostered interreligious dialogue to promote understanding and cooperation among diverse faiths. The Jesuits dedicated themselves to educational reform, healthcare, and social welfare, aiming to uplift the underprivileged and encourage holistic development.

In the post-independence era, the Jesuits expanded their outreach efforts by establishing new schools and colleges that emphasized quality education and values-

¹²² Robin, and Koji Kawashima. 'Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1936', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 105, no. 3, 2000, p. 911.

based learning. They intensified their social work to meet pressing community needs, such as poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, and health services. The Jesuits began to think about more meaningful involvements. They began their active involvement with the training of the youth in university studies through the functioning of the Catholic Students Union. In the context of the growing prominence of the communists in Kerala and other subsequent developments in society, the Jesuits thought it was necessary to redefine their mission.¹²³ With the rise of communism in Kerala, particularly after the CPI's electoral victory in 1957, the Jesuits recognized the need to redefine their mission. The communist government's policies, including land reforms and labor movements, posed challenges to traditional Christian institutions. In response, the Jesuits shifted their focus toward social justice, labor welfare, and secular education. They expanded their outreach to marginalized workers and farmers, established educational institutions with skill-based curricula, and engaged in labor reforms while maintaining a non-political stance. Additionally, they promoted local clergy leadership, reducing reliance on foreign missionaries. Historical records from the Jesuit Madurai Province archives and KCBC reports highlight this strategic transformation, which allowed the Jesuits to sustain their influence in Kerala's changing socio-political environment.¹²⁴

Socio-Religious Centre (SRC)

After India gained independence, the Jesuits gave serious thought to how they could creatively utilize the available spaces they had. This became a common concern, as they sought ways to adapt their resources to better serve the changing needs of society. They focused on transforming their institutions and properties into centers for education, social welfare, and community development, aiming to make a meaningful impact on post-colonial Indian society. By reimagining these spaces, the Jesuits could continue their mission in ways that aligned with the nation's goals of progress and self-reliance. Over time, the Jesuits developed the idea of creating a center for socio-religious activities, envisioning it as a hub for retreats, seminars, and human resource

¹²³ P.T. Mathew, S.J, and Dominic Joseph, S.J, *op.cit.*, p.54.

¹²⁴ Jesuit Madurai Province Archives, *Records on the Kerala Mission*, Madurai, 1960.

development. Fr. Dominic George and K.C Thomas were appointed as tentative designers of this venture. The idea became a reality in 1927 as the socio religious centre, one of the first of its kind in Malabar. Major programmes in the early phase focused on four segments: retreats and spiritual programmes, counselling and therapy sessions, capacity building training, and socio-cultural interventions. SRC became the venue for regular Ignatian directed retreats and other spiritual programmes.¹²⁵ The social commitment was a core element of SRC programmes and evolved into what came to be Beach Blossoms Project. Workshops on social analysis and training Programmes for social workers were highly valued by the social organizations and trade unions from all over Kerala, particularly in the 1980s. The Beach Blossoms Project became a laboratory for field training of social workers. SRC got involved in many social issues and human rights issues in Kozhikode city and around through a forum called “*Powravakasa Vedi*” (Forum for Citizen’s Rights). Fr. Dominic George, Fr. Mathew Aerthayil, Fr. P.T Augustine were prominent Directors of the SRC.

Beach Blossoms Centre (BBC)

SRC launched programs focused on religious and social issues. Motivated by the difficult living conditions in the area, it soon expanded its efforts to support the coastal communities in the Kozhikode region. SRC thus developed into an organization with two distinct wings: a programme centre at Christ Hall, and a social centre on the Kampuram beach.¹²⁶ The latter became the channel of its development and conscientisation work among the coastal people.

The origin of Beach Blossoms goes back to 1975 when an AICUF(All India Catholic university) camp was organized at SRC under the guidances of Fr. Dominic George and Jose Mathew Malancheruvil. As part of analyzing social realities, the participants undertook exposure-cum-study programmes in some of the coastal settlements. An evaluation of the camp experience inspired the participants and the Jesuits to engage in a planned intervention in the life context of these people. Some

¹²⁵ P.T Mathew, *op.cit.*, p.57.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.141.

non-formal educational programmes were initiated as a collaborative venture of AICUF and SRC. As the work began to expand to more villages, it became the sole responsibility of SRC to organize the work systematically. An office-cum-programme centre was put up at Kampuram beach and work was diversified. Several Jesuits got involved in the social apostolate both in developmental programmes and conscientisation work.

In the pioneering phase, BBC was struck by the wretched living conditions of the beach dwellers who included sea-going fishermen as well as those who did unskilled labour in the city. The focus of the activity was non-formal education, income generating activities for women, organizing people to demand basic amenities like drinking water, better housing, electricity and leadership training. Community-based activities were insisted upon rather than individual-oriented welfare programmes. BBC helped to set up “*anganawadis*” (playschools) in villages for coastal children. By 1977, BBC had extended its work to five coastal villages within an 8 kilometre stretch of the city beach. It began organizing ward committees and gramasabhas to lead the programmes. “*Mahila Samajams*” (women’s groups) were set up and tailoring centres and health centres catered to women and girls. Remedial education classes were conducted for school going children. A Jesuit missionary shared his experience “We often faced opposition from the local Hindu and Muslim communities, as these villages were largely populated by followers of those faiths. Yet, we built goodwill with the coastal people through our dedicated efforts, which helped us overcome these communal and political challenges effectively. Their support allowed us to continue our work with resilience and success”.¹²⁷

In the second phase that began in the early 1980s, the focus shifted from beach dwellers to a specific sector of the economy, viz the fish workers. The reason was the realization that a movement of people can be built up only on a unifying thread like fishing. This evolved into the unionization of the traditional fish workers, a segment that was ignored by the politically affiliated trade unions. The Malabar Independent

¹²⁷ Interview with Jesuit priest at christhall, Malaparamba, 19th April 2019.

Fishworkers union was formed in 1982 and work was extended to the neighbouring districts too. This period between 1982 and 1987 can be seen as the golden period of BBC's coastal intervention. The union of fish workers was affiliated with the state level independent trade union of fish workers which was led by Fr. Tom Kocherry and others.¹²⁸ This federation brought together fish workers from all districts and all three religious communities, but the Muslim fisherman came from the Malabar union. The fisherman under the union identified themselves with the slogan of "ban on monsoon trawling".¹²⁹

The high point of the movement was the historic fishermen's agitation in 1984 that had state level implications politically. The Jesuit priests were active in the movement. Some of them joined the indefinite fast as part of the agitation or were arrested or jailed along with the fishermen activists. This became an occasion for the kerala church to discuss the morality of agitations and the use of methods like "fast unto death".¹³⁰ The agitation paved the way for legislative measures and policy rethinking in fisheries management. Besides securing relief packages the agitation brought increased visibility to the traditional fishing community as a political force in kerala. Through innumerable training programmes in social analysis and leadership, SRC helped the fish workers movement to build up its leaders.¹³¹

By the end of the 1980s, union activities began to diminish for various reasons. The politicization process of traditional fisherman attracted every political party to step in with their unions, and the initial demands were no more relevant. So BBC attempted to consolidate the other activities and to understand coastal issues from

¹²⁸ Jona.Halfdanardottir, 'Social mobilization in Kerala: fishers, priests, unions, and political parties', *semantic scholar*, 1993, pp.137-148.

¹²⁹ Gunakar, Surathkal, Adam Jadhav, and RamachandraBhatta. 'Protections for small-scale fisheries in india: A study of india's monsoon fishing ban', *The small-scale fisheries guidelines: Global implementation*, 2017, pp. 291-311.

The *monsoon trawling ban* is a seasonal restriction on mechanized fishing along India's coast to protect fish during breeding seasons.

¹³⁰ Like a fast unto death, it reflected the influence of Gandhian methods on the Jesuits' approach.

¹³¹ Interview with Fr P.T Mathew SJ, 12th August 2019.

more holistic perspectives, as linked to macro issues like ecology, legal systems, and global market economy. Attempts were made to network with other segments and movements working at human rights, displacement, and issues of cultural identity.¹³² Attacks from communal forces, both Hindu and Muslim groups, continued as BBC was seen as a Christian missionary outfit with ulterior motives. This became the occasion to enter the third phase in the evolution of BBC which culminated in the delinking of Beach Blossoms from SRC.

A comprehensive external evaluation of the Beach Blossoms project was undertaken in 1993 with the help of PROACT, a Hyderabad based agency to assess the social action intervention of SRC and to suggest ways for the future. The committee suggested for autonomy of the BBC and recommended its delinking from SRC to make it a secular movement with people's participation. Thus in 1997 BBC delinked from SRC. Consequently, three autonomous organizations were formed: The Malabar Coastal Institute for Training, Research and Action; The Malabar Theeradesa Vanitha Federation for women's welfare and empowerment, and The Malabar Fishermen's Co-operative. Though started as a conventional project of charitable and developmental activity, it evolved into a centre of social action animating a movement of fisher people along the path of agitation for legislative measures and rightful benefits. It inspired many Jesuits and other religious to engage in social issues, and created a space to discuss social issues.

The transition of BBC from a developmental project into an independent social movement reflects the Jesuits' responsiveness to evolving social dynamics and the realities of Kerala's political landscape. By promoting unionization and empowerment, they addressed immediate needs while encouraging sustainable development among the coastal population. Despite facing communal resistance, BBC continued to grow, achieving autonomy in 1997 and forming specialized institutions to further support fishermen and coastal communities. This transformation

¹³² Kalpana Ram, 'Mukkuvar women: Gender, hegemony, and capitalist transformation in a South Indian fishing community', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, 1993, pp. 760-761.

highlights the Jesuits' adaptability and their commitment to promoting social justice, economic sustainability, and community self-reliance.

Many initiatives started by Jesuit missionaries during the colonial period continued into the post-colonial era, often with increased social relevance and impact. For instance, the Chirakkal Mission, which began in 1937, remains actively engaged in post-colonial North Malabar. This not only highlights the enduring commitment of Jesuit missionaries but also underscores the limited socio-economic progress in the region. NirmalaITI operates under the administration of the Chirakkal Mission, which manages its overall functioning. Fr Antony ManipadamSJ started the Nirmala Craft Training Centre at Madayi (Kannur Dist) in 1965 to give training to poor boys from the Chirakkal mission in carpentry and general engineering to feed local small scale industries. Carpentry, fitting and masonry courses were offered. The Nirmala Saw Mill was started to find financial support for the training centre. The sawmill could not survive due to competition from other sawmills, and so was sold in 1970. The craft training centre was shifted to Pilathara in 1970. Br Varghese Nedungattu took the initiative to set up the carpentry training centre at Pilathara and it was inaugurated on 19 March to trainees each from the parishes of the Chirakkal Mission. Within four or five years 80 trainees including religious sisters of the DSS(Sisters of Dinasevnasabha) Congregation passed out of the institution successfully.

Meanwhile, the Nirmala Craft Training Centre started functioning at Pilathara at the initiative of Fr Joseph Chittooparambil who was the Parish Priest. New trades like Wireman, Electrician, Mechanic Radio-Television and Welder were soon added. It came to be known as NirmalaITI. By the early 1980s, a few problems disrupted the smooth functioning of Nirmala ITC at Pilathara. The Carpentry was closed down in August 1980 after some tussle with the workers. The workers were paid 15000 each as compensation. Then the students went on a strike in support of the workers and raising other demands. In the agitation that followed, they destroyed some furniture and caused damage to the building. Later, the teachers also went on a strike demanding higher salary which the management was unable to pay. After a series of negotiations with the stakeholders failed, the management decided to close down the ITIPilathara.

The Province made an offer to the Diocese to take up and run the industrial training centre and the production centre. But the Diocese expressed its inability. So in January 1981, the province decided to shift the NirmalaITI to SM Farm, Pariyaram. In August 1982, the ITI was shifted to temporary buildings in SM Farm. It continued to provide quality training in trades like Electrician, and Mechanic Radio-Television producing technically skilled labour at a time when institutes of technical education were rare in Kannur and Kasaragode districts. Later, the ITI was renamed as NirmalaITI (private) as per government directions. Today NirmalaITI is listed among the top technical institutes in Kannur and Kasargod districts with two units of Electrician, one unit each of Technician Power Electronics Systems and Mechanic Motor Vehicles attracting students from far and near.¹³³

The staunch support from individuals like Mr. Samuel Aaron played a crucial role in enabling Jesuit missionaries to sustain their mission in Malabar. This collaboration led to the establishment of the SM Farm in Pariyaram, Kannur district. Mr. Aaron, an industrialist from Pappinissery and a close friend of Fr. Joseph Koilparambil, donated 240 acres of land to the Kerala Jesuit Society during the tenure of Fr. Joseph Edamaram as Vice-Provincial.¹³⁴ Acting on Mr. Aaron's directive, his overseer, Mr. Krishnan Nair, meticulously ensured the smooth transfer of the property to the Jesuits. Despite facing obstacles such as reclaiming portions of the land held by others, the Jesuits secured legal ownership of 176 acres and 40 cents through a "Pattayam" issued on October 13, 1977. Driven by Mr. Aaron's vision of benefiting the local community, the Jesuits initially transformed the land into a farm. They cultivated cashews, which became the primary source of income. The project gained significant financial aid from the Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC) in Australia, while the Indian Government supported the initiative by granting import licenses and exempting customs duties on imported materials.

In 1964, the Jesuits launched a dairy farm on the property, aiming for large-scale success. However, challenges such as water scarcity, difficulty in marketing

¹³³ Interview with Fr. Lenin Antony SJ, Samskriti, Pariyaram, 3rd June 2022.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

milk, low demand, and insufficient staff training hindered the farm's profitability. After years of struggle, the dairy farm was closed in 1983. Refusing to abandon their mission, the Jesuits experimented with rubber cultivation in 1984. Their initial six-acre plantation yielded positive results, encouraging expansion. Rubber cultivation eventually became the farm's mainstay, ensuring its financial sustainability. Beyond agriculture, the Jesuits also focused on education and social welfare. In 1982, they relocated the NirmalaITI from Pilathara to SM Farm, enhancing local access to technical education. In the late 1980s, under the leadership of Fr. Linus Zucol, they dedicated 50 acres of the farm to a housing project for the poor, directly addressing community needs.

Father Linus Maria Zucol, affectionately known as “Zucolachan,” dedicated his life to uplifting the downtrodden in Kerala's Malabar region. He arrived in India in 1948, where he devoted more than six decades to serving the poor and marginalized.¹³⁵ From the moment he stepped into the Malabar region, Father Zucol focused on improving the lives of the region's low-caste communities. In 1948, he started his mission in Chundel, Wayanad, and later moved to Madai and Pattuvam in Kannur district. His remarkable ability to identify and address the needs of the people set him apart. He initiated housing projects for the homeless, constructing nearly 10,000 houses during his tenure. His approach went beyond temporary relief—he empowered individuals by providing sewing machines, cattle, and auto-rickshaws to help them earn a livelihood.

In 1968, he encouraged a German nun to establish the Deena Sevana Sabha (DSS), a religious congregation aimed at serving poor families. His efforts brought not only material assistance but also spiritual guidance. He later established the Mariyapuram parish in 1972, where he served as the parish priest for 39 years. Father Zucol's work earned him the respect and admiration of people from all walks of life. Despite his Catholic mission, he reached out to people of all religions. For instance, he provided a house to Mohanan Athilatt, a Hindu man who had suffered a spinal

¹³⁵ <https://www.manoramaonline.com/news/kerala/2023/01/06/fr-lenus-maria-zucol-is-now-a-servant-of-god.html>

injury. Similarly, Jose Thankappan, a convert from Hinduism, noted how the priest supported women by providing sewing machines to help them become self-reliant.¹³⁶

His dedication extended to building more than 30 churches and several schools, roads, and convents, especially in Kannur district. His compassion and integrity earned him the trust of even his staunchest critics. Communist leader K. Manoharan Kalleri and Muslim leader Kookkanam Rehman both praised his selfless work, acknowledging the transformative impact he had on the community.¹³⁷ Father Zucol also demonstrated resilience and courage in evangelization. While bringing thousands of people to Catholicism, he never faced significant opposition, even from right-wing Hindu groups. He attributed this acceptance to his genuine focus on improving lives rather than forcing religious conversions. The SM Farm illustrates how collective efforts supported the Jesuit mission in Malabar, allowing them to adapt to challenges and fulfill their vision of social upliftment and sustainable development.

Sanskriti

The Jesuit missionaries actively addressed the academic needs of the Dalit community in Malabar through their initiative, “Sanskriti”, established at Pariyaram in 1992. They launched this program to promote socio-cultural research, publications, and practical actions to uplift the Dalit community in North Malabar. Formally registered as a Charitable Society, Sanskriti conducted extensive research studies on cultural and social issues affecting Dalits, and published books to raise awareness and provide insights into their challenges. The missionaries encouraged the preservation and promotion of traditional Dalit art forms and sculpture by producing and distributing high-quality artistic items. Through Sanskriti, they conducted research projects that documented and analyzed the socio-economic and cultural struggles of the Dalit community, contributing significantly to academic discourse and policy recommendations. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the Jesuit missionaries demonstrated their commitment to educational equity by collaborating with various

¹³⁶ Isaac Pilathara, pavangalude zucholachan, *op.cit.*, p.36.

¹³⁷ https://plusone.google.com/_/+1/confirm?hl=en&url=https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive

organizations to distribute digital TVs to underprivileged students. This effort enabled many Dalit children to participate in online classes and continue their education despite the challenges of remote learning.

Jeevika

The Jesuits have actively prioritized concern for marginalized communities since the early 1970s. In Kerala, guest laborers from other states of India represent a significant marginalized group. Recognizing their needs, the Jesuit Province launched the Jeevika¹³⁸ Migrant Workers' Movement in 2011. The initiative began in Kalady, chosen due to the high concentration of guest laborers in nearby Perumbavoor and surrounding areas. Today, similar efforts across Kerala operate under the coordination of the organization PRISM.

This chapter highlighted the major initiatives that the Jesuit missionaries led in the Malabar region during the colonial and post-colonial periods. It details how they worked among the fisherman and Dalit communities, actively addressing the social and economic challenges these marginalized groups faced.

¹³⁸ The Jesuits in Karnataka are running a program under the same name, "Jeevika," aimed at raising awareness among the lower classes and helping them attain liberation from the caste system and slavery.

Chapter III

Jesuit Intervention with Tribal Communities in Post-Colonial Malabar

The previous chapter provided a detailed account of the activities of Jesuit missionaries in Kerala and Malabar during both the colonial and post-colonial periods. It explored the various efforts and initiatives undertaken by the missionaries in the region, focusing on their religious, educational, and social contributions. In this chapter, the focus shifts to examining the specific interactions and engagements between Jesuit missionaries and the tribal communities of Post-Colonial Malabar particularly in Wayanad and Palakkad. It seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how these missionaries influenced and shaped the lives of the tribes in Malabar.

“Wherever missionaries are active, the people are found to be educationally developed, especially among the deprived, the poor, the exploited and those excluded from mainstream society. The missionaries give hope to the people they have been trying to help educationally, socially, economically and politically.”¹ Christian missionaries have a history of transforming societies in different continents and countries. Their sacrificial transformative mission work in Africa and Asia resulted in the socio-economic liberation of the indigenous tribals that belong to different cultures and contexts.²

¹ SujitKumar Choudhary and TaejinKoh, ‘The contribution of Christian missionaries to educational development: a study of tribals in Jharkhand’, *Asian and African Studies*, Volume 28, Number 2, 2019, p.180.

² Panchanan Das and AninditaSengupta, ‘Christianity, Women Empowerment & Tribal Welfare: The Role of Missionaries in India’, *Salesian Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 2017, p.72.

The Christian missionaries have played a transformative role in uplifting marginalized communities globally, particularly in Africa and Asia.³ Their work extended beyond religious endeavors, focusing on education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. In Africa, missionaries established schools that became crucial in educating future leaders, such as Nelson Mandela, fostering resistance against colonial exploitation.⁴ They introduced modern agricultural practices and vocational training, helping local communities achieve economic independence. Similarly, in Asia, missionaries like the Jesuits prioritized education for marginalized groups, including tribal populations in India, providing literacy and skill development that enabled social mobility.⁵ These efforts addressed systemic inequalities, reduced healthcare disparities, and promoted gender equality by empowering women through education and self-help initiative. The legacy of these missions endures through institutions that continue to serve underserved populations, marking a significant contribution to the socio-economic liberation of marginalized groups across continents. The activities of the Jesuits in India are varied and not restricted to the Christian community. In India, tribal communities are seeking support to defend their land rights and access essential resources.⁶

Jesuits and Tribal Life in India

The Jesuit mission to tribal communities in India began during the colonial period and continued to evolve in the post-colonial era, focusing on education, cultural

³ Viera Pavliková-Vilhanová, 'Christian Missions in Africa and their role in the Transformation of African Societies', *Asian and African Studies* 16, 2007, p.253.

⁴ Steven N Wambugu, 'A Critique on Christian Missionaries in Africa and Their Role in the Education of the African Elite', *The University Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, Dec. 2021, pp.157-166.

⁵ Jenny Ackermann, et al., 'The Missionary Approach to Development: Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education for the Most Marginalized', *ICSD 2021*, p.2.

⁶ Geetanjy Sahu, 'Forest rights and tribals in mineral rich areas of India: the Vedanta case and beyond', *Research Handbook on Law, Environment and the Global South*, 2019, p.276.

preservation, and socio-economic upliftment.⁷ In India, their work among tribal communities gained momentum during the 19th and 20th centuries. They prioritized providing education as a means to bridge the gap between tribal societies and mainstream development. Notably, the Jesuits established schools and vocational training centers that catered specifically to tribal populations, emphasizing the need for cultural sensitivity in their curricula. These efforts were supported by their deep understanding of tribal customs, languages, and traditions, which allowed them to build trust with indigenous communities. In post-colonial India, the Jesuits expanded their mission to address the challenges of tribal displacement and cultural erosion caused by modernization. They worked under initiatives like Jesuit Ministry Among Indigenous Peoples (JEMAI), was established in 2004 as a dedicated mission to preserve and promote tribal culture, identity, and rights. This ministry focused on empowering tribal communities by fostering their governance systems, advancing their traditional agricultural and medicinal practices, and safeguarding their unique cultural ethos.

The JEMAI sought to enrich tribal lives by supporting their socio-cultural practices and languages, integrating these into church hymns and prayers during liturgy. In central India, Jesuits collaborated with the social apostolate to strengthen tribal youth leadership through the “*Jan Netritva Pahal Manch*” (Forum for People's Leadership Initiatives) programme.⁸ This training program prepares tribal youth for leadership roles. In Gujarat, the Jesuits actively supported tribal communities through legal aid and rights awareness initiatives. The Rajpipla Social Service Society has been instrumental in empowering tribal populations. Similarly, the Shakti Legal Aid and Human Rights Social Centre in Songarh have made significant strides in

⁷ P, Lingaraju. ‘The Evolution of Christian Missionary Activities in India: A Colonial Legacy and its Modern implications’. *Shodhkosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 2023, p.777.

⁸ Alexius Ekka, S.J, ‘Jesuit Ministry among Indigenous Peoples in India’, *Jesuits; the society of Jesus in the World*, Year book of the society of Jesuits, 2017, p.17.

protecting tribal rights.⁹ Publications such as *Adilok*, a magazine that serves as a platform for tribal intellectuals, contribute to cultural preservation.

The Bombay Province continued its legacy of working with marginalized communities, including tribals, as outlined by the 32nd General Congregation's Decree 4 in 1975.¹⁰ Jesuits in this region empowered the Warli tribal community through art and culture at the Gnanmata Adivasi Kendra in Talasari while addressing their socio-economic needs.¹¹ Additionally, they extended their support to the Pauda and Bheel tribal communities.¹²

In Kerala, the Jesuits operated through two key social centers: TUDI in Wayanad and AADI in Palakkad. These centers focused on promoting tribal culture, identity, and economic self-reliance through self-help groups, cooperative farming, and indigenous medicine. In Tamil Nadu's Kodaikanal, Jesuits assisted tribal communities in obtaining Scheduled Tribe certificates, provide formal education for children, and conduct leadership and skill development programs, including the Grihni Program for school dropout girls.¹³ Their efforts extend to liberating tribal bonded labourers and reclaiming land taken by moneylenders. In Andhra Pradesh, the Jesuits combat cultural alienation caused by non-tribal influences and work to protect tribal lands from political and corporate exploitation. They actively resisted attempts to de-schedule tribal regions for easier access to natural resources by multinational companies. In the northern region, Jesuits worked across provinces like Calcutta, Darjeeling, Kohima, and Assam (Ranchi Province). In Calcutta Province, efforts were directed at preserving the identity of the Santhal tribes amidst the growing threat of Hinduization, by reviving tribal festivals and traditions. The Darjeeling Province runs

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ This decree emphasized faith and justice as inseparable, urging Jesuits to uplift the oppressed. In response, the province expanded efforts in education, socio-economic empowerment, and tribal rights advocacy, reinforcing its commitment to justice and social transformation.

¹¹ The Warli tribe primarily resides in the hilly and forested regions of Maharashtra and Gujarat, particularly in districts like Palghar, Thane, and Nashik in Maharashtra, and parts of the Valsad and Dang regions in Gujarat.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ <https://mnnews.today/authors/anne-benjamin/>

the Human Life Development and Research Centre (HLDRC) in Siliguri, which focuses on leadership training, life skills development, and preventing human trafficking and child labor.¹⁴

The Kohima region encompasses Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya, where Jesuits empowered hill tribes to reconnect with their traditional roots. They also worked to foster unity among tribal groups often divided by exclusivist tendencies. Jesuits played a critical role in mediating peace between conflicting tribal groups like the Naga and Kuki, or the Bodo and Adivasi. They also address the challenge of unemployed youth joining insurgent movements by promoting Christian values like forgiveness through education. In the Assam Mission of the Ranchi Province, Jesuits focused on helping migrant tribes from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha gain Scheduled Tribe status.¹⁵

JEMAI coordinators from different provinces meet annually to plan initiatives and share experiences.¹⁶ The national tribal festival organized by JEMAI brings together around 500 tribal individuals to discuss pressing issues like tribal identity, cultural preservation, displacement, rehabilitation, and forest rights. The festival also showcases tribal art, crafts, and cultural performances, fostering unity and pride. JEMAI collaborates with other religious congregations and civil society organizations to promote tribal culture, identity, and rights. It continues to play a vital role in advocating for the constitutional and socio-economic rights of tribal communities, ensuring their voices are heard, and their heritage preserved.

Jesuits Tribal Missions in Post-Colonial Malabar

Jesuit missionaries actively worked to address the socio-economic and cultural challenges faced by tribal communities in post-colonial Malabar.¹⁷ After India's

¹⁴ Alexius Ekka, SJ, *op.cit.*, p.18.

¹⁵ PeñarrochaGiménez, Carmen, "Rescuing the Adivasi Identity from their Invisibility. The encounter between Jesuits and the Indigenous peoples of India." 2017, p.119.

¹⁶ Alexius Ekka, *op.cit.*, p.19.

¹⁷ Tomila, Lankina, and LullitGetachew, 'Competitive Religious Entrepreneurs: Christian Missionaries and Female Education in Colonial and Post-Colonial India', *British Journal of Political Science* 43.1, 2013, pp- 103–131.

independence, tribal populations, particularly in Wayanad, Palakkad, and Kannur struggled with systemic exclusion, land loss, poverty, and limited access to education and healthcare. These issues, deeply rooted in colonial policies, persisted under post-colonial governance, creating a need for focused and impactful interventions. The Jesuits responded to this need by establishing tribal institutes and implementing programs aimed at empowering marginalized groups.¹⁸ They prioritized education as a tool for transformation, providing formal and vocational training to uplift tribal communities.

Jesuit missionaries also addressed critical issues such as healthcare disparities, gender inequality, and economic instability by promoting sustainable agriculture, forming self-help groups, and advocating for tribal rights. In collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other agencies, the Jesuits combined education, social reform, and economic initiatives to create lasting change.¹⁹ They modified their approaches to the specific needs of tribal communities, ensuring their development efforts respected local traditions and culture.²⁰

Tribal communities in Wayanad and Palakkad

Kerala has a relatively small proportion of tribal population, with tribes distributed across the state, predominantly in forested regions. The 2011 Census of India recorded 4,84,839 Scheduled Tribes in Kerala, accounting for approximately 1.45% of the state's total population, showing a slight increase from the 2001 census figures (see table 7).²¹

¹⁸ C.Peñarrocha, Peris, R., & Pinazo, D, 'Inter-group relationships of interdependence between the Adivasi people and the Jesuits in India: Emergence of a new identity', *Culture & Psychology*, 30(3), 2024, pp 690-709.

¹⁹ Sebastimall, S&, Manish Tiwari.' The Role and Contributions of Christian Missionaries in Undertaking Social Work Practice for Dalits in Bihar', *Forum for linguistic studies*, 2014, p. 1272.

²⁰ P, Lingaraju. *op.cit.*, p. 767.

²¹ According to the 2001 Census of India, Kerala's tribal population was recorded at 3,64,189, comprising 1.14% of the state's total population.

Table 7*Distribution of Tribal Population in Kerala*

Sl. No.	District	General population Total	% distribution of district population	Scheduled Tribes			% of Scheduled Tribes in Total Population
				Total	Male	Female	
1	Kasaragod	1302600	3.90	48857	23950	24907	3.75
2	Kannur	2525637	7.56	41371	20141	21230	1.64
3	Wayanad	816558	2.45	151443	74476	76967	18.55
4	Kozhikode	3089543	9.45	15228	7429	7799	0.49
5	Malappuram	4110956	12.31	22990	11272	11718	0.56
6	Palakkad	2810892	8.42	48972	24314	24658	1.74
7	Trissur	3110327	9.32	9430	4362	5068	0.30
8	Ernakulam	3279860	9.82	16559	8349	8210	0.50
9	Idukki	1107453	3.32	55815	27995	27820	5.04
10	Kottayam	1979384	5.93	21972	10974	10998	1.11
11	Alappuzha	1195537	6.36	6574	3175	3399	0.55
12	Pathanamthitta	2121943	3.58	8108	3947	4161	0.38
13	Kollam	2629703	7.88	10761	5195	5566	0.41
14	Thiruvananthapuram	3307284	9.91	26759	12624	14135	0.81
	Kerala	33387677	100.00	484,839	238,203	246,636	1.45

Source: Census of India, 2011

The table illustrates the distribution of Kerala's Scheduled Tribes across various districts, with notable concentration in Wayanad, Idukki, Kasaragod²², and Palakkad, where tribal communities comprise significant portions of the total population. Wayanad stands out with 18.55% of its population being tribal, while Idukki, Kasaragod and Palakkad also feature substantial tribal populations, contributing to 5.04%, 3.75 and 1.74% respectively. In contrast, districts like Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, and Alappuzha have much lower tribal percentages due to higher urbanization and land alienation. The tribal communities in northern

²² The Jesuits gave less importance to tribes in Kasaragod because their mission initially focused on more isolated and marginalized tribal belts like Attappady and Wayanad, where communities faced extreme poverty, land alienation, and cultural disintegration.

districts of Kerala often reside in forested and remote areas, historically marginalized and separated from mainstream development.²³ Given this, the Jesuits have concentrated their efforts in Wayanad and Palakkad, where the tribal populations are higher and more in need of focused educational and social outreach programs. Their mission to uplift these communities aligns with the regions' long-standing social and economic challenges, making them key areas for intervention through initiatives like TUDI and AADI, which aim to support the empowerment and integration of tribal populations into mainstream society. Kerala has 36 tribal communities, and they are scattered across different districts of the state.²⁴ The following table (see table 8) provides an overview of their district-wise distribution and percentage representation.

Table 8

Tribal Communities in Kerala

Sl. No.	Name of Tribe	District(s)	Percentage of Total Tribal Population
1	Adiyan	Wayanad, Kannur	3.80%
2	Aranadan	Malappuram	0.20%
3	Eravallan	Palakkad, Thrissur	1.50%
4	Hill Pulaya	Idukki, Pathanamthitta	1.70%
5	Irular	Palakkad	6.50%
6	Kadar	Thrissur, Palakkad	1.20%
7	Kanikkaran	Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam	2.10%
8	Kattunaikan	Wayanad, Malappuram	4.30%
9	KochuVelan	Idukki	0.30%
10	Koraga	Kasaragod	0.20%
11	Kudiya	Kasaragod	0.40%
12	Kurichiyan	Wayanad	17.70%

²³ Kjosavik, D. J., & Shanmugaratnam, N. Integration or Exclusion? Locating Indigenous Peoples in the Development Process of Kerala, South India. *Forum for Development Studies*, 31(2), 2004, pp. 231–273.

²⁴ P. R Suresh., and D. Rajasenan. *Social structural determinants of education among tribes in Kerala*. Diss. Cochin University of Science and Technology, 2015.

Sl. No.	Name of Tribe	District(s)	Percentage of Total Tribal Population
13	Kuruman	Wayanad, Kannur	6.60%
14	Kurumbas	Palakkad	1.30%
15	MahaMalasar	Palakkad	0.10%
16	MalaiArayan	Kottayam, Idukki	2.80%
17	MalaiPandaram	Pathanamthitta, Kollam	0.50%
18	MalaiVedan	Malappuram, Kozhikode	2.20%
19	Malasar	Palakkad	0.80%
20	Malayan	Palakkad, Idukki	1.10%
21	Malayarayar	Idukki, Kottayam	2.00%
22	Mannan	Idukki	1.40%
23	Marati	Kasaragod	0.60%
24	Mavila	Kannur, Kasaragod	0.50%
25	Mudugar	Palakkad	0.70%
26	Muthuvan	Idukki, Ernakulam	7.40%
27	Palleyan	Kannur	0.20%
28	Palliyan	Idukki, Palakkad	0.90%
29	Paniyan	Wayanad, Kozhikode, Kannur	22.50%
30	Ulladan	Kottayam, Pathanamthitta	0.60%
31	Uraly	Idukki	3.60%
32	Veda	Kasaragod	0.40%
33	Velan	Kasaragod, Kannur	0.70%
34	Vettakuruman	Wayanad	0.90%
35	Kattupaniyan	Idukki	0.10%
36	Malapandaram	Pathanamthitta	0.30%

Source: Census of India, 2011

(As Amended by The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act. 2002 (Act 10 of 2003) Vide Part-VII-Kerala-Second Scheduled noticed in the Gazette of India. Dated 8/1/2003

The data reveals the diverse distribution of Kerala's 36 tribal communities, with significant regional and population variations. Tribes such as the Paniyan (22.5%), Kurichiyan (17.7%), and Muthuvan (7.4%) emerge as the largest groups,

predominantly concentrated in Wayanad, Kozhikode, and Idukki districts. Wayanad alone accounts for a substantial portion of the tribal population, hosting communities like the Paniyan, Kurichiyan, and Kattunaikan. In contrast, smaller communities such as MahaMalasar (0.1%) and Kattupaniyan (0.1%) are confined to Palakkad and Idukki, respectively. Certain tribes, like the Kanikkaran and MalaiArayan, are distributed across multiple districts, reflecting their adaptability to varying ecological zones.

The above two tables (tables 7 and table 8) indicate that tribal communities in Kerala are more concentrated in the districts of Wayanad, Idukki, Kasargode and Palakkad. Wayanad stands out with a significant representation of tribes such as Kurichiyan (17.7%), Paniyan (22.5%), and Kattunaikan (4.3%), making it the district with the highest concentration of tribal communities. Idukki also shows a notable presence, hosting tribes like Muthuvan (7.4%), Mannan (1.4%), and Malayarayar (2.0%). Similarly, Palakkad is home to tribes like Irular (6.5%), Kurumbas (1.3%), and Kadar (1.2%).

Wayanad, a hilly district in the northeastern corner of Kerala, stands out for its unique geography compared to the rest of the state.²⁵ This region, forming part of the Western Ghats and an extension of the Deccan Plateau, significantly shapes its climate and landscape. Covering 42% of its land (886 km²) with evergreen forests, Wayanad boasts an average elevation of 3,000 feet above sea level, with many peaks rising much higher. Vellarimalai, also known as Camel's Hump Mountain, is the highest range in this region, primarily located in the Meppady forest of southern Wayanad, with some parts extending into the Thamarassery area of Kozhikode district. Chembra Peak, the tallest of the Vellarimalai range, reaches an elevation of 7,364 feet. The district's prominent rivers, including the Kabani and Chaliyar, enhance its natural beauty. The Kabani River originates from the Pakramthalam hills and merges with the PanamaramPuzha before flowing eastward to join the Kaveri River in Karnataka. Meanwhile, the Chaliyar River starts from Elambileri Hill, cascades

²⁵ Anoop Thankachan, *Transformation of agriculture and environment in Wayanad (1882-2013)*. Diss. University of Calicut, 2020, p.24.

near the Choladi Pass, flows through the Nilambur forest, and merges with the Punnapuzha and Karimpuzha before emptying into the Arabian Sea.

The name "Wayanad" evolved from the terms *Bayalu-nadu* in Kannada or *Vayal-nadu* in Malayalam.²⁶ In Kannada and Telugu, *Bayalu* means "an open field or open space", while in Malayalam, *Vayal* refers specifically to "open land used for paddy cultivation". The term *nadu* denotes an administrative division common across medieval South India during pre-Vijayanagara times. This etymology suggests that Wayanad was once part of Kannada-speaking regions, governed continuously by the Kadambas of Banavasi, the Gangas of Talakad, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra, and the later Kadambas of Bayalu-nadu.²⁷ The Western Ganga inscriptions from the 10th century CE provide the earliest mention of *Bayalu-nadu*. Numerous Hoysala records also confirm its inclusion in their imperial territory. Inscriptions from the Kadambas of Bayalu-nadu, such as the MaggeVirakal record of Raviyammara,²⁸ the Kittur record of Kandavamman (1079 CE), and the SogolliVirakal records of Siva and IraviChallamma, refer to *Bira-Bayalu-nadu*. Another MaggeVirakal record by Kanthirava (1090 CE) mentions *Changi-Bayalu-nadu*.²⁹ The Sasana-Gudi record of MukannaKadamba (1138 CE) and the Kittur record also describe *YugmaBayalu-nadu*, meaning "Double Bayalu-nadu," indicating a division into *Bira-Bayalu-nadu* and *Changi-Bayalu-nadu*. Additional references, such as the Mariamman temple record from SulthanBathery, mention *Vira-Vayalnadu*, and the Puthangadi deeds from Punchavayal in Wayanad refer to *Pera-viyanad* or *Piraviyanad*, which likely align

²⁶ Dhiraj M.S., 'Political and Cultural Dynamics of a Supra-Region: Punnada Country in the History of Jainism in Kerala', *Heritage*, 2020, pp.421-449.

²⁷ Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARIE), 1961-1962.1986 (Reprint). New Delhi: Archeological Survey of India

²⁸ EpigraphiaCarnatica (EC), Vol.IV.1898. Lewis Rice, B. (Ed). Bangalore: Mysore Government Press.

²⁹ Dhiraj, M.S., 'Wayanadan Kadambanmar (Kadambas of Wayanad)', Pragati (Quarterly Research Journal. Issue No.131-132) 2015, Thiruvananthapuram: Bharatheeya Vichara Kendram Research Centre, p.9.

with *Vira-Vayalnadu*.³⁰ These records confirm that present-day Wayanad was part of the *Bira-Bayalu-nadu* division under the Deccan-Kannada dynasties³¹

Wayanad is a home land of various tribal communities. This district is the highest tribal habituating region of Kerala. Historically, the tribal communities in the region exhibited significant cultural diversity, distinct kinship structures, and varied gender relations.³² These groups maintained economic and ritual interdependence both among themselves and with the Hindu Castes. Their relationships were often hierarchical in nature. For instance, the Mullukurumar and Kurichyar tribes were landholding agriculturalists in the region.³³ They cultivated rice and other cereals on communally owned wetland and some dryland areas near the forest, relying on agricultural labour provided by members of the Paniya and Adiyar communities.³⁴ The distribution of tribal communities in Wayanad is illustrated in the table below (see table 9).

Table 9

Distribution of Tribal Communities in Wayanad

Tribe	Total Population	Rural Population	Urban Population
Total Scheduled Tribes	1,51,443	1,48,215	3,228
Paniyan	66,068	63,926	2,142
Kurichiyan	25,093	24,915	178
Kurumans	23,591	23,135	456
Kattunayakan	14,557	14,438	119

³⁰ _____, *History of Jainism in Kerala*. Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2021, pp-268-69.

³¹ Dhiraj.M.S., *History of Jainism.....*, *op.cit.*, p.424.

³² P. Vipindas, *Changing Livelihoods and Health Status of Paniyan of Wayanad*. Diss. Department of Rural and Tribal Sociology Kannur University Campus Mananthavady, Kannur University, 2022, p.43.

³³ Ursula Münster, and Suma Vishnudas, 'In the jungle of law: Adivasi rights and implementation of forest rights act in Kerala', *Economic and Political Weekly* 2012, pp.38-42.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Tribe	Total Population	Rural Population	Urban Population
Adiyan	10,996	10,984	12
Kadar	653	650	3
Urally	3,654	3,549	105
VettaKuruman	569	507	62
Kanikkar	26	22	4
Muthuvan	45	45	0
Cholanaickan	4	4	0
MalaiVedan	138	138	0
Mala Panickar	35	35	0
Irular	42	41	1
Karimpalan	172	152	20
Palleyan	69	69	0
ThachanadanMoopan	1,615	1,581	34

Source: Census of India, 2011

Since Kerala's formation in 1956, the government has invested substantial funds to improve the lives of tribal communities.³⁵ Large-scale rehabilitation projects were introduced to combat widespread poverty among Wayanad's tribal population. Initiatives such as the Sugandagiri Cardamom Project, Pookkot Dairy Project, Priyadarshini Tea Estate, and Cheengeni Coffee Project aimed to enhance livelihoods.³⁶ However, most of these projects have become inactive, and those that still operate yield discouraging results. Alternative government measures to address tribal issues have similarly fallen short of expectations. In addition to livelihood projects, the government implemented numerous programs to improve health and education.

³⁵ N. R Nithya, 'Globalization and the plight of tribals: The case of Kerala, India', *The Dawn Journal* 3.1, 2014, pp. 727-758.

³⁶ K. M Pramod, 'Education and development among tribals in Kerala: A study with special reference to wayanad district'. Diss. Department of Education, University of Calicut, 2013, p.19.

Despite these efforts, a significant proportion of tribal children in Wayanad remain out of school, and morbidity rates among tribal communities are alarmingly high. Landlessness remains a critical obstacle to development, with nearly two-thirds of the tribal population historically lacking land ownership. Non-tribal exploitation has exacerbated these issues, leading to severe socio-economic challenges. High poverty levels, low literacy rates, inadequate nutrition, widespread use of tobacco and alcohol, overexposure to chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and poor sanitation and hygiene further hinder tribal development.

The alienation of tribal communities from their land has become a pressing concern in Wayanad.³⁷ An organized and unorganized tribal land struggles frequently dominate media coverage. This land alienation has deep historical roots. According to Munster and Vishnudas (2012),³⁸ tribal land dispossession in Wayanad began during the late 14th and early 15th centuries when the Vedar kings (Mullukurumar) lost their kingdom to the Rajas of Kottayam. The Kottayam rulers expanded their administrative system into Wayanad, fundamentally altering land relations. Tribal self-governance gave way to temple economies and caste-based village labour divisions. High-caste Nairs, who were appointed as temple caretakers and administrators, gained control of land and power. Consequently, Paniyans and Adiyars were reduced to bonded labourers under upper-caste landlords like the Chettis, Nairs, Nambiyars, and Jains.³⁹

During colonial rule, large-scale dispossession of Wayanad's tribals intensified. The British government introduced land titles and new ownership concepts, drastically transforming resource use. The Indian Forest Act of 1882 established scientific forest management across India. Forests were surveyed, divided into administrative blocks, and reclassified, with ownership transferred to the government. Reserved forests were set aside for commercial exploitation, while non-

³⁷ Devika N Menon, 'Invisible Histories: Tracing Displacement, Bondage and Resistance through Adivasi Songs and Performance Practices in Wayanad.' *Performance Making and the Archive*. Routledge India, 2022, pp. 46-62.

³⁸ Ursula Munster, & Vishnudas, Suma, *op.cit.*, pp.44-45.

³⁹ K. M Pramod, *op.cit.*, p.28.

forested areas became revenue land. These measures criminalized tribal forest use, denied customary rights, and restricted forest access to minor produce collection.⁴⁰ Post-independence, the Government of India retained control over forests through policies like the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, further marginalizing tribal communities.⁴¹ Despite this, the Forest Department occasionally relied on the traditional knowledge of tribes such as the Kattunayikka and Uralikurumars for forest management.⁴² The Uralikurumars, for instance, were employed as elephant trainers and handlers during the colonial and post-independence periods. They performed tasks such as building elephant pits, cutting trees, and planting teak and other commercial timber species. However, their legal status remained precarious, as they were often treated as illegal occupants and relocated based on the department's operational needs.

The ongoing challenges faced by Wayanad's tribal communities highlight systemic failures in addressing their socio-economic and cultural needs. Comprehensive strategies that prioritize land rights, education, health, and the preservation of traditional knowledge are essential to ensuring their sustainable development.

Palakkad

Palakkad, located in central Kerala, is the largest among the fourteen districts, covering an area of 4,480 square kilometres with a population density of 627 people per square kilometre. The name "Palakkad" has long been associated with the region's natural and geographical features, offering insights into its cultural and ecological history. Historical accounts, including those by Achutha Menon Komattil in his work *Ancient Kerala*, provide valuable perspectives on this matter.⁴³ Menon notes that the

⁴⁰ C.R. Bijoy & Raman, Ravi K., 'Muthanga: The real story – Adivasi movement to recover land', *Economic & Political Weekly*, 38(20), 2003, pp.17- 23.

⁴¹ Ashish, Kothari, and Neema Pathak, "Conservation and rights in India", *Deeper roots of historical injustice: Trends and challenges in the forests of India*, 2012 pp. 48-77.

⁴² K. M, Pramod, *op.cit.*, p.29.

⁴³ Komattill Achutha Menon, *Ancient Kerala* Trissur, 1962, p.16.

region and its surrounding areas were once covered with dense forests of *Pala* trees (*Alstoniascholaris*). He suggests that the name Palakkad likely originated from the combination of “*Pala*” (referring to the trees) and “*Kadu*” (forest), underscoring the region's ecological identity. This interpretation is compelling, as it aligns with the historical evidence of the region's dense vegetation and fertile plains. The association with “*Pala*” trees reflects the natural landscape that once defined Palakkad, making this explanation both logical and culturally significant.

An alternative view hypothesizes that Palakkad could have derived from the Tamil classification of land, specifically from the term “*palai*”,⁴⁴ used to denote barren and rocky regions. However, as Menon observes, such a classification is inconsistent with the fertile agricultural plains of Palakkad, which do not fit the description of a “*palai*” region. The explanation offered by Achutha Menon is more credible, emphasizing the role of the “*Pala*” forests in shaping both the physical and cultural identity of the region. By linking the name to the area's ecological history, this interpretation provides a more accurate understanding of Palakkad's origins. The name Palakkad might also be linked to its Jain heritage, with references to a significant Jain temple near the modern town, as noted in East India Company records.⁴⁵ It is speculated that the term could have originated from “*Palli*”, a word used in Jain tradition to denote a settlement, or “*Palighar*”, possibly referring to a location associated with the Pali language spoken in the area.

Palakkad's history can be traced back to the early centuries of the Common Era. William Logan, in his *Malabar Manual*, speculates that the Pallava dynasty of Kanchi invaded Malabar during the 2nd or 3rd century CE.⁴⁶ A settlement called “*Palakada*,” believed to be the precursor to modern Palakkad, might have served as a

⁴⁴ Sangam period land division based on soil and physical features such as *Kurinji* (forest), *Mullai* (Bushes and hilly regions), *Marutham* (cultivated area) *Palai* (barren and rocky land), *Neythal* (coastal area).

⁴⁵ B. Shyama, ‘Remaking the Past: Identifying Sramanic Traditions from Kerala’, *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, Vol.6, issue, 2, 2024, p.2.

⁴⁶ Kiran Krishan Nair, *By Sweat and Sword: Trade, Diplomacy, and War in Kerala Through the Ages*. Manohar Publishers, 2013, Delhi, p.62.

strategic base for their operations. Throughout history, the region was frequently contested by South Indian rulers, including the Cheras and Cholas, leaving a legacy of cultural and administrative influences.

During the reign of the Perumals, Palakkad became a feudal landscape. Powerful chieftains, known as Utayavars, administered territories under the Perumal rulers.⁴⁷ With the decline of the Perumal dynasty, the Valluvakonathiri of Valluvanad, the Kollengodu Rajas of Vengunad, and the Sekharivarma Rajas of Palakkad emerged as prominent rulers. Amidst these political narratives, Palakkad's tribal communities, particularly the Irula, Muduga, and Kurumba tribes, lived in the forested landscapes of the Western Ghats. These communities had a distinct socio-economic system rooted in subsistence agriculture, forest produce, and spiritual practices connected to nature. Despite their peripheral position in mainstream historical accounts, tribal groups played an integral role in sustaining the region's ecological balance and preserving its cultural diversity.

In the mid-18th century, the Raja of Palakkad faced invasions from the Zamorin of Calicut. Seeking military support, the Raja allied with Hyder Ali of Mysore, who successfully repelled the Zamorin's forces.⁴⁸ However, Hyder Ali's intervention came at a cost, as he later annexed Palakkad into the Mysore kingdom. His son, Tipu Sultan, continued Mysore's dominance over the region until his defeat by the British East India Company in 1792. The Treaty of Seringapatam formalized the transfer of Tipu's territories, including Palakkad, to British control.⁴⁹ During Mysore and British rule, tribal communities faced significant disruptions. The encroachment of forests for agricultural and commercial purposes marginalized tribal populations, undermining their traditional livelihoods and cultural autonomy. Colonial forest laws restricted

⁴⁷ A. Sreedhara Menon, *Legacy of Kerala*. DC Books, Kottayam, 2010, p.12.

⁴⁸ P.V Haseena, *Imagination, Experience, Memory and Narrative: Representation of Calicut and Its People down the Ages*. Diss. Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi, 2017, p.89.

⁴⁹ Charles Cornwallis Marquis. *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis of Cornwallis*. Vol. 2. J. Murray, London, 1859, p.91.

access to resources, further alienating tribal groups and fostering socio-economic inequalities.

After independence, the administrative reorganization of Kerala led to the formation of Palakkad district on January 1, 1957. The district initially comprised the taluks of Palakkad, Perinthalmanna, Ponnani, Ottapalam, Alathur, and Chittur. Later adjustments occurred in 1969 with the creation of Malappuram district, leading to the transfer of parts of Ponnani and Perinthalmannataluks. A new taluk, Mannarkkad, was also formed by consolidating tribal-dominated areas, highlighting their demographic significance.

Today, Palakkad’s tribal heritage is reflected in its vibrant festivals, oral traditions, and unique cultural practices. Tribes such as the Irula, Kurumba, and Muduga continue to inhabit the forests of Attappady and other areas, maintaining a spiritual connection to their ancestral lands despite ongoing challenges.⁵⁰ Development initiatives, including the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) programs, aim to address the socio-economic issues faced by these communities. However, concerns about land alienation, deforestation, and the erosion of tribal identity persist.

The distribution of tribal communities in Palakkad is given in the table below (see table 10)

Table 10

Distribution of Tribal Communities in Palakkad

Tribes	Total Population	Rural Population	Urban Population
Total Scheduled Tribes	48,972	47,023	1,949
Adiyan	15	10	5
Eravallan	4,755	4,755	0
Hill Pulaya,	12	12	0
Irular, Irulan	23,258	23,063	195

⁵⁰ Manjula Poyil, ‘Ritual Cosmos of Tribal Customs in Northern Kerala’, *The Routledge Handbook of Tribe and Religions in India: Contemporary Readings on Spirituality, Belief and Identity*, 2024, p.193.

Tribe	Total Population	Rural Population	Urban Population
Kadar	983	854	129
Kanikaran	384	319	65
Kattunayakan	790	679	111
Koraga	7	7	0
Kudiya, Melakudi	2	2	0
Kurichchan	8	4	4
Kurumans, Mullu	59	23	36
Kurumbas	2,145	1,996	149
MahaMalasar	144	144	0
Mala Arayan	237	71	166
MalaiPandaram	324	319	5
Malavedan	121	117	4
Malakkuravan	10	4	6
Malasar	3141	3139	2
Nattu Malayan	2262	2189	73
Malayarayar	539	522	17
Mannan	146	94	52
Mudugar	4,715	4512	203
Palliyan	2	2	0
Paniyan	714	575	139
Ulladan	63	28	35
Uraly	6	6	0
Thachanadan	9	9	0
Cholanaickan	1	0	1
Mavilan	4	4	0
Karimpalan	3	0	3
VettaKuruman	2	2	0
Mala Panickar	13	8	5

Source: Census of India, 2011

The table presents the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Palakkad district, categorized by specific tribal groups as per the 2011 Census. It reveals a total ST

population of 48,972, with a significant majority (47,023) living in rural areas and only 1,949 in urban regions. The largest tribal groups, such as Irular and Muthuvan, predominantly reside in rural areas, while smaller groups, like Karimpalan, are found only in urban settings.

The tribal communities in Palakkad, such as the Irulas, Mudugas, Kurumbas, and Paniyas, have traditionally relied on agriculture, hunting, and gathering for their livelihoods. These communities are primarily located in the remote hilly regions of the district, including areas like Attappady and Mannarkkad. They have distinct cultural practices, languages, and social structures, with a strong emphasis on nature worship and ritualistic festivals.⁵¹ However, their way of life has been significantly impacted by land dispossession due to the expansion of plantations and government policies. Despite their close proximity to urban centers, tribal populations face exclusion from mainstream development, experiencing challenges such as illiteracy, inadequate healthcare, and limited access to basic services.

Over the years, government interventions like the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 and Tribal Sub-Plan initiatives have helped some tribes secure land rights and welfare benefits. Education and healthcare programs have also been implemented to improve their living conditions, though many continue to face obstacles in accessing these resources. The environmental degradation of their ancestral forests, due to logging and industrial projects, further exacerbates their struggles.

In this context, the efforts and contributions of Jesuit missionaries working among the tribal communities in Wayanad and Palakkad are becoming increasingly significant. Their work in these regions highlights a commitment to social justice and community development through diverse and innovative approaches. The Jesuits have long been champions of social justice, adapting their mission to the unique needs of the regions they serve.⁵² In Africa, Jesuits have focused on inculturation, integrating their ministry with local traditions to address social challenges effectively. A

⁵¹ Manjula Poyil, 'Farewell ritual and transmigrating souls: secondary funeral of the AttappadiKurumbas', *The Anthropologist* 11.1, 2009, pp. 31-38.

⁵² Daniel Cosacchi, 'Jesuits and Social Justice', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 2019, pp.655-656

significant part of their work involves combating the spread of AIDS through initiatives like the African Jesuit Aids Network, recognizing the connection between the disease and cycles of social injustice. By addressing health crises, they aim to build a more equitable society. In Asia, Jesuits have prioritized ecological care and interreligious dialogue. They have worked to counter environmental degradation, which they see as a key barrier to achieving social justice. Jesuit social centres in Asia have also been pivotal in fostering cooperation across religious boundaries to address pressing issues like landmine bans, refugee justice, and peace building.⁵³

The 32nd General Congregation held in 1974-75 brought a big change to the Jesuit mission. The Jesuits decided to focus on both faith and justice, making these the centre of their work. They created a vision statement for the Kerala Jesuit Province, which aimed to help marginalized groups like Adivasis, Dalits, fisherfolk, poor farmers, rural workers with unstable jobs, and unemployed youth living in poverty. To follow this vision, the Jesuits took over Sarvodaya High School, a small village school in Eachome, Wayanad. Earlier, the school was managed by a Hindu administration. It was started with the efforts of two dedicated people, Mr. Kunjkrishnan Nair, a former MLA, and Mr. Gopalan Nambiar. Mr. Nambiar even quit his government job to become the school's first headmaster. The school opened on September 3, 1951, with 52 students and two teachers. Mr. C. Raman, the senior Deputy Inspector of Wayanad, inaugurated it. Over the years, the school grew. By 1958, it became an upper primary school with 150 students and six teachers. Later, in 1982, it was upgraded to a high school.

In the beginning, the school faced many challenges. Its buildings were in poor condition, and classes were held in five separate, run-down structures. Even with these problems, the school became an important part of the community, giving hope and education to many children. However, the management could not continue running the school for long. As a result, the school management approached the Bishop of the

⁵³ Don Hubert, and S. Neil MacFarlane, *The Landmine Ban: a case study in humanitarian advocacy*. Providence, RI: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 2000, pp.17-23.

Mananthavady Diocese and discussed the possibility of handing over the school. The details regarding this matter were communicated to the Jesuit Provincial through a letter from the Bishop on August 29, 1989. Accordingly, the Province decided to take over the school. This decision was primarily based on three key reasons: one was the enthusiastic initiative and invitation from the Bishop of Mananthavady; the second was the school's location in an underdeveloped area; the third was the high percentage of SC/ST and OBC students enrolled. The Provincial officially announced this decision on March 20, 1990.

Tribal Unity for Development Initiative (TUDI)

Origins

When the Jesuits took charge of the Sarvodaya school, the SSLC pass rate was around 40%. Each year, over 30% of the students admitted were from tribal communities, but many of them struggled to complete their schooling. The Jesuits realized that the Adivasi children they wanted to serve were dropping out for various reasons, including clear socio-cultural discrimination against tribal people in and around Sarvodaya School. This understanding led to the establishment of TUDI in 1996, an initiative under the auspices of the Kerala Society, aimed at addressing these challenges. Interestingly, TUDI had started its work even before the Jesuits officially launched their ministry, JEMAI. Fr. George Thenadikulam was appointed as its Founding Director with Scholastics Sabu Malayil and Wilson Mulackal as Assistant when Fr. Jose Murickan was the Provincial. Fr. Jose Murickan had stated that “In Wayanad, Sarvodaya School and TUDI are two independent ministries of Kerala Jesuit province. Each one has its vision, mission goals and objectives and strategies. They respect one another, collaborate and do not interfere in the other’s internal matters”.

The Jesuit team along with Sr. Jeena FCC and a group of non-tribal animators made contact with the training in dealing with tribal people, conducting regular village meetings, and accompanying tribal children in education. It was not easy to get the trust of the tribal communities and also the support of the

non-tribal communities. Building rapport with tribal people became a priority, and with this in view, Fr. George started teaching in the school in 1996. As a school teacher he, along with the TUDI team, could enter the tribal villages and get in touch with Adivasi communities in three Panchayats (Panamaram, Kottathara, and Kaniyambetta).

The issue of dropouts among tribal children required urgent attention, necessitating a shift in the attitudes of non-tribals towards the tribal community. Recognizing this need, TUDI, in partnership with Sarvodaya School, undertook a transformative initiative by establishing “*Thudikkottams*” in tribal villages, and a tribal festival with the help of the school PTA.⁵⁴ Thus, the beginning of TUDI was closely linked with the history and mission of the educational and social apostolate of Sarvodaya School. Gradually, TUDI began to take a new identity and character of its own.

TUDI’s initiatives exemplified the post-colonial Jesuit approach to addressing the socio-economic and cultural marginalization of tribal communities, rooted in empowering the oppressed while preserving their unique identities. TUDI envisioned a sustainable tribal society by fostering the preservation of indigenous culture, participatory living, and access to education, enabling communities to reclaim their identity and assert their space in society. Its objectives included promoting tribal culture, language, and folklore, ensuring quality education, fostering intercultural dialogue, and disseminating traditional knowledge through research and media. This aligned with the Jesuit mission in post-colonial India, where missionaries went beyond religious education to address structural inequities faced by depressed classes.⁵⁵ By emphasizing education, cultural preservation, and intercultural engagement, TUDI continued the Jesuit tradition of resisting the homogenizing pressures of colonial modernity while fostering empowerment and sustainable

⁵⁴ Sanil Mathew Mayilkunnel, and Dipal Patel Shah. ‘TUDI-A Saga of Educational Empowerment’, *MIER Journal of Educational Studies Trends and Practices*, 2018 p.117.

⁵⁵ Mousumi Mukherjee, *Inclusive education and school reform in postcolonial India*. Diss. University of Melbourne, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, 2015, p.18.

development, ensuring that tribal communities integrate into modern society on their own terms without losing their distinct cultural heritage.

Establishment of Centre and Expansion of Activities

In 1998, the Jesuits purchased 2.20 acres of land with an old house at Eachome under the Jesuit Educational and Charitable Society of Wayanad to establish a centre for TUDI's activities. All operations were relocated to this new centre, named "Tudiveedu" (house of TUDI). In 2000, Fr. Baby Chalil took charge as the director and, with support from the Nippon Foundation in Japan, initiated the construction of "ThudiKalakendram", a folk arts centre within the premises.⁵⁶ Demonstrating the post-colonial Jesuit attitude of supporting the cultural identity and traditions of depressed classes, the Jesuits invited Sri PolanMoopan and Sri ChimbanMoopan to perform traditional poojas to bless the new centre. The inauguration was held on May 5, 2001, during the Tudi Adivasi Gramotsavam. That year, the annual tribal festival, renamed Tudi Adivasi Gramotsavam, was permanently moved from the Sarvodaya School grounds to the TUDI premises, reinforcing the Jesuit commitment to honouring and preserving tribal cultural practices.

Initiatives of TUDI

TUDI is a cultural heritage that upholds the cultural uniqueness and identity of the tribal community. It serves as a means to establish social unity and communication, while also promoting cultural, educational, and developmental growth. TUDI plays an important role in preserving and transmitting the community's traditions, acting as a tool for the exploration and protection of their cultural practices, and contributing to their overall social and educational progress. Through this cultural symbol, the community engages in collective efforts for the advancement of their traditions, education, and social well-being. The following are the initiatives of TUDI:

- 1) TUDIKalasangam: TUDIKalasangam was designed to promote music, arts, and other cultural practices of the tribal communities, while also introducing

⁵⁶ Interview with Fr. Baby Chalil at TUDI, 28th December 2018.

their unique traditions to the wider society and showcasing their distinct identity.⁵⁷ Fr. Baby Chalil took the initiative to form a cultural troupe, TUDI Kalasangam, consisting of 25 artists who have received specialized training. They were given rigorous training in vocal and instrumental music and got the opportunity to learn Thappattam, Oyilattam Lasim and Kolkalie with the help of experts from Tamil Nadu. The troupe performed in various places in Kerala and other states. They also performed for groups that visited the centre for exposure to tribal life and culture.⁵⁸ The TUDI Kalasangam serves as a practical example of their efforts to integrate traditional values with contemporary opportunities while ensuring respect for tribal identities.

- 2) Tudikkoottam: Thudikootangal (plural of Tudikkoottam) are cultural learning centres within tribal communities that provide leadership in education, recreation, and cultural preservation for children, youth, and elders. These centres promote informal and formal learning through activities like literacy programs, vocational training, and traditional knowledge preservation. They also serve as hubs for recreational activities such as sports, music, dance, and storytelling, fostering community bonding and well-being. By involving different age groups, Thudikootangal encourage intergenerational dialogue, where youth and elders collaborate to preserve tribal heritage while embracing modern educational practices, ensuring the continuity of indigenous identities and traditions. These study centres are extended to 30 tribal settlements involving 700 tribal families in Panamaram, kottathara, and kaniyambetta panchayats. These facilitated regular village meetings in the tribal settlements. Children from these centres would assemble at Tudi Kalakendram every Saturday and were given training in instrumental music, folk music, folk dance and study habits. This is very effective in addressing the problem of drop outs. The functions of Thudikootangal highlights the Jesuits' post-colonial efforts to integrate tribal communities into broader educational and cultural frameworks

⁵⁷ Wayanadan Thudippu (Mal.), special paper, Tudikalakendram, 2015, pp.1-4.

⁵⁸ Sanil Mathew Mayilkunnel, *op.cit.*, p.118.

while preserving their heritage. However, this approach, while commendable, raises questions about the potential influence of external ideologies on tribal autonomy and the delicate balance between empowerment and cultural assimilation. TUDI is ready to collaborate with any NGO or government program to support the educational development of tribal communities. In partnership with organizations like Caring Through Sharing (CTS),⁵⁹TUDI aims to enhance access to quality education and vocational training, addressing the specific needs of tribal populations. This collaboration reflects a shared commitment to empowering tribal communities and fostering long-term social and economic development. By working together, TUDI and CTS strive to create sustainable, community-driven educational initiatives that bridge the gap for underprivileged tribal children and young adults

- 3) Kurunjipookal: The problem of student dropouts among tribal communities dates back to when tribal children first began attending public schools.⁶⁰ Despite various government initiatives to address this issue, many failed to tackle the core challenges faced by these students, such as cultural alienation, lack of adequate support, and insufficient resources.⁶¹ Consequently, dropout rates among tribal students remained high, highlighting the systemic neglect and the inability to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. This is where the importance of primary education programs in tribal languages becomes evident. Both the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and the State Curriculum Framework (SCF) have consistently emphasized the need to provide primary education in the child's mother

⁵⁹ *Caring Through Sharing (CTS)*, the development wing of the Jesuit Research and Development Society (JRDS), has been empowering underprivileged communities through education, vocational training, and social development initiatives across 28 states in India since its inception in 2006.

⁶⁰ Anirban Mukherjee, *Tribal education in India: an examination of cultural imposition and inequality*, Diss. Kansas State University, 2009, p.54.

⁶¹ The modern education system is a significant innovation for tribal communities as it contrasts with their indigenous methods of education. However, despite being shaped by the post-colonial national education policy, it has failed to incorporate the valuable aspects of tribal indigenous learning systems.

tongue or primary language whenever possible. During an interview, a young boy from the Paniya community in Kaniyampetta shared his schooling experience. He said, “I studied up to Class 8, but it was always a struggle for me. Language subjects were particularly hard, and I found math and science even more challenging because there was no one to help me understand them. Some teachers didn’t pay attention to my struggles, and a few classmates made me feel left out. My friends were the only ones who made school bearable, but when they stopped attending, I lost interest too and decided to leave. I still don’t feel any regret about my choice”.⁶² The Kurinjipookkal Nursery School stands out for its efforts to integrate tribal children into mainstream education while preserving their linguistic heritage. At Kurinjipookkal, children from the Paniya community are taught in their mother tongue by teachers belonging to the same community.⁶³ They learn foundational subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Malayalam in the Paniya language, ensuring a culturally familiar and supportive learning environment. As they progress, their education gradually transitions to Malayalam by the end of the academic year to prepare them for further studies. This method has emerged as a highly effective and successful model for primary education, striking a balance between preserving cultural identity and fostering academic development.⁶⁴ Language holds great significance in tribal education, as it is deeply tied to a community's cultural identity.⁶⁵ The language of a community represents its cultural heritage and uniqueness. For tribal communities, their native languages often face the threat of extinction, much like the communities themselves.⁶⁶ Jesuit missionaries understood this critical connection and designed programs in tribal regions with a focus on preserving and promoting

⁶² Interview with a drop out student at Kaniyambetta 13th May 2019.

⁶³ TomyKuttickal Ouseph, *Educational Perspectives of Paniya Tribal Community*. Archers & Elevators Publishing House, Bengaluru, p.44.

⁶⁴ Robin Varghese, “Ninkaenthenkueena” (Mal.), *Koodu*, 2015, p.22.

⁶⁵ Marie Battiste, ‘Maintaining Aboriginal identity, language, and culture in modern society’, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, 2000, pp.192-206.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.208.

tribal languages. The Kerala government addressed the issue of tribal dropouts by establishing 100 *Samootha Padanamuri* (Community Study Centres) in tribal hamlets across the state during 2017-18.⁶⁷ Inspired by the Jesuit initiative of Kurinjipookkal, these centres employ educated tribal youth as facilitators and social workers, creating a supportive educational environment within the hamlets while fostering a sense of community-driven development. Non-tribal languages pose significant challenges for tribal people, as became evident during the Covid-19 pandemic. The introduction of “First Bell” online classes in Malayalam highlighted this issue, as many Adivasi children struggled to comprehend the telecasted episodes.⁶⁸ Unlike the offline teaching methods they were accustomed to—delivered by local teachers, including Adivasi Gothrabandhu teachers, who understood the linguistic and cultural nuances of their communities—the online classes in a non-tribal language alienated these children from the learning process. This disconnect underlined how non-tribal systems often fail to accommodate the unique needs of tribal communities. For instance, the grassroots initiative by a group of Adivasi youngsters to translate the episodes into tribal languages demonstrated a practical solution. However, government officials intervened, halting their efforts and later excluding them from the process. Although the government launched the “*Mazhivilpoov*” programme with episodes in seven Adivasi languages, these were mere translations of the original Malayalam content, lacking cultural contextualization and customized pedagogy.⁶⁹ Moreover, the decision to not telecast these episodes on television due to the “micro-minority” status of Adivasi audiences highlighted systemic neglect. Instead, the responsibility of disseminating the content fell on mentor teachers and

⁶⁷ *Samootha Padanamuri* initiated by STDD.

⁶⁸ First Bell was Kerala's online education initiative launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide virtual classes for school students through television and digital platforms.

⁶⁹ Mazhivilpoovu was an educational programme introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala to provide lessons in seven Adivasi languages—Paniya, Kuruma, Kattunaikka, Adiya, Uraali, Kurichya, and Mannan.

temporary community learning centres, adding an extra burden on tribal educators. These actions reflect how non-tribal systems often implement superficial solutions that fail to address the deeper barriers tribal communities face. The Covid-19 period thus starkly revealed how non-tribal languages and systems can become barriers for tribal people, emphasizing the need for inclusive, culturally responsive education that genuinely involves tribal voices in decision-making.⁷⁰

- 4) Panikkootam (Swasraya Sangam): Food security has been a significant concern for the tribals of Wayanad.⁷¹ Food security is a concept with multiple dimensions. It is built on four key aspects: the availability of food, the ability to access it, the stability of this access over time, and the proper utilization of food. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2002), food security exists when everyone has access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food that supports a healthy and active life.⁷² To address the issue of food scarcity, TUDI initiated the formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) called SwasrayaSangams to promote the cultivation of food crops. TUDI set up ten SHGs, involving both men and women, covering 150 tribal families in the project areas. These SHGs focused on traditional agricultural practices, including the cultivation of vegetables, tuber crops, and paddy. TUDI's SwasrayaSangam also aimed to develop scientific and sustainable agricultural knowledge among tribals, helping them not only preserve their community traditions but also promote organic farming practices in harmony with nature.⁷³ The program's goal is to uplift the tribal

⁷⁰ Athul Sarala Nanu, *Is The Rainbow An Illusion? Educational Programmes and the Adivasi Peoples during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Kerala, India*. MS thesis. UiTNorgesarktisuniversitet, 2021, pp.15-18.

⁷¹ G. Geetha Nath, *Socio-technical system analysis of tribal and settler farmers in the western ghat regions of wayanad district in Kerala*. Diss. Department of Agricultural Extension, College of Agriculture, Vellayani, 2007, p.17

⁷² P. K Sujathan, and M. G. Prasad. 'Multiseed Farming Technique: A Panacea for Food Insecurity among Tribes in Kerala', *Journal of Rural Development*, vol. 41, no. 3, NIRDPR, Hyderabad, 2022, pp. 341.

⁷³ Interview with Fr. Baby Chalil, 5th October 2019 at TUDI.

farmers, who have been working primarily in traditional farming “*Jhum*” Cultivation⁷⁴ for centuries, and encourage them to rise to a more sustainable agricultural approach for the future.

- 5) **Arivuda* Boarding House for Girls:** The causes behind the dropout of tribal children from school can be attributed to several social, cultural, and economic factors. Among these, a negative attitude towards education is one of the most significant contributors. Many children from the Paniya tribe perceive schooling as a monotonous and unnecessary process. Despite being aware of government schemes and financial support for education, they fail to see its relevance to their daily lives or future livelihoods. This disinterest in learning often leads them to prefer staying in their familiar community environment rather than attending school. Peer influence is another crucial factor influencing these children’s decisions to drop out.⁷⁵ Many students reported being influenced by their friends, who had already discontinued their education. This peer pressure creates a cycle where one dropout leads to another, as children often follow the example set by their peers, believing that education is not valuable or necessary. Family dynamics and parental influence also play a pivotal role. In many cases, the children’s parents were themselves early school dropouts, often due to economic hardships. Initially, poverty and unemployment were the main reasons for educational discontinuation. However, this has changed, and today, parents are more aware of government initiatives aimed at supporting their children's education.⁷⁶ Still, some children discontinue schooling because of familial

⁷⁴ *Jhum cultivation*, or slash-and-burn agriculture, has been a traditional practice among tribal communities in which forest land is cleared for farming

* The boarding bears the name “*arivuda*”, in the local dialect it stands for “abode of knowledge”.

⁷⁵ Rick Audas, and Jon Douglas Willms. *Engagement and dropping out of school: A life-course perspective*. Hull, QC: Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, 2001, p.18.

⁷⁶ Sujit Bordhan, ‘Parental attitude towards schooling of their children’, *Journal of all India association for educational Research*, 26.1, 2014, p.2.

pressures, such as taking on early responsibilities, especially when parents struggle with health or financial issues. In some extreme cases, parental alcoholism has been identified as a significant cause of dropout. Teachers have observed that children from households where alcohol consumption is prevalent tend to lack the mental and emotional stability required for learning, as they often face neglect and an unstable home environment.

Caste-related Issues also contributed to the dropout rates.⁷⁷ In some cases, children felt uncomfortable interacting with students from different caste backgrounds, whether higher or lower, and this social divide led to a reluctance in continuing education. The discomforts created by caste-based discrimination within schools further discouraged participation, making education seem less appealing.⁷⁸ Health problems have been a significant barrier to education for many tribal children. Due to inadequate healthcare facilities and lack of timely medical attention, many children fell behind in their studies or dropped out entirely.⁷⁹ The absence of proper medical care during illness often resulted in prolonged school absences, and in some cases, the inability to catch up with missed lessons leads to permanent discontinuation of education. Distance is a major factor contributing to the dropout rate among tribal students in Wayanad, with many children residing in isolated areas far from schools, necessitating long and difficult travel.⁸⁰ To address the dropout issue, the government has implemented hostel facilities specifically for tribal students in Wayanad. Wayanad has 28 pre-metric hostels for ST students.⁸¹ The

⁷⁷ Abhisek Panda, and Laxmipriya Ojha, 'Wastage' is a challenge of tribal education-a review based study', *international Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 7.1, 2021, p.37.

⁷⁸ Rajendra P. Mamgain, 'Caste, Social Exclusion and Inequality in Independent India; *Rethinking Caste and Resistance in India*, Routledge, 2023, pp.188-217.

⁷⁹ National Research Council, et al., *Improving access to oral health care for vulnerable and underserved populations*. National Academies Press, 201, p.14.

⁸⁰ Paul P Binu, and D. Rajasenan. *Income, Livelihood and Education of Tribal Communities in Kerala-Exploring Inter Community Disparities*. Diss. Cochin University of Science and Technology, 2013, p.61.

⁸¹ K. M, Pramod, *op.cit.*, p.10.

Statewide, Kerala has 108 pre-matric hostels and 18 special tribal schools under the Scheduled Tribe Development Department

hostels aim to offer a safe environment for students, with provisions for food, lodging, and academic support. However, their effectiveness is often limited by funding and infrastructure issues, and the quality of facilities varies. It was understood during the research period that all the pre-metric hostels and model residential schools in Wayanad were in opposition to tribal students. Government residential schools have been used as a model for such hostels, but many students graduating from these schools are still illiterate. One tribal student shared that their hostel lacked basic facilities, and the students felt disconnected from the hostel.⁸² They also faced difficulties in traveling, which made them leave the hostel. The government initiated the “GotraSarathi” project to provide transportation for students from forest regions, but the programme faced setbacks due to delayed salaries for drivers, causing it to stall in several areas and hindering its effectiveness in addressing the issue.⁸³

Since its inception, education has been a key focus at TUDI, with a long-held dream to provide a boarding house for students. Initially, a temporary arrangement was made to accommodate around hundred students, especially from the Paniya community, who were lagging in education. Fr. Philip Vattamala and Sindhu M, a teacher from the Paniya community supervised this initiative. Sindhu was a Paniya tribal woman who, through TUDI’s educational support, became the first teacher from the Paniya community in the Panamaram Panchayath. While this achievement is significant for breaking barriers, it also reflects the Jesuit missionaries’ tendency to prioritize formal education as a pathway to “modernity”, potentially overshadowing traditional knowledge systems and cultural practices. The emphasis on such singular success stories raises questions about the broader inclusivity and sustainability of TUDI’s educational model within the community. In 2012, the hostel was moved to the second floor of the TUDI office with support from benefactors in Germany at Nuremberg. The hostel now accommodates around fifty students from different tribal communities, fostering cultural exchange and improving education, especially for

⁸² Interview with Rahul, Easthill, 3rd April 2022.

⁸³ Justin P. Jose, and C. H. E. R. A. Y. I. Shanuga. ‘Inclusive properties of school interactional milieu: implications for identity construction and social exclusion’, *Contemporary Voice of Dalit* 10.1, 2018, pp. 98-113.

girls from the Paniya community. The FCC sisters have been collaborating in the running of the boarding facility. A Paniya student from Arivuda Hostel of TUDI expressed positive feedback, sharing that the hostel has been a life-changing experience. The student highlighted how the environment has fostered a sense of belonging and confidence. The support provided at the hostel, both academically and emotionally, helped them excel in education and personal growth.

The Jesuits in Attapadi

The Jesuits' engagement with the Adivasis of Attapadi stands as a significant chapter in their broader mission to align faith with justice. Rooted in the directives of Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation (GC 32),⁸⁴ their social action ministry has consistently prioritized the marginalized, advocating for a preferential option for the poor. While GC 32 offered an ideological framework, its translation into tangible action required courage, adaptability, and an acute awareness of the complexities inherent in working with disenfranchised communities. The Jesuits' decision to focus on the Adivasis reflects not just a continuation of their historical mission but also an evolving understanding of the interchange between social justice and systemic inequities.

The success of the Jesuits' involvement with the fishworkers' movement in Kerala provided both a precedent and a facilitator for their engagement with the Adivasis.⁸⁵ However, the transition from coastal activism to addressing the complex socio-economic and cultural challenges of indigenous communities was far from seamless. Their efforts to promote liberation and holistic development among the Adivasis were shaped by the pressure between immediate welfare needs and the long-term goal of empowerment. This apprehension became particularly evident with the

⁸⁴ John W. Padberg (ed) *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. St. Louis, Mo.: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009, pp. 455-482.

⁸⁵ P. Ramdas, *Socio-Economic Roots of Communalisation in Coastal Malabar (1950-2005)*. Diss. Department of History, University of Calicut., 2009, p.181.

establishment of the Tribal Unity for Development Initiatives in 1996, an endeavour marked by both promise and limitations.

While these initiatives cultivated enthusiasm among Jesuit priests to work in Attappadi, they also exposed deeper systemic issues, including the problems of state's Adivasi welfare and the complex cultural dynamics of intervention. The Jesuits' work, therefore, must be critically assessed within the broader socio-political context, raising questions about the sustainability and depth of their impact. Unemployment has been one of the most pressing issues affecting tribal youth in Attappadi, a region known for its vibrant tribal communities yet marked by socio-economic challenges.⁸⁶The problem is deeply rooted in a combination of historical neglect and structural barriers that have limited the opportunities available to these young individuals. Several factors have contributed to this situation, including geographical isolation, lack of educational opportunities, and the disruption of traditional livelihoods. The geographical remoteness of Attappadi has significantly hindered access to mainstream markets, education, and employment opportunities. Tribal youth often grow up in an environment where formal education is either inaccessible or insufficiently developed to meet the demands of the modern job market. This lack of exposure to education and vocational training leaves many of them unprepared for skilled employment. Furthermore, traditional livelihoods such as subsistence farming and forest-based activities, once the backbone of their economy, have been severely disrupted by deforestation, land encroachment, and changes in land use patterns. These developments have led to a loss of self-sufficiency, pushing tribal youth further into unemployment and poverty.

In this context, the Jesuit missionaries played a pivotal role in addressing unemployment among tribal youth in the region. Recognizing the multidimensional nature of the problem, they adopted a comprehensive approach that combined education, skill development, and self-employment initiatives. Vocational training centres were established first at Elachivazhi to impart practical skills in trades such as

⁸⁶ Jesuits: *Year Book of The Society of Jesus*, 2012, p.36.

carpentry, masonry, tailoring, and other crafts that could enable young people to find work locally or in nearby towns.⁸⁷ Moreover, efforts were made to improve literacy rates through schools and adult education programs, laying a strong foundation for long-term employability.

In addition to skill-building, the missionaries promoted self-employment by encouraging micro-enterprises and cooperative ventures. Handicrafts, agro-based industries, and other locally viable economic activities were introduced to provide sustainable income sources.⁸⁸ These initiatives not only offered immediate employment opportunities but also preserved cultural traditions and strengthened the community's sense of identity. To further enhance their impact, the Jesuits facilitated access to government welfare schemes and provided financial literacy training, enabling tribal youth to make better use of available resources. The Government's initiatives in Attappadi, such as the establishment of the APJ Abdul Kalam Tribal Residential School and other educational facilities, demonstrated a strong commitment to uplifting tribal communities through education. These efforts were commendable, as they aimed to provide high-quality, residential schooling for tribal students, particularly from the Kurumba community. While the government's contributions are substantial, collaboration with and recognition of the work done by grassroots organizations like AADI can further enhance the impact of educational programs in Attappadi, ensuring that the needs of the tribal communities are addressed comprehensively and inclusively.⁸⁹

However another major intervention that positively transformed the Adivasis of Attappadi was the setting up of a Career Guidance and Information Centre at Agaly.Sumathi, a student spoke about the impact of the Jesuit Career Guidance Centre at Agaly:

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Interview with Fr. P.S Antony SJ at Samskriti, Kannur, 5th May 2019.

⁸⁹ Sannet Thomas &, Dr-Manoj Pandey,'Tribal Culture and Livelihood OfAttappady', *International Journal of Biology, Pharmacy and Allied Sciences*, 2022, p. 49.

I had no clear idea about what to do after finishing school. We often don't receive proper career guidance from authorities, which leaves us feeling lost about our future. However, the Jesuit Career Guidance Centre at Agaly changed that for me. They helped me identify my strengths, explore opportunities, and make informed decisions about my career path. Today, I feel confident about my future.⁹⁰

Through sustained and systematic efforts, the Jesuit Career Guidance Centre has guided students for higher studies and prepared them for competitive examinations and other tests. They not only made information available but found suitable candidates and trained them for the challenges.

A piece of land in Attappadi was purchased with the intention to start a centre that would positively transform tribal lives in the Attappadi area. Initially it was thought that starting a technical institute to make the tribal youth employable would be meaningful service. But soon after the purchase, a government-run ITI was set up in the area just three kilometres away. This significantly dampened the enthusiasm for establishing a technical training centre. Therefore the focus shifted to other meaningful interventions apart from those that were already operational.⁹¹ After wide consultations, it was decided to develop the land as an eco-reserve besides putting up a tribal cultural centre and a Jesuit house. Thus, AADI was registered as a Charitable Society in 2015 to work for the integral development of the Adivasis of Attappadi. AADI envisioned achieving this by focusing on their educational and cultural development and working for the protection of the environment.

Environmental Activities in Attappadi

In Attappadi, their efforts have focused on addressing ecological challenges while supporting the tribal population, for whom the forest is an essential part of life. While their initiatives have brought visible change, a critical analysis highlights areas of success and opportunities for deeper community engagement. One of the key Jesuit projects in Attappadi was the establishment of an eco-reserve. This initiative was

⁹⁰ Interview with Sumathi, she was a student in Agaly, 14th May 2022.

⁹¹ Interview with Fr.P.T Mathew. SJ at Christ Hall, Kozhikode, 10th March, 2019.

guided by Fr. John BrittoSJ, a botanist from St. Joseph's College, Trichy, who studied the barren land and proposed a plan to transform it into a thriving forest. The eco-reserve aimed to restore the land's ecological balance and raise environmental awareness among the tribal population. For tribal communities, such efforts are vital, as forests provide not only resources but also a foundation for their cultural and spiritual identities.

To strengthen the project, the Jesuits collaborated with Tarumitra, an environmental movement under Jesuit leadership. Meaning "Friends of the Trees,"⁹²Tarumitra focused on spreading environmental awareness and was recognized globally with Special Consultative Status by the United Nations in 2005.⁹³ This partnership added value to the project by emphasizing the importance of engaging young people in environmental conservation. Jesuit fathers Robert Athical and RappaiPoothokaran played an active role in developing the eco-reserve. Fr. Rappai donated one lakh rupees for a water tank to ensure irrigation for the saplings. His contribution was critical in addressing the dry conditions of Attappadi and ensuring the survival of the newly planted trees. In 2014, Fr. Augustine Kallunkal, SJ, a botanist, joined the effort. He devoted himself to planting and nurturing a variety of trees, often facing challenges from wild animals like elephants and deer that damaged young saplings. Despite these difficulties, his dedication transformed the land into a dense forest, providing the tribal community with improved access to natural resources and a revitalized ecosystem.

While the Jesuits' efforts have had a significant positive impact, a critical perspective reveals areas for improvement. The eco-reserve initiative largely focused on restoring the environment, but it could have better integrated the tribal community in the planning and decision-making process. Tribal people, as primary stakeholders, possess traditional ecological knowledge that could have enhanced the project's

⁹² Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu, S.J, 'The Contributions of South Asian Jesuits to Environmental Work', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 3, 2016, p.627.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

outcomes. Additionally, fostering a stronger sense of ownership among the community could ensure the long-term sustainability of such efforts.

The eco-reserve today stands as a testament to the Jesuits' commitment to environmental conservation and their recognition of the forest's importance to the tribal way of life. However, their work also highlights the need for a more inclusive approach that actively involves the tribal population as equal partners. By doing so, Jesuit initiatives can move beyond conservation to empowerment, ensuring that tribal communities are not only beneficiaries but also leaders in preserving their environment and cultural heritage.

Cultural Interventions through Kalakendram

The Attappadi Adivasi Development Initiative (AADI) undertook a range of activities aimed at improving the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the tribal population in Attappadi. Educational programs, including tuitions and weekly personality development sessions known as “Kuttikuttams”, have been integral to AADI's work since its inception. These initiatives aimed to address the educational disparities faced by tribal children by creating opportunities for learning and self-improvement. However, while these programs have been widely appreciated, their long-term impact could be enhanced by incorporating culturally relevant curricula and improving teacher training to align with the unique needs of tribal communities. To improve the quality of education for tribal children, AADI established seven study centres in villages such as Umathampady, VattalackyOLH, Nallasinga, Dasanur, Marapalam, and Karayur. These centres provided a conducive environment for learning and were instrumental in increasing children's enthusiasm for education. AADI's educational initiatives, such as enrolling school dropouts and providing follow-up support with volunteer help, underlined the missionaries' commitment to improving tribal education. Additionally, Fr. S. Lenin Antony conducted training programs for educators and women's groups, contributing to capacity building in the community.⁹⁴ While these efforts had tangible outcomes, they also highlighted

⁹⁴ Interview with Fr. P S Antony, 19th December, 2022.

systemic challenges in integrating tribal children into mainstream educational systems without eroding their cultural identities. Beyond academic support, AADI offered martial arts training to help children develop discipline, physical fitness, and self-confidence. While this was a commendable effort, a broader array of extracurricular programs, including arts, sports, and STEM⁹⁵ education, could have further enriched the learning experience. To address unemployment among the tribal youth, AADI introduced vocational training programs, including a specialized course for electricians. Participants were trained in safety practices, technical skills, and preparation for industry-recognized certification exams. This program provided meaningful opportunities for employment. However, expanding vocational training to include other trades, such as carpentry, plumbing, or digital literacy, could diversify career options for participants and increase their resilience in the job market.

AADI has placed significant emphasis on preserving and promoting Adivasi cultural traditions. The establishment of “*Kala Sangham*”, a cultural troupe specializing in tribal dances and songs, provided a platform for showcasing these art forms beyond the local community. Additionally, the construction of the “*Kalakendram*”—a circular hall for performances—alongside a dormitory and Jesuit residence in 2013, has strengthened the infrastructure needed for cultural activities. Despite these efforts, there is scope to ensure that the leadership and creative direction of such cultural initiatives rest predominantly with the tribal community to avoid external imposition and maintain authenticity. Street plays and discussion forums organized by AADI have effectively highlighted pressing issues faced by tribal populations. AADI’s initiatives to revive tribal art and cultural expressions were evident in activities like the Art Camp and the Cultural Camp.⁹⁶The Art Camp, led by Polish artist Anna Burzec and her husband Stan, introduced mosaic art using waste materials to 41 Adivasi children, transforming the AADIKalakendram into an aesthetic landmark. Similarly, the Cultural Camp, directed by Mr. Kuppuswami, an Adivasi artist trained at the School of Drama, produced the street play *AnumPenum*

⁹⁵ STEM education is a way of learning that combines science, technology, engineering, and math into one approach.

⁹⁶ Kerala Tidings (Mal.), Jesuit Monthly Magazine, March, 2014, p.2.

addressing the issue of teenage marriages. Staged in 40 tribal hamlets (“*oorus*”), it effectively combined cultural expression with social critique. While these initiatives revived community participation and creativity, they also raise critical questions about the sustainability of such interventions and the potential dependency on external facilitators.

Grassroots Mobilization and Community Celebrations

The annual “AadiGramotsavam” emerged as a vibrant community festival, drawing over 1,000 participants from across Kerala.⁹⁷ Combining traditional dances, songs, and performances, the event served as a platform for collective identity and celebration. However, its increasing reliance on external organizational structures highlights a tension between fostering community-led initiatives and orchestrating events that may inadvertently impose external agendas. The revival of the “*OoruUtsavams*”- traditional tribal night-long celebrations—was another significant step in rejuvenating lost communal traditions.⁹⁸ By organizing these festivals at Nakkupathy, Pattimalam, and Choriyanur, AADI attempted to restore practices integral to tribal community life.⁹⁹ Yet, the broader issue remains whether such efforts can be sustained without continuous external facilitation. Sociologist Nandini Sundar highlighted that such festivals are instrumental in preserving intangible cultural elements and fostering communal harmony among tribal groups.¹⁰⁰

AADI’s initiatives aimed to foster unity and mutual respect among community members. Cultural programs for children, held every Saturday at study centres, provided a platform for them to explore their creative potential and develop confidence. Staff members facilitated these sessions with practical training in social skills. However, to ensure inclusivity, it is crucial to involve parents and elders in these programs, thereby creating intergenerational dialogue and understanding. Tribal

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, May 2014, p.5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, May 2015, p.4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, September 2015, p.6.

¹⁰⁰ Nandini Sundar, *The scheduled tribes and their India: Politics, identities, policies, and work*. Oxford University Press, 2016, p.79.

communities across the world are known for their rich cultural heritage, which is deeply intertwined with their daily lives and traditions. Among the most distinctive aspects of their cultural expression are their folk forms and songs. These art forms are not just modes of entertainment but also serve as repositories of their history, spirituality, and values. VerrierElwin noted that “tribal art is not merely ornamental but serves as a vital part of the community's daily existence, encompassing religious rituals, social practices, and the expression of their worldview.”¹⁰¹

Folklore holds a central role in the life and culture of people in India, particularly among tribal communities. Each tribe has its own distinct folk traditions and songs, which serve as a medium for sharing knowledge and life experiences. These songs convey a wealth of information about nature, mythology, history, morals, rituals, and taboos, passing down important cultural narratives and values through generations.¹⁰² The younger generation of tribal people exhibits a complex response to tribal songs, balancing tradition with modern influences. While many continue to value these songs as a means of connecting with their cultural heritage, others are drawn to the appeal of contemporary music, leading to a blend of old and new styles. Urbanization and formal education have distanced some youth from traditional practices, yet many still recognize the importance of tribal songs in preserving history, rituals, and community values. However, there is a growing concern that without active efforts to revive these traditions, tribal songs may gradually lose their significance among future generations. FrP.SLenin Antony SJ, published a songbook called *Adivasi Pattu* (“Adivasi Songs”) to support and preserve tribal folksongs, which are an integral part of the community's cultural heritage. His work not only helped maintain the connection to their heritage but also brought tribal music into the present, making it relevant for today's youth. This aligns with the growing concern that, without such efforts, tribal songs could gradually fade from the cultural

¹⁰¹ Verrier Elwin, *The Tribal Art of Middle India. A Personal Record*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1951, pp.47-56.

¹⁰² K R Sreehari & Kasi, E., ‘Continuity and Change of Folklore among Irulas of Kerala: Discourse Analysis of Tribal Folk Songs from the South Indian State of India’, *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 2024, p.11.

consciousness of future generations. Through the *Adivasi Pattu*, Fr. Antony created an accessible and engaging way for young people to appreciate and connect with their rich cultural history.

Traditional Healthcare and Indigenous Knowledge

Tribal medicine represents one of the oldest forms of healthcare systems, deeply rooted in the cultural and ecological practices of indigenous communities. It encompasses the use of medicinal plants, herbs, and natural remedies for treating a wide range of ailments, reflecting the tribes' close relationship with their natural environment. This knowledge, often passed down orally through generations, forms an integral part of the tribal way of life and is regarded as a valuable cultural heritage. Tribal healers have mastered the use of plant extracts, decoctions, and powders derived from leaves, roots, barks, and flowers, often employing trials to identify effective herbs for diseases. Their practices represent an invaluable reservoir of medicinal insights, much of which remains undocumented or underexplored by modern science. Modernization, however, poses significant challenges to the preservation of this traditional wisdom. Rapid deforestation and the loss of biodiversity have not only diminished the availability of medicinal plants but also jeopardized the continuity of tribal knowledge systems. Additionally, the growing dominance of allopathic medicine, coupled with the lack of formal recognition for traditional practices, has led to a decline in the reliance on indigenous remedies.¹⁰³

AADI has played a vital role in promoting ethno-medicine through collaborations with Adivasi “*vaidyas*” (traditional healers). This system blends traditional knowledge with modern science to restore health and well-being using natural remedies, including herbs for detoxification and immune system support. The “Adivasi ParambariyaChikilsyaKendram” (Indigenous Health Centre), staffed by two experienced *vaidyas*, exemplified this effort. While this initiative preserves valuable traditional knowledge, integrating modern healthcare practices and scientific

¹⁰³ T. Purushothaman, and K. Irfana Mol. ‘Ethnobotanical medicines used by the Kani and Kurichiyar tribal communities of Kerala’, *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities* 8.1, 2020, pp. 191-199.

validation could enhance its effectiveness and credibility. One of AADI's noteworthy contributions was the "AdivasiVaidyar Training Programme", held in March 2014, which brought together 38 traditional healers to exchange knowledge and aspirations about indigenous medicine. The training underscored the importance of preserving traditional medicinal practices. Experts from "Vanamoolika"¹⁰⁴ enriched the discussions on medicinal plants. However, the effort also pointed to the risk of institutionalizing traditional practices in ways that may unintentionally commodify or distort their original communal essence. The subsequent decision to form and register societies for the *vaidyas* underlines the push toward government integration and funding, but it also raises questions about the long-term autonomy and authenticity of these practices within a formalized framework. The tribal population in Attappadi faces severe health issues, including malnutrition and sickle-cell anaemia, which have resulted in high infant mortality rates.¹⁰⁵ Recognizing this, AADI collaborated with the Palliative Care Society to provide medical care for chronic and cancer patients. However, while these measures offer relief, a more proactive approach is needed. Programmes focused on nutrition awareness, access to clean water, and early health interventions could significantly reduce the prevalence of these issues.

LokManch: A Platform for Tribal Empowerment

India's tribal communities have long struggled to access basic rights and entitlements due to systemic barriers such as socio-economic inequality, policy neglect, and historical injustices.¹⁰⁶ LokManch, established in 2015 under the leadership of Jesuits in Social Action (JESA) and coordinated by the Indian Social

¹⁰⁴ Vanamoolika is an organization rooted in the Wayanad district of Kerala, India, formed as a community initiative involving tribal cultivators, local women, and indigenous healers. Founded in 1991 by pharmacist and environmental activist P.J. Chackochan, the initiative focuses on preserving biodiversity and safeguarding traditional medicinal knowledge through eco-friendly and sustainable methods

¹⁰⁵ The Kerala government has implemented schemes to improve tribal health, including financial aid for medical care, mobile units, and the "Janani-JanmaRaksha" program for maternal and child support. It also provides training to tribal women in health, hygiene, and nutrition

¹⁰⁶ Perungulam S Krishnan, *Social Exclusion and Justice in India*. Routledge India, 2017, pp.23-44

Institute (ISI), Delhi, emerged as a ground-breaking initiative to address these challenges.¹⁰⁷ This national platform united over 100 organizations, including NGOs, religious institutions, and civil society groups, to champion a rights-based approach to social justice. LokManch focused on critical issues like food security, forest rights, water and sanitation, and self-governance, working to ensure the effective implementation of existing policies while advocating for relevant amendments at local, state, and national levels.¹⁰⁸ One of LokManch's defining features was its ability to collaborate with regional initiatives, tailoring its efforts to address specific local needs. In Wayanad, TUDI (Tribal Unity for Developmental Initiatives) serves as the regional unit of LokManch, collaborating with three other NGOs—Bhodini, Jwala, and Ooru. Together, they supported 12,000 tribal households, focusing on critical areas such as the National Food Security Act (NFSA), the Forest Rights Act (FRA), and the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA). These efforts not only ensured that tribal communities received their legal entitlements but also fostered leadership among tribal youth, creating a foundation for long-term empowerment. Similarly, in Attappadi, LokManch works closely with the AADI (Attappadi Adivasi Development Initiatives), which partnered with organizations like the AttappadiKurumba Adivasi Development Society (AKADS), Kerala Tribal Development Society (KTDS), and Sultanpet Multiple Service Society (SMSS). This collaboration reached a wide network of tribal settlements, addressing issues like food security, psychological well-being, and community leadership.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of LokManch's collaborative approach. During the lockdown, AADI, in partnership with LokManch, distributed food and medical kits donated by various agencies to vulnerable tribal populations. Additionally, a counselling centre was established to provide psychological support to Adivasis and their children, demonstrating the initiative's responsiveness to immediate crises. LokManch also became a platform for fostering leadership development among tribal youth, enabling them to advocate for their rights

¹⁰⁷ JIVAN: News and Views of Jesuits in India, magazine, November-December 2015, p.10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

and engage with policy mechanisms effectively. The platform's dual focus on grassroots mobilization and advocacy at multiple governance levels ensured a comprehensive approach to tribal empowerment.

LokManch's success lay in its ability to connect local and national efforts while maintaining a people-centred focus. By fostering collaboration between diverse stakeholders, including Jesuit organizations, NGOs, and community groups, it significantly improved access to entitlements for tribal populations. However, challenges such as systemic barriers, limited resources, and entrenched inequalities persist. Despite these obstacles, LokManch showed how collective action and community-led initiatives can drive meaningful change. Its partnership with regional organizations like TUDI and AADI not only amplified its impact but also ensured that tribal voices were at the forefront of social justice movements. As LokManch evolves, its commitment to equity, inclusion, and empowerment serves as a model for addressing the needs of marginalized communities across India.

AADI's engagement extended to social advocacy, as seen in the anti-Coca-Cola movement at Plachimada. Fr. P. S. Antony's nine-year legal battle and twelve-day imprisonment for leading the protest demonstrated the missionaries' active role in environmental justice.¹⁰⁹ While the eventual acquittal of the activists in 2020 marked a victory, the prolonged struggle underscores the complexities of challenging corporate exploitation through grassroots mobilization. In collaboration with CEVA, AADI organized summer camps focusing on child rights, personality development, and leadership training for tribal students.¹²⁴ tribal students attended this programme.¹¹⁰ Competitions in Adivasi languages and arts further reinforced cultural pride. However, these camps also exposed the tension between introducing modern developmental paradigms and preserving indigenous worldviews. AADI's involvement in protests, such as the closure of a liquor shop in Anaikatty and the demand for safe drinking water, exemplified its proactive stance on public health and basic amenities. The 2017 campaign "*Surakshithajalam, sthiramaayajalam*" (safe

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Fr. P.S Antony SJ at Samskriti 5th May 2022.

¹¹⁰ *Kerala Tidings*, op.cit., June, 2015, p.4.

water, steady water) mobilized over 100 people, highlighting the critical need for sustainable solutions to water scarcity.¹¹¹ These interventions, while impactful, also revealed systemic governance failures that necessitated on-going activism.

While AADI's activities reflected a deep commitment to social justice and cultural preservation, they also raised critical questions about the broader implications of missionary-led interventions. The dependence on external resources, the challenges of balancing traditional practices with modern developmental frameworks, and the potential risks of cultural homogenization were significant concerns. AADI's efforts underscored the necessity of empowering tribal communities to lead their own development while ensuring that external support is complementary and non-intrusive.

The Jesuits' involvement in the tribal life of post-colonial Malabar demonstrates a sincere commitment to sustainable development, particularly in Wayanad and Palakkad. Their initiatives have significantly contributed to the educational, cultural, social, and political upliftment of tribal communities, fostering self-reliance and preserving cultural heritage without exercising religious influence. While government policies have made strides in improving tribal welfare, the Jesuits' approach offers a complementary and inclusive model that prioritizes empowerment over dependency. Despite these efforts, doubts and critiques regarding the Jesuits' role persist among certain sections of society. These critiques often stem from scepticism about their intentions and the broader implications of their work in tribal communities. Understanding these perspectives is vital to gaining a balanced view of the Jesuits' contributions. Therefore, the next chapter will focus on exploring the opinions and perceptions of various stakeholders regarding the Jesuits' involvement in tribal life. This discussion will provide critical insights into the societal reception of their work and address concerns surrounding their role in tribal development.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, October, 2017, p.4.

Chapter IV

Perspectives and Challenges to Jesuits work in Tribal Malabar

The Jesuits involvement in the tribal life of post-colonial Malabar exemplifies their dedication to fostering sustainable development, particularly in regions such as Wayanad and Palakkad. Their initiatives have played a pivotal role in uplifting tribal communities, focusing on education, cultural preservation, social empowerment, and political awareness. Unlike approaches rooted in religious influence, the Jesuits have emphasized self-reliance and cultural respect, offering an inclusive model of development that complements governmental efforts.¹ However, their work has not been without critique. Doubts regarding the Jesuits' intentions and the broader implications of their involvement persist among certain sections of society. These critiques highlight the complexities and diverse perspectives surrounding their role in tribal development. This chapter seeks to examine the varied responses to Jesuits work in tribal Malabar, focusing on the perspectives of missionaries, non-tribal groups, tribal elites, and the tribal community. By delving into these viewpoints, this analysis aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the societal reception of the Jesuits' efforts and address the concerns and debates surrounding their impact.

The term “perspective” is commonly defined as a specific attitude or way of regarding something—a particular point of view.² According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, it denotes “a mental view or prospect”, highlighting the subjective nature of how individuals perceive and interpret the world based on their experiences, beliefs, and context. This concept is central to disciplines such as philosophy, psychology,

¹ Gerald A Arbuckle, *Violence, society, and the Church: A cultural approach*. Collegeville, Minn, Liturgical Press, 2004, pp.12-18.

² John Alan Robinson, *Perspective, meaning, and remembering*, CUP, 1996, pp.199-217.

and art, where the notion of perspective shapes understanding and representation, providing a lens through which reality is analysed or depicted.³

Christian missionary activities in post-colonial India have faced significant criticism, more than they did during the colonial period. E.B. Webster explains that this is largely due to the shift in how history is studied and understood in these two eras. During colonial times, the history of Christianity in India was written from a Western perspective. It was presented as part of the West's effort to "civilize" Indian society. This approach, often called "history from above", highlighted the achievements of Western missionaries and portrayed their work as a noble mission to uplift the so-called uncivilized people. In post-colonial India, however, the focus has shifted. Historians began to emphasize the perspectives of Indian communities and local contexts rather than glorifying Western contributions. This new approach brought attention to the experiences of Indian Christians and their role in society. Instead of concentrating solely on the achievements of foreign missionaries, historians started studying "the history of the Indian missionaries" and "the Christian community". This marked a significant change in how Indian Christian history was understood. Scholars like E.B. Webster, Mathias Mundadan, KajBaago, and Leonard Fernando have been at the forefront of this shift. They moved away from writing about the expansion of Western missions and focused instead on how Christianity interacted with Indian society. These interactions involved complex relationships with India's socio-economic, political, and religious systems. This broader approach has provided a deeper understanding of the impact of missionary activities on Indian communities. As a result, missionary work has come under greater scrutiny. The post-colonial perspective questions the earlier narrative that portrayed missionaries as purely benevolent and highlights the social and political consequences of their activities. By focusing on the lived experiences of Indian Christians, this approach reveals both the

³ Darren Dalcher (ed.), *Leading the Project Revolution: Reframing the Human Dynamics of Successful Projects*. Routledge, 2019, pp.23-27.

achievements and challenges faced by the Indian Christian missionaries, leading to a more critical view of Christian missionary efforts in the post-colonial era.⁴

In the post-colonial period, the responses to Jesuits work among tribal communities in Malabar were varied.⁵ The tribal regions of Malabar, particularly in areas like Wayanad and Palakkad, underwent significant social, cultural, and economic changes during this time, largely due to the involvement of missionaries. These responses were shaped by several factors, including historical experiences, cultural values, political circumstances, and the personal interests of different groups.

The role of missionaries in tribal life was multifaceted, including education, healthcare, social reforms, and religious conversion. For some tribal groups, missionaries represented a source of modernity and development, offering access to education and healthcare that were otherwise inaccessible. However, for others, the presence of missionaries posed a threat to their traditional ways of life and cultural practices. Hughson notes, “There are still many different opinions regarding the work of missionaries and their influence on public society”.⁶

The different attitudes towards missionaries work can be understood by considering the perspectives of three main groups: the missionaries themselves, the non-tribal people, and the tribal communities. Each group has distinct motivations and goals, which influenced how they perceived the missionaries presence and activities in tribal areas. Missionaries, particularly those from Christian religious orders like the Jesuits, often viewed their work as a mission of civilizing and uplifting the tribal populations. They believed that by providing education, healthcare, and social services, they could help improve the quality of life for tribal people. Their focus was on bringing positive changes in the form of modern education, health services, and

⁴ Potana Venkateswara Rao, *Christian Missions Historiography: An Indian Perspective*, Christian world imprints, Delhi, 2024, p. 42.

⁵ Clara AB Joseph, *Christianity in India: The Anti-Colonial Turn*. Taylor & Francis, 2019, p.103.

⁶ D.T Hughson, ‘Missional churches in secular societies: Theology consults sociology’, *Ecclesiology*, 2011, pp.173–194.

economic opportunities, while also promoting Christianity. While some missionaries genuinely aimed to improve the living conditions of the tribals, others might have been motivated by a desire to expand the influence of their religious community.

For the tribal communities, the responses to missionaries work were mixed and varied depending on their own experiences, needs, and perceptions. David Hardiman (2008) states, “While some tribal groups found in Christianity a means of social mobility and empowerment, others resisted it as an intrusive force disrupting their traditions”.⁷ Some tribal groups welcomed missionaries because they offered educational opportunities and healthcare services that were previously unavailable to them. These groups saw the missionaries as agents of progress, helping them to adapt to the changes brought about by colonialism and modernity. However, other tribal groups were more sceptical or outright resistant to missionaries work. They viewed the missionaries as representatives of foreign power and feared the erosion of their traditional cultures, languages, and religious practices. These communities were wary of religious conversion and the potential loss of their identities as they interacted with outside influences. Bernard S. Cohn argues that “Christian missionaries in colonial India were not merely religious figures but played a crucial role in the British project of knowledge and control over indigenous societies”.⁸

K.C. Abraham observes,

The earlier approach of mission was centered on evangelism and conversion. However, with the influence of religious resurgence, nationalism, ecumenism, globalization, and the challenges posed by scientific and technological advancements, the scope of mission has significantly expanded. Today, human society as a collective entity falls within the purview of Christian missions, where addressing social

⁷ David Hardiman, *Missionaries and their Medicine: A Christian Modernity for Tribal India*. Manchester University Press, New York, 2008, pp.88-123.

⁸ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton University Press. Chichester, 1987, pp.18-53.

problems and striving for liberation from unjust structures have become integral to the Church's mission.⁹

Missionaries' Perspectives

Father Pedro Arrupe, a pivotal figure in Jesuit history, summarized the essence of this mission by asserting, “Our work is not just about preaching faith but also ensuring that the poorest among us can stand on their feet with dignity”.¹⁰ The Jesuits were always ready to serve others, and this news (Appendix-9) stands as an example of their efforts to uplift the poor in Chalil, Tellicherry. The letter sought support to rebuild homes for poor families in Chalil, Tellicherry, Kerala, who lived in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions. After a devastating fire in 1960 destroyed eight houses, the Jesuits planned to construct 20 new homes with proper facilities like bed rooms, a kitchen, bath, porticos, septic tanks, and piped water. Families would contribute half the cost through interest-free instalments, ensuring stability and dignity.¹¹

Guided by such a vision, Jesuit initiatives sought to uplift tribal communities through culturally responsive education, vocational training, and systemic reforms. The involvement of organizations like Tribal Unity for Development Initiatives (TUDI) and Action for Adivasi Development and Integration (AADI) further underscores the collaborative nature of these efforts.

Education has been central to the Jesuit mission of tribal empowerment, serving as both a tool for personal development and a vehicle for socio-economic inclusion. Jesuit-run institutions in Malabar prioritize culturally sensitive curricula that resonate with tribal traditions and aspirations.¹² By emphasizing education, the

⁹ K.C. Abraham, *Liberative Solidarity: Contemporary Perspectives on Mission*, Christava Shitya Samithi, Tiruvalla, 1996, p.100.

¹⁰ Brian Grogan, *Pedro Arrupe: A Heart Larger Than the World*. Loyola Press, 2022, pp.14-26.

¹¹ *The Catholic Advocate*, Vol.9, Number 36, 1 September 1960.

¹² John C.B. Webster, *A social history of Christianity: North-West India since 1800*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018, pp.11-18.

Jesuits aim to break the cycle of poverty and marginalization that has historically afflicted tribal populations. The high dropout rates among tribal students, however, remains a significant challenge. Financial constraints, familial responsibilities, and societal pressures often deter continued education. The Jesuit priests often adopted a personalized mentorship approach to support students in overcoming both academic and personal challenges.¹³ A notable example is from Kannur, where a Jesuit mentor consistently encouraged a young tribal woman to pursue a nursing program despite societal pressures for early marriage. Similarly, many students have been inspired to undertake professional courses such as Master of Social Work (MSW), Teacher Training Course (TTC), and computer education, equipping them with marketable skills.¹⁴

However, this journey was far from easy. Many tribal students who complete their higher secondary education often lack clarity about the courses they should pursue. Recognizing the job opportunities in the nursing sector, the Jesuit mentor guided the students to make informed decisions. Unfortunately, such efforts have not always been met with acceptance. A Jesuit priest from the Calicut diocese shared an incident where non-tribal individuals resorted to physical assault against a Jesuit mentor who was guiding tribal students toward a brighter future.¹⁵ This reflects the challenges and resistance faced by Jesuit priests in their mission to empower marginalized communities through education.

Grassroots initiatives like TUDI's evening schools and adult literacy programs further exemplify efforts to make education accessible. These programs often integrate academic learning with awareness campaigns on health, hygiene, and civic

¹³ Bernard Lee, *Jesuit Higher Educational Leadership: A Case Study of Universities in Asia*. Springer Nature, 2024, pp.99-125.

¹⁴ Interview with Fr.Baby Chalil, 28th December 2018 at TUDI Centre.

¹⁵ Interview with Fr.Tinu, 9th April 2022 at Kayapoyi, Kannur, same incident shared by a man (a tribal community member, who prefers to remain anonymous due to political pressure) shared that tribal people have greatly benefited from the social activities run by the Jesuits. He mentioned how, despite political interference that forced him to send his daughter for a computer diploma instead of nursing, the tribal community has received significant support from Jesuit initiatives.

rights. As one TUDI educator aptly noted, “Education is not just about reading and writing; it is about understanding one’s worth and rights.”¹⁶ Despite these efforts, sustained motivation remains critical, particularly for female students, who face compounded challenges stemming from gender biases and economic hardships.

Vocational training forms another cornerstone of Jesuit strategies for tribal empowerment. Recognizing the importance of economic independence, the Jesuits focus on skill development programs tailored to tribal communities’ traditional expertise and contemporary market demands. TUDI has successfully introduced training in organic farming, weaving, and small-scale industries, enabling participants to merge ancestral knowledge with modern practices.

Despite these successes, challenges persist. Limited access to resources and societal pressures continue to hinder the long-term engagement of many tribal members in vocational training. Continuous mentorship and targeted interventions are essential to overcoming these barriers and fostering sustained development.

The Jesuit mission has also sought to tackle the socio-cultural barriers that impede tribal development. High dropout rates, peer influence, and financial difficulties are persistent issues. Personalized mentorship has proven effective in mitigating these challenges. For example, in a Malabar village, a Jesuit priest counselled a male student at risk of dropping out due to peer pressure, resulting in the student’s successful enrolment in a computer programming course. Female students face unique obstacles, including early marriage and limited access to higher education. Jesuit interventions emphasize the importance of professional courses that provide long-term benefits. By championing the education and empowerment of young tribal women, Jesuits have fostered a culture that values education and professional growth. As William Carey (1817) stated, “The future of our tribal communities rests not only on the education of the young but more importantly on the empowerment of women, for they are the true agents of change in society”.¹⁷

¹⁶ Interview held at TUDI centre, 28th December 2018.

¹⁷ *Memoirs of William Carey, D.D., 1793-1834.*

Jesuit initiatives extend beyond education and vocational training to encompass holistic development, addressing systemic barriers and promoting environmentally sustainable practices. Programs led by AADI have focused on eco-friendly housing, water conservation, and organic farming, aligning with both environmental sustainability and community well-being. Such initiatives reflect the Jesuits' broader vision of development, as articulated by their leaders: "True development is not about charity but creating conditions where everyone can thrive in harmony with their environment."¹⁸

The transformative impact of Jesuit programs is evident in individual success stories. Sindhu, a tribal woman, Kayapoyil, Kannur, epitomizes the empowerment facilitated by Jesuit-led self-help groups.¹⁹ Learning stitching through a vocational training program enabled her to establish a thriving business, support her family, and inspire others in her community. Her story illustrates the Jesuits' holistic approach to development, which integrates skill-building with financial planning and community leadership. Stephen Bevans (1992) commented that "Missionary work among indigenous tribes has evolved into a more collaborative and respectful form, seeking to empower communities by recognizing their agency and engaging with their cultural realities, rather than imposing external norms".²⁰

Non-Tribal Perspectives

Gail Omvedt, an American Sociologist opined that, "Christian missionary works in India has undergone a significant transformation since the colonial period, adapting to contemporary socio-political realities. However, not all religious communities have experienced this shift in the same way, with varying levels of acceptance and resistance based on local contexts".²¹ During the colonial era,

¹⁸ 'Rio Declaration on Environment and Development', *Encyclopedia of Environment and Society*, 2007.

¹⁹ Interview with Sindhu 8th May 2022.

²⁰ *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992, pp.14-16.

²¹ Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India*. Sage Publications, India, 1994, New Delhi, pp.116-189.

Christian missions in India were dominated by foreign missionaries, such as the Jesuits, who were often supported by Western financial aid.²² These missionaries, who were predominantly foreigners, focused on evangelization, frequently overlooking the cultural and social contexts of the communities they sought to convert. Their activities were deeply rooted in Western cultural norms and aimed primarily at conversion rather than establishing an indigenous Indian church. Indian Christians during this period were treated as subordinates, with limited roles in church leadership.²³ Foreign missionaries, as Michel Hollis noted, held dominant control over mission affairs, often placing junior, inexperienced missionaries in charge, which reinforced the hierarchical structure within the Christian community. The mission institutions and organizations established during this period were almost entirely financed by Western missionary societies, which created a sense of dependency and alienation among Indian Christians. This excessive reliance on foreign funding meant that the Indian church remained disconnected from Indian society and culture, leading many to criticize it as a “potted plant”²⁴ isolated from its cultural roots.²⁵

In contrast, post-colonial Christian missions in India began to witness a shift towards greater Indian involvement, both in leadership and financial support. Indigenous groups, such as Pentecostal and evangelical movements, began to break away from foreign missionary organizations, aiming to create a more localized, culturally relevant Christian mission.²⁶ These groups sought to make Christianity more relatable to the Indian context by incorporating indigenous cultural practices and

²² Jesuit missions often received backing from Jesuit provinces in Europe or North America. These societies would send financial aid to cover the cost of building schools, churches, hospitals, and housing for the poor.

²³ William Allen Smalley, ‘Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church’, *Practical Anthropology* 1958, pp. 51-65.

²⁴ The term “*potted plant*” has been used to criticize the Indian church for its excessive reliance on foreign funding, which kept it disconnected from Indian society and culture, preventing it from developing an indigenous identity.

²⁵ Judith. M Brown, et al., ‘Christians, cultural interactions, and India's religious traditions’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 2003, pp.1271 - 1273.

²⁶ P Lingaraju, ‘The Evolution of Christian Missionary Activities in India: A Colonial Legacy and Its Modern Implications’, *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2023, pp. 767-771.

offering social services, such as education, healthcare, and vocational training.²⁷ The focus of missionary work shifted from mere conversion to the holistic development of marginalized communities, particularly among tribals and Dalits.²⁸ The aim was no longer solely to increase baptism numbers but to improve socio-economic conditions. Unlike in the colonial era, where Indian Christians were often relegated to subordinate roles, post-colonial missions emphasized self-sufficiency, self-governance, and self-propagation. The National Missionary Society (NMS), founded in 1905 by Indian Christian leaders like V.S. Azariah and K.T. Paul, exemplified this shift. The NMS focused on evangelizing regions that had not yet been reached by Christianity and promoted Indian-led leadership, aiming to break the “mission compound mentality” that had characterized the foreign-dominated missionary presence. The NMS, alongside movements like the Christian Ashram Movement, sought to foster indigenous leadership in missions, while the Christian Ashram Movement, rooted in Indian spiritual traditions, integrated Christian life with Indian cultural practices.

Despite these significant changes, missionary work in contemporary India continues to be a source of tension, particularly in the face of growing opposition from Hindu nationalist groups. Critics argue that Christian missionaries are using social welfare programs, such as education, healthcare, and housing, to covertly convert vulnerable populations, especially tribals and Dalits. These Hindu nationalist groups contend that foreign funds and the welfare services provided by missionaries undermine Indian culture and traditions. They claim that many of the poor and marginalized embrace Christianity not for spiritual reasons but for the material benefits offered by missionaries. As Mahatma Gandhi once stated, “Religious conversions are not necessary for salvation. The divine presence is within every religion. We should be true to our own faith and seek harmony with others. Those who are attracted to a religion because of the material benefits it offers are not following the true spirit of that faith. What the world needs is not more conversions

²⁷ Potana Venkateswara Rao, *Indigenous Missions in Post-Independent India*, Christian World Imprints, Delhi, 2022, pp.55-82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.88.

but more understanding, tolerance, and love for all human beings”.²⁹The political climate has further intensified these tensions, particularly with the rise of Hindutva ideologies under the BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP). Calls for stricter regulations on conversions and missionary activities have grown louder, and Hindu militant groups have begun to copy the welfare programs of Christian missions to counter what they perceive as the growing influence of Christianity. In this environment, many Christian missionaries today focus on providing humanitarian aid and engaging in social welfare work. This includes a variety of initiatives, such as disaster relief, healthcare, education, and community development. Programs like vocational schools, orphanages, eye clinics, immunization campaigns, and family planning initiatives have been an integral part of their mission, aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of marginalized communities.

Despite the challenges they face, these social welfare initiatives have gained recognition for their contribution to improving the lives of vulnerable groups. However, the on-going political opposition highlights the complexity of missionary work in post-colonial India. The transition from foreign-dominated missions to more indigenous-led initiatives marks a significant shift in the structure of Christian missions in India. This transformation reflects the changing dynamics of religious identity and the socio-political landscape of the country. The shift towards indigenous leadership has led to a growing desire for Indian Christians to assert control over their religious and cultural identities, moving away from the colonial model that treated them as subordinates.³⁰V.S. Azariah and K.T. Paul, through initiatives such as the NMS, sought to create a more self-sustaining, self-governing Christian community that could operate independently of foreign influence.³¹ However, despite these

²⁹ Anthony Parel (ed.), Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp.13-15.

³⁰ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present*. Oxford University Press, UK, 2008, pp.26-27.

³¹ Mathew Thomas, *Christian Missions in the Pluralistic Context of India – The Relevance of Gandhian Approach*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Mahatma Gandhi University, 2002.

efforts, indigenous missions struggled to grow on a large scale, mainly due to limited resources, internal leadership challenges, and systemic weaknesses.

The failure to sustain a strong indigenous movement left Indian Christianity vulnerable to criticism, perpetuating the perception that Christianity in India remains a foreign imposition. This, in turn, has fuelled opposition from Hindu nationalist groups, who view Christian missions as an extension of foreign influence, undermining the cultural and religious fabric of India.³² The political, social, and cultural challenges faced by missionary work in India underscore the continuing complexities of religious transformation in the country. The enduring legacy of foreign missionary control, alongside the rise of indigenous movements, reflects the on-going tensions between indigenous identity and foreign influence in the landscape of post-colonial India.

The Niyogi Commission and Anti- Conversion

After independence, the Indian government, amidst growing anti-conversion sentiments, took a critical stance towards Christian missionary activities. In 1954, the Madhya Pradesh government established the Niyogi Commission to investigate allegations of forced conversions by Christian missions, particularly among tribal and marginalized communities. The commission, led by M.B. Niyogi, a retired Chief Justice, released its report in 1956, which harshly criticized the methods used by missionaries.³³ The report accused Christian missions, often backed by international funding, of using schools, hospitals, and orphanages to carry out mass conversions. It alleged that these conversions were not driven by genuine faith but by inducements such as free educational materials and other benefits, especially targeting minors in missionary-controlled schools. The report further claimed that missionaries disrupted societal harmony and weakened national loyalty, portraying their activities as part of a global agenda to revive Western dominance rather than a spiritual mission. Tribal

³² Robert Eric Frykenberg, *op.cit.*, p.33.

³³ Rowena Robinson, *Christians of India*. SAGE Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp.111-113.

and Dalit communities were identified as the main targets of this aggressive proselytizing.

The commission recommended strict legislative measures to curb conversions. It proposed expelling missionaries accused of proselytization and banning the use of professional services like healthcare for religious conversion. While the report acknowledged the contributions of Christian missions in education and healthcare, it strongly disapproved of their proselytizing efforts, labelling them as manipulative and detrimental to India's social fabric. The response to the report was divided. While some saw it as a justified critique of missionary activities, others accused it of bias and fuelling anti-Christian sentiment. Nonetheless, the report reflected a significant shift in the government's attitude, which now viewed missionary activities with suspicion. By focusing on conversions as a threat to national unity and social cohesion, the Niyogi Commission's findings laid the groundwork for restrictive policies and amplified a critical narrative against Christian missions in independent India.³⁴

In India, the Jesuits, have often been viewed in a positive light. They are seen as educators and helpers, particularly in remote tribal areas, where their schools and healthcare services have been appreciated. However, a different perspective exists, especially among non-tribal critics, who believe that the influence of Jesuit missionaries has not been entirely beneficial. These critics argue that, in recent decades, some Jesuit missionaries have played an active role in promoting political unrest, which has led to increased tension between tribal communities and the government. They claim that Jesuits, under the influence of liberation theology, are setting tribal people against the Indian state. Liberation theology, emerging in the 1960s after the Second Vatican Council, emphasizes the "liberation of the oppressed" through socio-economic analysis, advocating for social justice, economic equity, and political empowerment, particularly among marginalized communities. Though it

³⁴ M.B. Niyogi, Chairman's Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee, Madhya Pradesh Vol. 1 Madhya Pradesh: Government Printings, 1956, pp. 4 -5

faced criticism for its association with Marxist thought, its influence persists in movements promoting human rights and grassroots activism worldwide.³⁵ Samuel P. Huntington states, “As some Christian missionaries transition from evangelization to political activism, their involvement has, at times, resulted in unforeseen consequences, notably heightening tensions between indigenous communities and state authorities.”³⁶

Historically, Jesuits in India were known for their peaceful and respectful approach to working with tribal communities. They focused on education, healthcare, and social upliftment, building a reputation as compassionate figures. Many older Jesuits, who have worked for decades in India, respected the traditions of the local people, including Hindu rituals and practices. Their aim was to help marginalized communities without forcing any political agenda on them. They were seen as sympathetic to the needs of tribal populations, and their work was largely uncontroversial. However, over the past few decades, there has been a noticeable shift in the orientation of some Jesuit missionaries, influenced by the broader global trend of liberation theology. This theological movement, which began in Latin America, advocates for the liberation of oppressed communities through revolutionary means, and it has made significant inroads into the Catholic Church, especially among Jesuits. Liberation theology is often associated with anti-capitalist, anti-market stances, and it promotes the idea that revolutionary change is necessary to address the inequalities in society. This ideological shift has influenced some Jesuits in India, leading them to adopt a more politically charged stance in their work among tribal communities.

Critics argue that Jesuits, inspired by liberation theology, have become aligned with Marxist ideologies and have begun to support Maoist insurgents in India. These critics claim that, while Jesuits present themselves as supporters of the tribal people, their true motives are political. By encouraging tribal communities to oppose the

³⁵ Gustavo. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Orbis Books, 1973, pp.23-25.

³⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, pp.16-17.

Indian government and its policies, Jesuit missionaries are seen as increasing unrest. They are accused of encouraging tribal people to view the government as an enemy, rather than helping them integrate peacefully into Indian society. In this view, Jesuits are seen as instigators of political resistance, rather than mere educators or social workers.³⁷

The rise of Marxist ideologies within the Jesuit order contrasts sharply with the earlier, more peaceful approach of the Church. In the past, Jesuits worked in harmony with Indian society, respecting local cultures and seeking to uplift the tribal people without challenging the political order. The Jesuit order, under figures like Roberto de Nobili, had long maintained a policy of respecting and understanding local traditions, including Hindu religious practices. Jesuits were seen as contributing positively to the social fabric of India, providing education and healthcare without stirring up political dissent.

In contrast, the newer generation of Jesuit missionaries, influenced by figures like Gustavo Gutierrez and Jon Sobrino, has embraced more radical forms of liberation theology.³⁸ These Jesuits view the Indian state, particularly its treatment of tribal populations, as oppressive and believe that revolutionary changes are necessary. They argue that India's political system, with its roots in Hindu society, is fundamentally unjust and must be overthrown. This view is in sharp contrast to the earlier Jesuit approach, which worked within the existing social and political framework, striving for peaceful change and integration.³⁹

The critics of Jesuit involvement in tribal areas argue that these missionaries are using their influence to create division rather than unity. They accuse Jesuits of exacerbating tensions between tribal communities and the Indian state, using tribal

³⁷ Malachi Martin, *The Jesuits: The Society of Jesus and the Betrayal of the Roman Catholic Church*. Linden Press, Simon & Schuster, 1987, pp. 116-201.

³⁸ Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*. Temple University Press, 1987, pp.80-119.

³⁹ David Mosse, *The Saint in the Banyan Tree: Christianity and Caste Society in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012, pp. 327-356.

grievances as a means to promote political and ideological agendas. Rather than serving as neutral agents of social change, these critics claim that Jesuits are acting as political provocateurs, pushing tribal populations into conflict with the government. They argue that Jesuits, by promoting a Marxist view of tribal life and encouraging rebellion, are putting the tribal communities at risk. Moreover, these critics claim that Jesuit missionaries are denying tribal communities their agency. By presenting tribal people as victims who need external help, they argue that Jesuits are preventing tribal communities from finding their own solutions. Tribal communities, according to this perspective, have historically navigated their social and political challenges without the interference of outside ideologies. Critics argue that Jesuits, by promoting Marxism and revolutionary change, are not empowering tribal people, but rather manipulating them to achieve a broader political goal.⁴⁰

This ideological shift within the Jesuit order has created a sharp divide between those who support and those who criticize the Jesuits. Older Jesuits, who have worked in India for many years, express frustration with the newer, more politically active members of their order. They argue that the Jesuit mission in India was once focused on providing education and social services, but now it has become intertwined with political activism. This, they believe, is damaging the reputation of the Jesuit order in India and causing unnecessary tensions between tribal communities and the state.

It is important to understand that many Christian missionaries in India operated with significant support from the British government, as their efforts to spread Christianity provided a religious justification for European colonialism.⁴¹ The British administration recognized the power of religion to further their colonial ambitions, viewed missionary work as an essential tool for civilizing and controlling indigenous populations.⁴² Government officials believed that what could not be

⁴⁰ <https://theprint.in/author/jaithirth-rao/> 15th July 2021.

⁴¹ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: 1707–1858*. Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp.148-149.

⁴² Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2004, pp.147-149.

achieved through military force could be accomplished by the power of the Gospel.⁴³ This close relationship between the government and missionaries were crucial, with the government often shaping the missionaries' approach to evangelism and their theological outlook.

However, the dynamics have shifted in modern times. Missionaries today often express concerns over the lack of support from the government and even face suspicion from authorities. For example, Fr. P.T. Mathew SJ, a Jesuit priest, reflected on how, during the post-colonial era, particularly under the leadership of Kerala's K. Karunakaran government, missionaries received considerable support, especially when working with marginalized groups like fishermen.⁴⁴ This relation between missionaries and the government was seen as a mutually beneficial arrangement. However, Fr. Mathew pointed out that such support has diminished in recent times, and missionaries now feel disconnected from the government's backing. This change in the relationship between missionaries and the state reflects a shift in priorities, with government authorities increasingly sceptical of their involvement in social and religious work. The shift in these dynamic highlights broader changes in political and social attitudes toward missionary activities in India.

Another perspective of non-tribals on Jesuit missions among tribes is that they view the concept of “rice bag converts” as central to the missionaries' activities.⁴⁵ Non-tribals often argue that the Jesuits use material aid, such as food, money, and other assistance, as a way to attract tribal people to Christianity.⁴⁶ They believe that these efforts exploit the poverty and hardships of tribes, making conversions more about survival than faith. The term “rice bag converts” is frequently used to describe those who are seen as embracing Christianity not for spiritual reasons but because of

⁴³ Stanley Brian, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Apollos, Leicester, 1990, pp.55-84.

⁴⁴ <https://eparlib.sansad.in/browse?>

⁴⁵ Robert Eric Frykenberg, *op.cit.*, pp. 234-251.

⁴⁶ Shiny K. Mathew and Godwin Sam Raj D.P., ‘Fr. Joseph Taffarel and North Malabar: Religious and Social Changes Among the Depressed Classes’, *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2024, pp. 11-16.

the benefits provided. Non-tribals also criticize the impact of these missions on tribal culture and traditions. Many believe that by encouraging conversion, the Jesuits replace tribal beliefs, practices, and customs with Christian ones. This, they argue, results in the loss of tribal identity and disrupts the continuity of their heritage. Some non-tribals even claim that the Jesuits' actions create divisions within tribal communities, separating those who convert from those who do not. This perceived divide is seen as weakening the unity of tribes, leaving them vulnerable to outside exploitation.

The relationship between tribal communities and mainstream society often reflects deep-seated prejudices and an unwillingness to embrace tribal people as equals. Despite their contributions to culture and heritage, tribal individuals are frequently marginalized and treated as outsiders. This harsh reality becomes evident through the experience of Tessa, who accompanied a group of Paniyar folk artists to perform at a five-star resort. The event was supposed to be a celebration of talent and cultural heritage, with the troupe performing before an elite audience comprising public prosecutors of Kerala and their families. While their performance captivated the audience and earned applause, the treatment they received off-stage revealed the biases and discrimination that tribal communities face daily. From being stared at with disregard, to being served food in a dingy room instead of the dining hall, the entire experience highlighted the reluctance of many non-tribal individuals to accept tribal people as fellow beings.⁴⁷

Tribal Perspectives

In the colonial period, tribes were subjected to severe exploitation, forced displacement, and alienation. The British colonial administration often viewed tribes as “primitive” and “uncivilized”, justifying their exploitation and marginalization.⁴⁸ This view, ingrained in colonial policy, continued to shape the portrayal and treatment of tribal communities even in the post-colonial period. In the context of post-colonial

⁴⁷ <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/equality/time-spent-people-treated>

⁴⁸ https://sociology.sas.upenn.edu/node/7162?utm_source=chatgpt.com#:~:text

India, the status of tribal communities has remained one of marginalization. The tribals continue to face social, economic, and political exclusion, compounded by land alienation, cultural erosion, and lack of adequate representation. The Constitution of India recognized tribal communities but also upheld their exploitation under the guise of “civilization”. They were considered “wards of the state”, with special provisions for their welfare, yet their rights to land and resources were rarely honoured. Tribal communities, particularly those in regions like Northeast India, continued to hold onto their distinct customs, traditions, and laws, but were systematically undermined by both colonial and post-colonial systems.

Empowerment may be considered from different points of view. The *World Bank World Development Report* (2000-2001), considers empowerment as the basis to increase the ability of an individual or a group to make purposive choices and transform them into desired outcomes. The concept of empowerment traces its origin to the United States of America during the civil rights movement in the 1960s.⁴⁹ The notion was interpreted in various ways, and new meanings were added throughout the decades. At present, the term is even used in different sectors like business, development discourse, social work, and advocates of diverse political interests. Empowerment is an individual process of taking control of and responsibility for one’s life and situation, it is also a political process where disadvantaged are permitted human rights and social justice.

For individuals and communities, empowerment can be truly materialized only if necessary support and resources are provided by the government.⁵⁰ CK Janu⁵¹ stated “I have led tribal agitations for the past 26 years, from the Muthanga agitation⁵²

⁴⁹ EmmanuèleAnne Calves, ‘Empowerment: The History of a Key Concept in Contemporary Development Discourse’ *Revue Tiers-Monde*, 2009, pp.3-15.

⁵⁰ https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/what-can-governments-do-to-empower-poor-people-305513/?utm_source=chatgpt.com#:~:text=What%20Can%20Governments%20Do%20To%20Empower%20Poor%20People%3F

⁵¹ C. K. Janu is a tribal activist and leader of the Adivasi GothraMahaSabha (AGMS), known for her role in the 2001 Muthanga agitation for land rights and her continued advocacy for Adivasi empowerment in Kerala.

⁵² The Muthanga incident occurred in 2003 when Adivasis in Kerala, led by C.K. Janu, occupied the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary in protest against the government's failure to

to the Nilpusamaram in front of the State Secretariat. These protests have taught me that support from different ideological groups in the State or the promises of political leaders after each agitation, cannot be trusted to better the marginalised sections. Only political power can improve the wretched conditions of our tribal people”.⁵³

C.K. Janu believes that Adivasis, as the rightful owners of the land, have been historically marginalized and deprived of their basic rights. She emphasizes that successive governments have failed to address the root causes of their struggles, focusing instead on superficial measures. Janu highlights the neglect of Adivasis and Dalits in government policies, pointing out the inhumane conditions where Adivasis were forced to bury their dead in kitchens due to lack of land. Janu's core belief is encapsulated in her slogan: “The right to live in the land where we are born till death”⁵⁴. Her experiences of poverty, exploitation, and disillusionment with mainstream political parties shaped her activism. She observed that political movements often exploited Adivasi participation without addressing their issues, leading her to form independent organizations focused on tribal rights. The Muthanga agitation, according to Janu, arose from the failure to address starvation deaths among Adivasis. While the government initially promised free rations, Janu and her group argued that no government in the world could sustain a community by providing free food indefinitely. Instead, they demanded land rights as the only lasting solution to their problems, enabling them to work and earn their livelihoods independently.⁵⁵

Some educated tribal individuals argue that Christian missionaries, despite their efforts to uplift marginalized communities, have inadvertently contributed to the disempowerment of tribal people. They believe that the missionaries’ approach often undermines the cultural identity and traditional systems of governance that tribes have

fulfill its promise of land distribution to landless Adivasi families. The protest turned violent during a police eviction, highlighting the Adivasis' struggle for land rights and government neglect of their issues.

⁵³ *The Hindu*, 12th May 2016.

⁵⁴ Jérémie Gilbert, *Indigenous Peoples’ Land Rights Under International Law*, Transnational publishers, USA, 2006, p.70.

⁵⁵ South Asia Citizens Web, 18th March 2005.

preserved for generations. By introducing new religious beliefs and practices, missionaries are seen as eroding the spiritual and cultural foundations that form the backbone of tribal societies. This cultural alienation, they argue, disrupts the collective unity of tribes, leaving them more vulnerable to external influences and exploitation. Educated tribals often emphasize that true empowerment lies in strengthening their indigenous identity rather than replacing it with foreign ideologies.

Additionally, these individuals criticize the dependency created by missionary initiatives. While missionaries provide essential services such as education and healthcare, critics feel that this fosters a reliance on external actors rather than promoting self-sufficiency within tribal communities. They point out that by focusing on charity and welfare, missionaries may inadvertently weaken the agency of tribal people to demand systemic changes from the state or assert their rights to resources and autonomy. Instead of empowering tribes to build their capacities and reclaim their ancestral lands, these educated voices argue that missionary efforts often align with broader systems of control that perpetuate marginalization under the guise of welfare. They advocate for a more collaborative approach that prioritizes preserving tribal agency and self-reliance.

It is indeed a paradox that many of the critics of Christian missionary activities in tribal areas have themselves benefited from the initiatives launched by these missionaries. This duality stems from a complex relationship between empowerment and perceived cultural or social costs. Educated tribal individuals who have gained access to education, healthcare, or economic opportunities through missionary efforts often acknowledge these benefits while simultaneously critiquing the long-term effects of these interventions on their communities. Not all tribal perspectives align with the critique of Christian missionaries. Many tribal individuals and communities have positively acknowledged the transformative contributions made by missionaries, particularly the Jesuits, in tribal regions. These missionaries are credited with pioneering efforts in education, healthcare, and social reform, which have significantly uplifted marginalized tribal populations.

For instance, BabuR.N, field staff of TUDI, shared his thoughts positively: Under the leadership and cooperation of TUDI, we experienced a time of unity and happiness. I realized that focusing only on the educational aspect was limiting, especially when I saw the challenges and suffering caused by others. I became involved with TUDI in 1996 under the Kerala Jesuit Society, and since then, I have had nothing but positive experiences related to their work.⁵⁴

Another statement is from Anil Narikkodan who is also a staff of TUDI:

As a member of TUDI, I have countless experiences to share. I am a singer, and TUDI has played a significant role in nurturing my talent and encouraging me to grow. The skills we gained through TUDI have been passed on to the younger generation in our community, helping them develop as well. The organization places great importance on fostering friendships and promoting cultural and artistic learning, which has been truly enriching for all of us.⁵⁴

Preetha K. Veliyan, a graduate of Mercy College in Palakkad with a BA and a B.Ed from Kaniyabetta B.Ed Training College under Calicut University, speaks passionately about TUDI. She shares,

As a Paniya Adivasi student, who has grown significantly in the fields of education and social and cultural awareness, TUDI has played a monumental role in shaping my journey. In a public society, we never had the freedom, unity, and joy to work together as we do now. However, TUDI has given us all the independence we need. It has created a space where we can thrive, express ourselves, and work collaboratively without any fear or limitations. TUDI is like a mother's home for us. It has instilled in us the awareness that the culture, native wisdom, language, and traditions passed down by our ancestors truly belong to us. It is TUDI that has helped us reclaim this identity. We are no longer silent spectators to exploitation, oppression, or humiliation by others. TUDI provides us with a platform to stand up and voice our resistance against such injustices.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Special publication TUDI.*

Historians, particularly those from tribal communities, argue that the tribal history must be rewritten from their perspective, challenging the narratives shaped by colonial and dominant societal views. Tribal historiography has often been written from the perspectives of the privileged elites, and these historical accounts have portrayed the tribals as backward and inferior. Post-colonial historians assert that tribal history should reflect their unique experiences and cultural identity. It must address the impact of colonialism, including exploitation, land alienation, and the erosion of tribal ways of life. This requires a revision of traditional historical methods, reinterpreting texts and records from the dominant colonial viewpoint. Tribal communities are now seeking to assert their rights to land, culture, and autonomy, and their histories are critical in the fight for justice and recognition. The rewriting of tribal history is essential not only to reclaim their past but also to combat the on-going forms of neo-colonialism they face today.⁵⁷

Challenges

Despite their noble intentions, the work of missionaries in tribal areas has not been without challenges. One of the main obstacles is the slow pace of change, which often discourages some missionaries from continuing their efforts in these areas. The results of missionary work, especially in terms of long-term social transformation, tend to be gradual. The tribals, who have a strong sense of their cultural identity and autonomy, may view outside intervention with suspicion. As a result, while some communities embrace the work of missionaries, others remain indifferent or even hostile.

A notable example involves a tribal girl who, with the support of Jesuit priest, gained admission in Loyola College in Trivandrum. However, she returned to her home after just three days, unable to adapt to the unfamiliar environment and challenges of city life, far removed from her community. This incident highlights the intricate challenges of tribal development, particularly the cultural disconnect that

⁵⁷ L.Z Khongsai, "From Colonial to Postcolonial Mission Studies in India: A Methodological Assessment with Special Reference to Historical and Empirical Study Methods." *Academia*, p.32.

arises when tribal students enter mainstream educational institutions without sufficient preparation or support. Additionally, her reluctance to leave her familiar surroundings may have stemmed from other underlying factors, such as emotional ties, fear of isolation, or a lack of interest in relocating to a distant urban setting.⁵⁸

The slow pace of change and mixed responses from tribal communities have led to a situation where not all Jesuit missionaries are actively working among tribes. The challenges faced in terms of cultural acceptance, the adaptation of tribal students to urban life, and the limited impact of missionary work in certain areas have led some missionaries to focus their efforts elsewhere. The lack of immediate visible results, as well as the emotional toll of working in such a challenging environment, can sometimes lead to burnout and disillusionment.

The President of the South Asian Jesuit Conference, Fr. George Pattery, emphasized that the priority should be to shift from the current one-sided, one-dimensional developmental model, which is creating more vulnerable groups. He advocated for a more integrated and inclusive approach to development, highlighting that true development is achieved through real “*atmasantooshti*” (self-satisfaction). He expressed hope that the LokManch program would focus on achieving maximum “*atmaasantooshti*” for everyone involved.⁵⁹ Fr. Stany shared that the aim of reimagining Jesuit work is to make their ministries not just more effective, but also transformative. He mentioned that many leaders emphasized the need for spiritual and intellectual strength to make their mission successful. The focus is on being discerning, aware of the world around them, and understanding the signs of the times. This approach has been key to Jesuit work among tribal communities, where it is important to understand the changing needs and challenges. Over time, the Jesuit community has been growing into a space for teamwork and collaboration, which has

⁵⁸ Interview with Fr. Baby Chalil, 28th December 2019 at TUDI Centre.

⁵⁹ Document from Jesuit online Archives July 2019.

helped make their work with tribal people more inclusive and meaningful, focusing on both development and their cultural and spiritual needs.⁶⁰

A major challenge faced by Jesuit missionaries is internal criticism from members of the Christian community, who question why so much effort and financial support is directed towards tribal groups when they already receive assistance from government schemes and NGOs. Many Christian groups argue that missionary efforts should focus on strengthening the socio-economic conditions of existing Christian populations rather than aiding tribal communities, especially those who have not converted to Christianity. This creates tensions within church-based organizations, leading to resistance from Christian leaders and parishioners who believe that resources should be allocated exclusively to Christian welfare.

Scholars have highlighted this internal division within the Christian community regarding the priorities of missionary work. According to Rowena Robinson (2003) in *Christians of India*⁶¹ many established Christian communities feel that tribal development efforts divert church resources away from their own struggles, particularly in regions where Christians themselves are socio-economically disadvantaged. Similarly, Christophe Jaffrelot (2010) in *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India*⁶² discusses how missionary organizations face resistance from mainstream Christian groups when prioritizing tribal welfare over church-related activities. Another significant challenge arises from the reluctance of certain Christian landowners and estate holders to accept the economic and social progress of tribal people, particularly the Paniya community in Wayanad.⁶³ Historically, Paniyas worked as agricultural labourers (“*thozhilikal*”) on farms and estates, often under exploitative conditions. However, with the introduction of government welfare schemes, Jesuit missionary efforts, education, and access to modern technology, many

⁶⁰ Jesuit online Archives Feb, 2022.

⁶¹ Rowena Robinson, *Christians of India*. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp.19-21.

⁶² Christophe Jaffrelot *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India*, Primus Books, Delhi, 2010, pp.16-21.

⁶³ Interview with K.A Abraham, near Eachome, 13th August 2022.

Paniyas are opting out of low-wage agricultural labour. Instead of continuing as dependent workers, they are pursuing alternative livelihoods, using mobile technology for financial transactions, and benefiting from state-funded development programs.

This shift has disrupted traditional economic structures, leading to frustration among Christian landowners who struggle to find cheap labour for their agricultural estates. Some even express resentment towards missionary efforts, arguing that uplifting tribal communities reduces the availability of daily wage labourers, thereby impacting the profitability of their farmlands. Felix Padel and Samarendra Das (2010) in *Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*⁶⁴ discuss how economic independence among tribals is often met with opposition from dominant landholding communities, who perceive their empowerment as a threat to established labour systems. Similarly, Virginius Xaxa (1999) in *Transformation of Tribes in India: Terms of Discourse*⁶⁵ explains how tribal access to government support programs often creates resentment among non-tribal employers, who rely on their labour for economic stability.

Beyond economic concerns, the social perception of tribal upliftment as a disruption to traditional hierarchies further complicates the work of missionaries. Many Christian community members who historically viewed the Paniyas as an underprivileged labour class now struggle to accept their growing financial independence and self-sufficiency. There is a prevailing belief that tribal communities should remain in their historical roles as workers, rather than rising to economic equality with landowners.⁶⁶ This perception is reinforced by statements from estate owners who claim that government funding and technological access should not be extended to tribal people, as it disrupts the existing social order. Anthropologists and

⁶⁴ Felix Padel and Samarendra Das, in *Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 38-42.

⁶⁵ Virginius Xaxa, *Transformation of Tribes in India: Terms of Discourse*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 34, No. 24, 1999, pp. 1519-1524.

⁶⁶ Luisa Steur, *Indigenist Mobilization: Confronting Electoral Communism and Precarious Livelihoods in Post-Reform Kerala*. Germany, Berghahn Books, New York, 2017, pp. 291-298.

sociologists have examined this phenomenon in multiple studies. For example, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival*⁶⁷ discusses how tribal access to government subsidies, mobile technology, and economic development programs is often met with hostility from dominant communities, who feel that such progress weakens their control over labour markets. Similarly, Ramachandra Guha (1999) in *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals, and India* highlights how traditional power structures within rural communities are often challenged when tribals gain financial independence, leading to opposition from landowning and dominant groups.⁶⁸

One of the major challenges faced by the Jesuit congregation in working among tribal communities is the shortage of missionaries dedicated to these efforts. While the Jesuits have a long history of engaging with marginalized communities, several factors contribute to the declining number of missionaries willing to work among tribals. These challenges range from the demand for immediate results, internal differences in program implementation, and a general decline in missionary vocations. A significant reason for the declining number of missionaries engaging in tribal work is the desire for quick and visible results. Many Jesuit missionaries are driven by the expectation that their work should lead to immediate social, economic, and religious transformation in tribal communities. However, tribal development is a long-term process, requiring years of consistent effort in education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. Some missionaries become frustrated when they do not see rapid progress in improving tribal living conditions.

Furthermore, tribal communities often resist external influences and prefer gradual social changes over sudden interventions. According to Walter Fernandes in *The Indigenous Question: Search for an Identity*,⁶⁹ many development efforts fail

⁶⁷ Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982, pp. 49-51.

⁶⁸ Ramachandra Guha, *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals and India*. India, Random House Publishers India Pvt. Limited, 1999, pp.28-57.

⁶⁹ Walter Fernandes (ed.), *The Indigenous Question: Search for an Identity*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1993, pp.21-25.

when they are not aligned with the cultural and social structures of indigenous people. Missionaries who expect instant results may become disillusioned and abandon tribal missions in favour of other forms of pastoral work where the impact is more immediately visible.

Another key challenge is the internal disagreements among Jesuit missionaries regarding the best approach to tribal development. Some missionaries advocate for integrationist policies, where tribal communities are encouraged to assimilate into mainstream society through education and economic reforms. Others, however, believe in preserving tribal culture and identity, promoting self-sufficiency and indigenous governance rather than external intervention.⁷⁰

These philosophical and strategic differences often lead to conflicts within Jesuit mission teams. As Christophe Jaffrelot (2010) points out in *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India*,⁷¹ debates within missionary organizations about whether to prioritize social work or religious conversion have led to divisions and reduced enthusiasm among missionaries. Some missionaries leave tribal missions because they feel their approach is not being supported, leading to an overall decline in personnel working in these areas.

The Jesuit congregation, like many other religious orders, is facing a general decline in new vocations. Fewer young men are joining the priesthood, and even fewer are choosing to work in difficult, remote tribal areas. Many prefer assignments in urban parishes, educational institutions, or administrative roles rather than taking on the physical and emotional challenges of tribal missions. Additionally, younger missionaries often struggle to adapt to the harsh conditions of tribal regions, where access to modern amenities is limited. Living among tribal communities requires a deep commitment to simplicity, cultural adaptation, and long-term engagement, which many find difficult. According to Felix Padel and Samarendra Das (2010) in

⁷⁰ Former Jesuit priest (not ready to disclose his identity).

⁷¹ Christophe Jaffrelot, *op.cit.*

Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel,⁷² missionary work in tribal areas requires an immersive approach, often conflicting with the modern preference for short-term, high-impact projects.

Some Hindus oppose Christian missionary work among tribal communities due to several concerns, primarily centred on the methods and intentions of the missionaries. One of the main issues is the aggressive proselytization in tribal areas, where missionaries are often accused of using incentives to convert vulnerable individuals. These conversions are seen as a direct attack on the tribal communities' long-standing Hindu beliefs and practices. Hindu groups are particularly upset by the missionaries' insistence that new converts abandon the worship of Hindu deities, which is an essential part of tribal identity and tradition. Tribal identity and tradition share some cultural similarities with Hinduism but remain distinct in their religious beliefs and practices.⁷³ Missionaries often tell converts that they cannot follow both Hinduism and Christianity, leading to a decline in participation in Hindu festivals and religious ceremonies. This undermines the tribal community's cultural practices, causing friction and social divisions. In small villages, where family and community bonds are strong, such actions can isolate converts and disrupt the social fabric.

There is also the issue of identity. Some Hindu groups claim that Christian tribals hide their conversion status to benefit from government schemes meant for Hindu Scheduled Tribes.⁷⁴ The social upliftment efforts made by missionaries in tribal areas are seen as challenging the traditional social structure. Missionary programs, which promote awareness of caste discrimination and social justice, are viewed by

⁷² Felix Padel and Samarendra Das, *op.cit.*

⁷³ Virginius Xaxa, 'Tribes as Indigenous People of India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 34, no. 51, 1999, pp. 3589-3595.

⁷⁴ https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/vasava-tribals-who-convert-will-be-denied-reservation-benefits-7624570/?utm_source=chatgpt.com#:~:text=Premium, 16th November 2021

some as a threat to the existing caste system, particularly by upper-caste Hindus. This perceived challenge to the social order fuels the opposition to missionary activities.

Graham Staines, an Australian Christian missionary, dedicated his life to serving leprosy patients in Odisha but was brutally burned alive along with his two sons in 1999 by religious extremists.⁷⁵ Stan Swamy, a Jesuit priest and human rights activist, fought for Adivasi rights in Jharkhand but was arrested under anti-terror laws in 2020 and died in custody due to medical neglect.⁷⁶ Both cases highlight the persecution faced by Christian missionaries in India, including violence, false accusations, and legal crackdowns. Despite these challenges, many missionaries continue their humanitarian work, focusing on social justice, education, and healthcare.

There are allegations that Christian missionaries indirectly support Maoists in tribal areas by influencing local communities. Critics argue that missionaries' focus on empowering tribal communities through education, healthcare, and advocacy for land rights often aligns with anti-state sentiments. By highlighting the alienation, exploitation, and displacement of tribals caused by government policies, missionaries are accused of fostering resentment against the state, creating an environment conducive to Maoist ideologies. This narrative further gains ground in regions where state development initiatives have failed to meet basic needs, leaving a vacuum. However, this assumption overlooks the fact that many tribals support infrastructure projects for practical reasons, despite the pressure from Maoist forces. Moreover, some point to the ideological overlap between missionaries and Maoists in critiquing state policies, particularly regarding resource alienation and land rights.

⁷⁵ Ram Puniyani (ed.), *The Politics Behind Anti Christian Violence: A Compilation of Investigation Committee Reports Into Acts of Violence Against the Christian Minorities*. Media House, 2006, pp.304-479.

⁷⁶ Arockia Rayappan, 'Stan Swamy: Martyr of the Adivasis in India', *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 2022, pp.486-502.

Missionaries' advocacy for tribal autonomy and their criticism of displacement due to industrial projects echo Maoist opposition to state-backed development initiatives. This similarity is often misinterpreted as direct support, although missionaries primarily focus on social justice and welfare rather than insurgency or violence. However, evidence contradicts the claim that missionaries intentionally aid Maoists. Missionary efforts are largely centred on uplifting marginalized communities by addressing gaps left by the state. While their work may inadvertently align with some Maoist criticisms of government policies, missionaries actively promote development and peace rather than conflict. For instance, their support for education and healthcare strengthens tribal resilience and self-sufficiency, which are not goals aligned with Maoist agendas of prolonged insurgency. An example that fuels the debate over allegations against Christian missionaries is the incident in Wayanad district, where the district collector imposed a ban on TUDI in 2012 hosting annual tribal festivals. Critics alleged that such events, often supported by missionary groups, were being used as platforms to express anti-state sentiments. This led to accusations that missionaries, through such cultural interventions, were indirectly creating a narrative of resistance that aligned with Maoist ideologies.

In India, Christian missionaries have long been involved in efforts aimed at social change and the upliftment of marginalized communities, rather than focusing solely on conversion. The Census data reveals that despite decades of missionary presence and activity, the Christian population in India has shown minimal growth—only a slight decline from 2.34% in 2001 to 2.30% in 2011. This indicates that the primary aim of missionaries is not to increase religious numbers, but rather to address social issues such as poverty, illiteracy, and caste discrimination. Missionaries have been instrumental in providing education, healthcare, and social services to disadvantaged groups, particularly in tribal and rural areas. By working in the communities, often in the most neglected regions, they have contributed significantly to improving the quality of life for the underprivileged, without the primary objective of religious conversion. A. K. Ramanujan opined that “India's pluralistic society is

built on the foundation of coexistence and mutual respect among its diverse cultures and religions”.⁷⁷ While the contributions of missionary work in providing education, healthcare, and social services are undeniable, the critical issue lies in ensuring that such activities remain respectful of the cultural and religious identities of the communities they serve. The right to religious freedom, enshrined in the Constitution of India, must be preserved, but it must also be protected from exploitation by any group, be it through material incentives or coercion.

⁷⁷ Anamika, ‘Diasporic Concerns in a. K. Ramanujan’s Writings’, *The Creative Launcher*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 2019, pp. 39–43.

Conclusion

Post-Colonialism is the study of how colonial rule has affected societies even after gaining independence. It looks at the long-lasting impact of colonialism on culture, politics, economy, and identity. Even though colonial powers left, their influence remained in different ways, shaping the lives of people in former colonies. One of the key influences of post-colonial policies in Malabar was land reform, which aimed to address colonial-era inequalities. Under British rule, systems like “Zamindari”, “Jenmi”, and “Verumpattam” concentrated land among landlords, reinforced by laws such as the Permanent Settlement and Malabar Tenancy Acts. The Kerala Land Reforms Act (1963), implemented in the 1970s, abolished landlordism, granting ownership to 1.5 million tenants and issuing “*pattayam*” (land deeds) to small farmers. However, Adivasis, historically not tenant farmers, gained little. The 1975 Tribal Land Act, meant to restore their lands, faced opposition, leaving many Adivasis landless and marginalized.

The economy of Malabar changed after independence, but some colonial patterns remained. The government encouraged industrialization and development, but agriculture remained focused on cash crops like pepper, coconut, and tea—similar to British times. This meant Malabar’s economy was still dependent on global markets. Due to limited industrial investment, many people migrated to Gulf countries from the 1970s onward. While this migration brought economic benefits, it also increased dependence on foreign remittances, showing that colonial-era economic weaknesses were not fully addressed. After independence, Kerala made great progress in education, expanding schools and colleges. Malabar benefited from this focus on literacy and learning. However, the education system remained largely unchanged from colonial times, emphasizing bookish knowledge over practical skills. This led to high educated unemployment, as students were prepared for government jobs rather than technical or vocational work. English-medium education also retained its

colonial prestige, creating a gap between the English-speaking elite and those educated in local languages, reinforcing social divisions.

The idea of post-colonialism became important in the mid-20th century when many countries in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean gained independence. Thinkers like Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961), Aimé Césaire (*Discourse on Colonialism*, 1950), and Albert Memmi (*The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 1957) wrote about the struggles of people who had been under colonial rule. They showed how colonialism not only controlled land and resources but also shaped the way people saw themselves. Many former colonies struggled with political instability, economic dependency, and cultural confusion after independence. Post-colonial studies focus on how these societies resist, adapt to, and reclaim their own traditions and identities after years of foreign rule.

In 1978, Edward Said's book *Orientalism* changed the way people thought about colonial history. He explained how European countries described the East as exotic, backward, and uncivilized to justify their rule. Later scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha expanded post-colonial studies by discussing how colonized people created their own ways of resisting colonial rule while also being influenced by it.

Even today, post-colonialism is important because many problems caused by colonial rule still exist. For example, in India, laws, land policies, and governance systems from British rule continue to affect society. Economic dependence on former colonial powers, political interference, and cultural influences has still shape many countries. The British introduced the Permanent Settlement System (1793), which made the Zamindars the primary landowners, leaving peasants as tenants and causing long-term land inequalities. India still follows the Westminster Parliamentary System and Common Law Legal System, which were inherited from British rule. The colonial trade pattern continues, as India exports raw materials like cotton and tea while importing expensive manufactured goods from Western countries. Post-colonialism helps us to understand these issues and how societies continue to fight for true independence in all aspects of life.

Even after Indian Independence in 1947, India continued to experience the deep-rooted influence of colonial rule. While political freedom was achieved, the structures of governance, economic policies, and social hierarchies inherited from the British remained largely unchanged. This was particularly evident in how the Indian government formulated policies for tribal communities. Many of these policies reflected a colonial mindset—viewing tribes as “backward” groups in need of state intervention rather than recognizing their autonomy, traditions, and rights over land and resources.

Colonial Influence on Tribal Policies

During British rule, the administration followed a dual approach towards tribal communities: isolation and control. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 classified many tribal groups as "criminals" by birth, disrupting their traditional livelihoods. The Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878 restricted tribal access to forests, which were their primary source of sustenance. These laws reflected the colonial state's economic priorities, which prioritized revenue generation over indigenous rights.

Scholars like Verrier Elwin, an anthropologist who worked closely with Indian tribes, criticized British policies for their exploitative nature. However, his early ideas of tribal isolation later influenced India's post-independence tribal policies, reinforcing the notion that tribals should be protected rather than empowered. In contrast, G.S. Ghurye, a sociologist, argued that integration was necessary for their progress. This debate shaped how post-colonial India approached tribal policies—oscillating between protection and assimilation.

Tribal Policies: Colonial Continuities

1. **Land Rights and Forest Policies:** The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 continued colonial restrictions by prioritizing state control over forests, limiting tribal rights. Though the Forest Rights Act of 2006 attempted to restore land rights to tribes, its implementation remains slow and riddled with bureaucratic hurdles. Ramachandra Guha, a historian and environmentalist, points out that forest policies in India still reflect a colonial legacy where

tribals are seen as intruders rather than rightful inhabitants of their ancestral lands.

2. **Assimilation vs. Autonomy:** Government schemes for tribal welfare often focus on "mainstreaming" rather than recognizing their distinct way of life. The Ashram Schools introduced for tribal education were modelled after British missionary education and aimed at "civilizing" tribals rather than promoting indigenous knowledge. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, a well-known anthropologist, criticized such policies, arguing that they undermined tribal self-sufficiency and led to cultural erosion.
3. **Economic Marginalization:** Large-scale development projects, such as dams, mines, and industries, have led to the massive displacement of tribal communities. Projects like the Sardar Sarovar Dam and coal mining in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have forced thousands of tribals off their ancestral lands. Social scientist Walter Fernandes estimates that, since independence, over 40% of those displaced by development projects have been tribals, highlighting their continued economic marginalization.
4. **Political Representation and Bureaucratic Control:** While India has reserved seats for Scheduled Tribes in legislatures, decision-making for tribal affairs remains in the hands of non-tribal bureaucrats. The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), meant to ensure adequate budgetary allocation for tribal welfare, often suffers from fund diversion and poor implementation. B.D. Sharma, former Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, argued that the Indian administration continues to treat tribals as subjects of governance rather than as active participants in policy-making.

The Kerala government has implemented numerous programs over the decades to enhance tribal literacy, healthcare, land rights, and social upliftment. Initiatives such as Model Residential Schools (1975), Ashram Schools (1982), the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme (1996), Vidya Jyothi Scheme (2002), and Smart Gurukulam (2017) were introduced to improve educational opportunities

for tribal communities. Similarly, the Forest Rights Act (2006), Oorukoottam (2012), and Mission 1000(2017) aimed at securing land rights for tribals.

In the healthcare sector, programs like Tribal Health Centers (1960), Aardram Mission – Tribal Clinics (2008), Amritham Health Insurance (2010), JananiJanmaraksha Scheme (2015), and GothraArogyaKendram (2019) sought to improve access to medical facilities. Additionally, Total Literacy Campaign (1990), GothraBandhu Scheme (1995), Aksharasree Program (2010), and Gothra Kala Kendram (2018) played a role in enhancing literacy among tribal populations.

Despite these efforts, many programs failed to achieve their intended objectives due to unsystematic implementation, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and lack of community participation. Studies indicate that these initiatives often reflected colonial continuities, where development remained top-down and externally driven, failing to address the structural challenges that tribal communities face. Against this backdrop, this study, titled *Addressing the Question of Tribal Life in Post-Colonial India: The Case of Jesuit Mission in Post-Colonial Malabar*, explores the role of Jesuit missionaries in tribal life, assessing their contributions to education, healthcare, and social transformation.

The first chapter, “Evolution of Tribal Life in India: Historical Developments and Policy Interventions”, reveals how tribal societies historically functioned in self-sufficient ways before facing increasing pressures from external forces. It traced the impact of colonial and post-colonial policies on tribal communities, highlighted how land reforms, economic integration, and government schemes often failed to address the root causes of marginalization.

The second chapter, “Jesuit Legacy in Malabar: From Colonial Roots to Post-Colonial period”, examined the arrival and expansion of Jesuit missionary activities, illustrating how their early focus on religious conversion and education evolved into broader social interventions. It discussed the shifting objectives of Jesuit missions from the colonial to the post-colonial period, reflecting their adaptation to changing socio-political landscapes.

The third chapter, “Jesuit Intervention with Tribal Communities in Post-Colonial Malabar”, sheds light on specific Jesuit-led initiatives aimed at tribal upliftment, particularly through education, cooperative farming, and cultural preservation. It highlighted the establishment of institutions like TUDI and AADI, emphasizing their role in promoting self-reliance and tribal identity while addressing economic challenges.

The fourth chapter, “Perspectives and Challenges to Jesuits’ Work in Tribal Malabar”, delves into the obstacles faced by Jesuit missions, including resistance from dominant social groups, internal conflicts over the approach to tribal integration, and the declining presence of missionaries in tribal areas. It critically assesses the broader implications of Jesuit interventions within the socio-economic and political landscape of tribal development.

Through this structured analysis, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the Jesuit missions’ role in post-colonial Malabar, offering insights into both their contributions and the challenges they encountered in the pursuit of tribal empowerment.

The Jesuit missionaries played a significant role in shaping the social and cultural life of post-colonial Malabar, continuing a legacy that had begun during the colonial period. Their presence in Kerala, particularly in Malabar, dates back centuries, and their influence extended beyond religious activities to various aspects of social reform. During colonial rule, they actively engaged with marginalized communities, especially the fishing communities and Dalits, addressing their struggles by providing food, clothing, and medicine. However, their social work was closely tied to their mission of religious conversion. Sometimes, they collaborated with the colonial administration, which viewed indigenous populations as “uncivilized” and believed it was their duty to “civilize” them. This mind-set, rooted in the colonial ideology of the “white man’s burden”, led to the imposition of foreign cultural practices, often at the cost of local traditions and indigenous ways of life.

With India's independence, there was widespread hope that colonial structures and attitudes would disappear, and that the new government would bring real change to all sections of society, including tribal communities. However, in many cases, people felt that the shadow of colonialism still lingered in governance, policies, and social institutions. Despite this, the work of Jesuit missionaries in post-colonial Malabar underwent a major transformation. Unlike their earlier approach, this was deeply intertwined with colonial ideologies, their post-independence efforts focused more on social upliftment than on religious conversion. They gradually moved away from practices that mirrored colonial control and instead directed their efforts toward education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.

First, the approach of Jesuit missionaries toward marginalized communities in post-colonial Malabar underwent a significant transformation. While their work during colonial rule was largely dictated by foreign perspectives, post-independence, their initiatives became more aligned with the actual needs of marginalized communities. By promoting education, skill development, and access to healthcare, they played a crucial role in improving the socio-economic conditions of those who had long been oppressed. Their work helped dismantle several colonial-era practices that had kept these communities in a cycle of poverty and dependence. Thus, while the post-colonial state struggled to fully eradicate colonial legacies, the Jesuit missionaries in Malabar demonstrated a significant departure from their past methods. Over time, their role evolved from being enforcers of foreign influence to active contributors to social change. This shift marked a crucial moment in history, as it signalled the possibility of breaking free from colonial-era oppression and creating a more just and equitable society.

Second, the relationship between Jesuit missionaries and tribal culture marks a major difference between their colonial and post-colonial approaches. During the colonial period, Jesuits often imposed non-tribal cultural practices on indigenous communities, disrupting their traditional way of life. While this was not a significant issue in Malabar—where Jesuit activities were largely focused on Dalit and fishing communities—it was a common experience among tribal populations outside Kerala.

The forced imposition of foreign customs created tensions and made life difficult for many indigenous groups under colonial rule. In contrast, Jesuit engagement with tribal communities in post-colonial Malabar has been marked by mutual respect and acceptance. Rather than attempting to change tribal culture, they now work towards its preservation and revival. Their initiatives, particularly through TUDI and AADI centers, have provided platforms for sustaining and celebrating tribal traditions. These centres regularly host cultural programs, including “*Kalasangam*” (tribal cultural forums), annual tribal *melas* (festivals), and discussions on indigenous knowledge systems. By organizing such events, Jesuits actively contribute to the restoration of tribal identity, ensuring that traditional art, music, rituals, and customs continue to thrive. Unlike their colonial predecessors, who sought to assimilate indigenous communities into non-tribal ways of life, contemporary Jesuits foster an environment where tribal communities feel a sense of ownership and pride in their heritage. The warm reception they receive from these communities is a testament to this transformation. Instead of being agents of cultural disruption, they have become facilitators of cultural sustainability, marking a significant departure from their colonial-era practices.

Third, a key distinction between the colonial and post-colonial activities of Jesuit missionaries in Malabar is their shift away from promoting religious conversion. During the colonial period, conversion was a central objective of Jesuit missions. A notable example is Fr. Joseph TaffraelSJ, who worked among the Dalit communities of Mattul, Madayi, and Pazhayangadi. He required them to attend Holy Mass before providing food and clothing, which ultimately led to their conversion to Christianity. The Chirakkal and Mattul missions serve as prominent examples of Jesuit-led conversion efforts in Malabar during this time. However, in post-colonial Malabar, Jesuits no longer actively encourage conversion. Several factors contributed to this shift, the most significant being that present-day Jesuit missionaries in Kerala are themselves Indian. Unlike their colonial predecessors, they emphasize interreligious dialogue and respect for indigenous spiritual traditions. During data collection, tribal communities consistently stated that whenever a program was initiated in a TUDI or AADI, their *moopan* (elder or leader) performed the traditional

rituals. Despite their close association with Jesuit missionaries, none of them recalled being introduced to the teachings of Jesus Christ, further reinforcing the shift away from proselytization. This fundamental change highlights the transformation of Jesuit engagement with tribal life in post-colonial Malabar, moving from a focus on religious conversion to a more inclusive approach centred on social empowerment and cultural respect.

Fourth, the promotion of education among tribal communities stands out as a significant contribution of the Jesuit missionaries. During the colonial period, particularly in North Malabar, Jesuits established several schools primarily for Dalit communities, introducing them to Western education. However, the curriculum was often rigid, forcing students to study subjects they had little interest in, leading to disengagement and resistance toward formal education. In the post-colonial period, Jesuits have continued their educational mission in Malabar but with a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach. They now operate numerous educational institutions, placing special emphasis on tribal education. One of their most successful initiatives in this regard is “*KurinjiPookal*”, a program designed to reduce school dropout rates among tribal children. Recognizing that language barriers often contribute to reluctance in attending school, Jesuits have adopted a more effective strategy—providing early education in tribal languages. This approach has proven to be highly beneficial in improving school retention rates, ensuring that tribal children feel comfortable and engaged in their learning environment.

Fifth, political awareness and social upliftment of tribal communities have become key areas of focus for Jesuit missionaries in post-colonial Malabar. During the colonial period, depressed classes, including Dalits and tribal communities, faced severe exploitation at the hands of landlords, bureaucrats, and colonial authorities. However, Jesuit missionaries largely remained silent on these issues. Their role was limited to providing shelter and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a means of offering a better life. This reluctance to engage in political activism may have been influenced by their position within Malabar’s colonial framework. Since Malabar was under British rule, which favoured Protestant missionaries, Jesuits—many of whom

were of Italian origin—had little political influence and refrained from confronting the colonial government. In the post-colonial period, however, Jesuit missionaries have taken an active role in advocating for the political rights of tribal communities. Unlike their predecessors, they no longer distance themselves from socio-political struggles but stand in solidarity with tribal groups in their fight for justice. A significant example of this shift is the participation of Jesuit missionaries in the Plachimada struggle, where they supported tribal communities in their protest against corporate exploitation of natural resources. Additionally, they have been vocal in demanding the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), which seeks to restore land and legal rights to indigenous communities.

Sixth, ecological preservation is another significant contribution of Jesuit missionaries in post-colonial Malabar. Forests have traditionally been the habitat of tribal communities, providing them with sustenance and cultural identity. However, forest protection policies in Kerala have undergone various changes over time, often to the detriment of indigenous groups. Large areas of tribal land were encroached upon for plantations, leading to the displacement and marginalization of tribal populations. As a result, many indigenous communities found them cornered, struggling to maintain their traditional way of life. Recognizing the deep connection between tribal communities and their environment, Jesuit missionaries have taken proactive steps toward ecological restoration and sustainable livelihoods. A remarkable initiative in this regard is the AADI project, where Jesuits purchased 22 acres of barren land and transformed it into a thriving forested area. This initiative not only revitalized the environment but also created opportunities for tribal people to sustain their livelihoods within a restored ecosystem. By integrating afforestation with community-based employment, Jesuits have provided a model for ecological conservation that respects tribal rights and traditions. Additionally, the *Tarumitra* project, another Jesuit-led initiative, serves as a powerful example of their commitment to environmental protection. This project promotes ecological awareness and afforestation efforts, encouraging sustainable practices among both tribal and non-tribal communities. Through such initiatives, Jesuit missionaries in post-colonial Malabar have redefined their role from religious educators to active environmental

stewards, ensuring that tribal communities not only reclaim their land but also regain their self-sufficiency and dignity.

Seventh, Jesuit missionaries in post-colonial Malabar have actively promoted tribal empowerment through various community-driven programs. To support this, they have appointed educated tribal individuals as animators, enabling them to work within their own communities and address their specific needs effectively. One of their most impactful strategies has been appointing educated tribal individuals as animators, who work directly within their own communities. This approach has proven highly effective, as it ensures that tribal people themselves play a central role in identifying the needs and aspirations of their students and families. By placing decision-making power in the hands of the community, Jesuits have fostered a sense of ownership and agency among tribal groups. A key aspect of this empowerment process is the shift from dependency on external aid to skill-based self-reliance. Unlike in the past, where marginalized groups were often provided with free goods and services without long-term solutions, Jesuits now prioritize vocational training over mere hand-outs. Recognizing the need for diverse career opportunities, they have expanded training programs to include a wide range of trades, such as carpentry, plumbing, tailoring, masonry, and digital literacy. These initiatives equip tribal youth with practical skills that enhance their employability, ensuring they can secure stable livelihoods either within their local communities or in nearby towns. The establishment of vocational training centres, particularly the first one at *Elachivazhi*, has played a crucial role in this effort. These centres offer hands-on training in various crafts, providing tribal youth with sustainable alternatives to traditional occupations that may no longer be viable due to land loss and economic changes.

Despite their significant contributions, Jesuit missionaries in post-colonial Malabar continue to face several challenges in sustaining and expanding their work among tribal communities. A critical issue is the shortage of missionaries actively engaged in tribal regions, which affects the continuity and effectiveness of their initiatives. Additionally, linguistic and cultural barriers, resistance from traditional tribal leadership, and infrastructural limitations in remote areas pose considerable

difficulties. Governmental restrictions and evolving legal frameworks further complicate their efforts, sometimes limiting the scope of their interventions.

To overcome these challenges, a more collaborative and participatory approach is essential. Strengthening partnerships between Jesuit missionaries, tribal leaders, and government agencies can ensure that developmental programs are both culturally sensitive and community-driven. Future initiatives should prioritize participatory development, where tribal voices are actively included in decision-making processes, aligning interventions with their needs and aspirations rather than imposing external solutions. A truly decolonized approach would involve recognizing tribal self-governance, respecting their land and cultural rights, and ensuring that development policies are shaped by tribal voices rather than imposed from above. As Mahasweta Devi, an activist and writer, has highlighted in her works *Aranyer Adhikar* (Rights of the Forest) and *Chotti Munda and His Arrows*, real progress for tribals will only come when they are allowed to define their own future.¹ Until these changes occur, the post-colonial condition of India's tribes will continue to reflect the unfinished struggle against colonial legacies.

A comprehensive understanding of Jesuit missionary engagement with tribal communities in India would be complete only if studies on other regional missions were carried out as well. However, such an extensive comparative investigation lies beyond the scope of the present study. Based on a post-colonial perspective, this study has examined how Jesuit missionaries operated within the framework of colonial and post-colonial power structures, and how their work influenced tribal identities, social relations, and cultural transformations in the Malabar region. Future research could extend this inquiry by adopting a similar theoretical lens to analyse Jesuit activities across different provinces in India. Since Jesuit missions function under distinct provincial jurisdictions, a comparative study would reveal how regional variations shaped missionary strategies, theological interpretations, and interactions with local

¹ Antara Saha, "Tribal sustenance and survival: postcolonial ecofeminism in mahasweta devi's chotti munda and his arrow." *Social Values and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1, Mar. 2023, pp. 25-29.

communities. Such research, informed by post-colonial critique, would deepen our understanding of the enduring legacies of missionary work and its role in negotiating power, culture, and identity among tribal populations. The present study, therefore, recommends these larger questions for future exploration.

Suggestions

Based on the study's findings, it is evident that while Jesuit missionaries have played a transformative role in addressing tribal life in post-colonial Malabar, a more inclusive and sustainable approach is necessary for long-term progress. Government policies must move beyond welfare-oriented provisions and actively promote tribal self-determination, ensuring that development efforts do not replicate colonial patterns of control. Many initiatives continue to function in a top-down manner, limiting the agency of tribal communities in shaping their own futures. Jesuit interventions should prioritize cultural sensitivity and long-term community empowerment rather than short-term relief, fostering self-reliance instead of dependency. Additionally, strengthening tribal rights, particularly in land ownership, education, and economic opportunities, is crucial to ensuring their social and economic well-being. Development initiatives must be participatory and respect indigenous traditions, allowing tribal communities to lead their own progress. By fostering an equitable and respectful engagement with tribal populations, both government and missionary efforts can contribute to the sustainable upliftment of these marginalized communities while preserving their cultural heritage for future generations.

Glossary

<i>Adhimavasi</i>	:	<i>Indigenous people</i>
<i>Adivasi Pattu</i>	:	<i>Tribal Song</i>
<i>Assistancies</i>	:	global network of Jesuits division into geographic regions
<i>Atmasantooshti</i>	:	self-satisfaction
<i>Badaga</i>	:	agricultural community in Nilgiri Hills
<i>Benami</i>	:	property or transactions conducted in the name of someone who is not the real owner.
<i>Gotra</i>	:	<i>Indigenous community</i>
<i>Jan NetritvaPahalManch</i>	:	Forum for People's Leadership Initiatives
<i>Janmam</i>	:	form of landlordism
<i>Jhum cultivation</i>	:	slash-and-burn agriculture
<i>Kadar</i>	:	indigenous tribal community
<i>Kanam</i>	:	a type of intermediate land tenure arrangement between the landlord (Janmi) and the tenant.
<i>kuri</i>	:	<i>A traditional umbrella made of palm leaves</i>
<i>Kundalpani</i>	:	<i>Bonded Labour</i>
<i>MahilaSamajams</i>	:	women's groups
<i>Novitiate</i>	:	A novitiate is a training center where Jesuit novices undergo spiritual and theological formation before taking their vows.
<i>Paranghi</i>	:	<i>Portuguese</i>
<i>Pattam</i>	:	rent paid by a tenant to the landlord
<i>Pavangalude Achen</i>	:	<i>Father of the Poor</i>
<i>Poonool</i>	:	sacred thread wear by Brahmins

<i>PowravakasaVedi</i>	:	Forum for Citizen's Rights
<i>Raja Sannyasi</i>	:	<i>Royal ascetic</i>
<i>SamooahaPadanamuri</i>	:	Community Study Centres
<i>SocietasJesu</i>	:	<i>Society of Jesus</i>
<i>Vaidyas</i>	:	traditional healers
<i>Valia Padre</i>	:	<i>Great priest</i>
<i>Vanavasi</i>	:	<i>Forest dwellers</i>
<i>Vasthradaranam</i>	:	<i>clothing</i>

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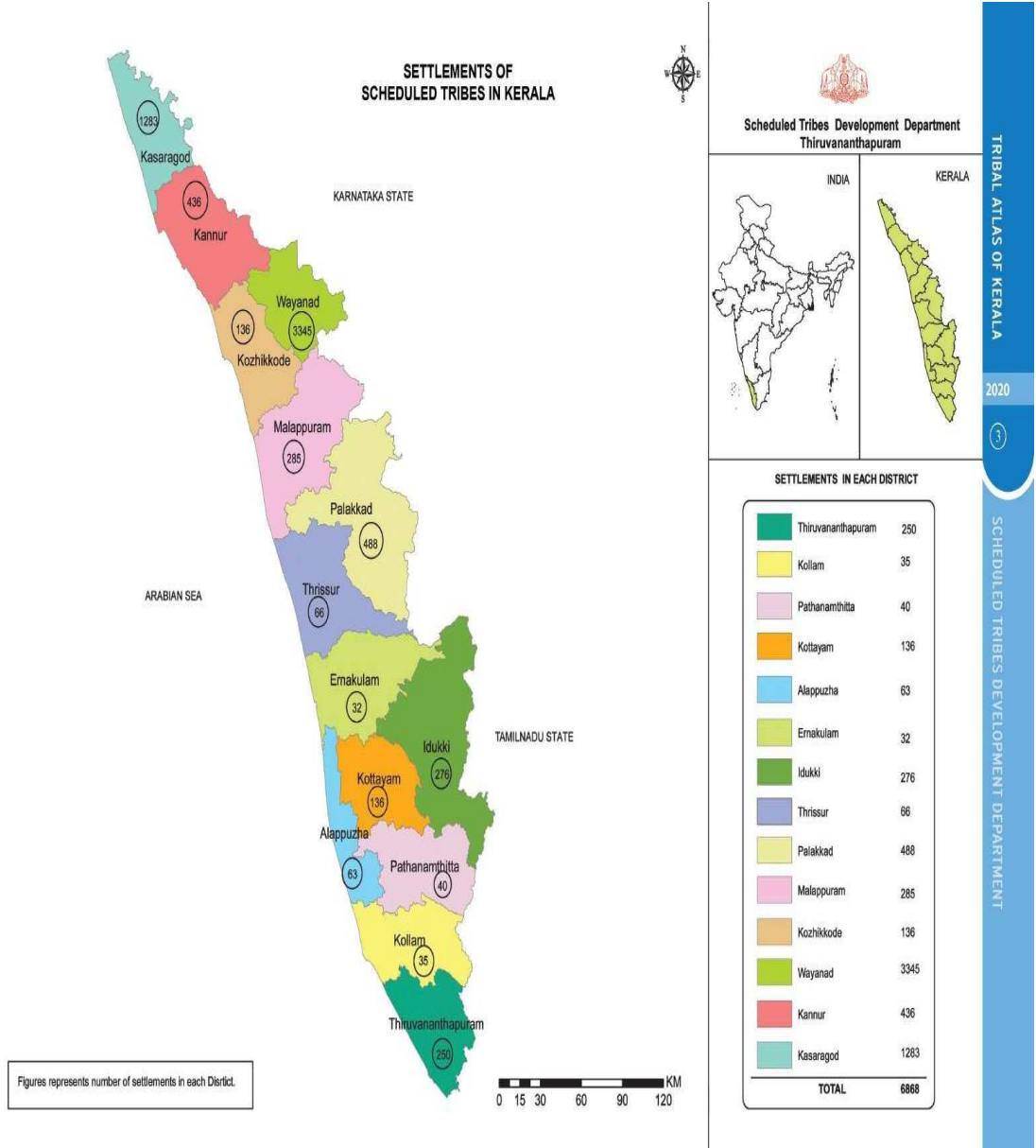
UCA News Archive (Possibly broken or outdated link, consider verifying):
https://plusone.google.com/_/+1/confirm?hl=en&url=https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive

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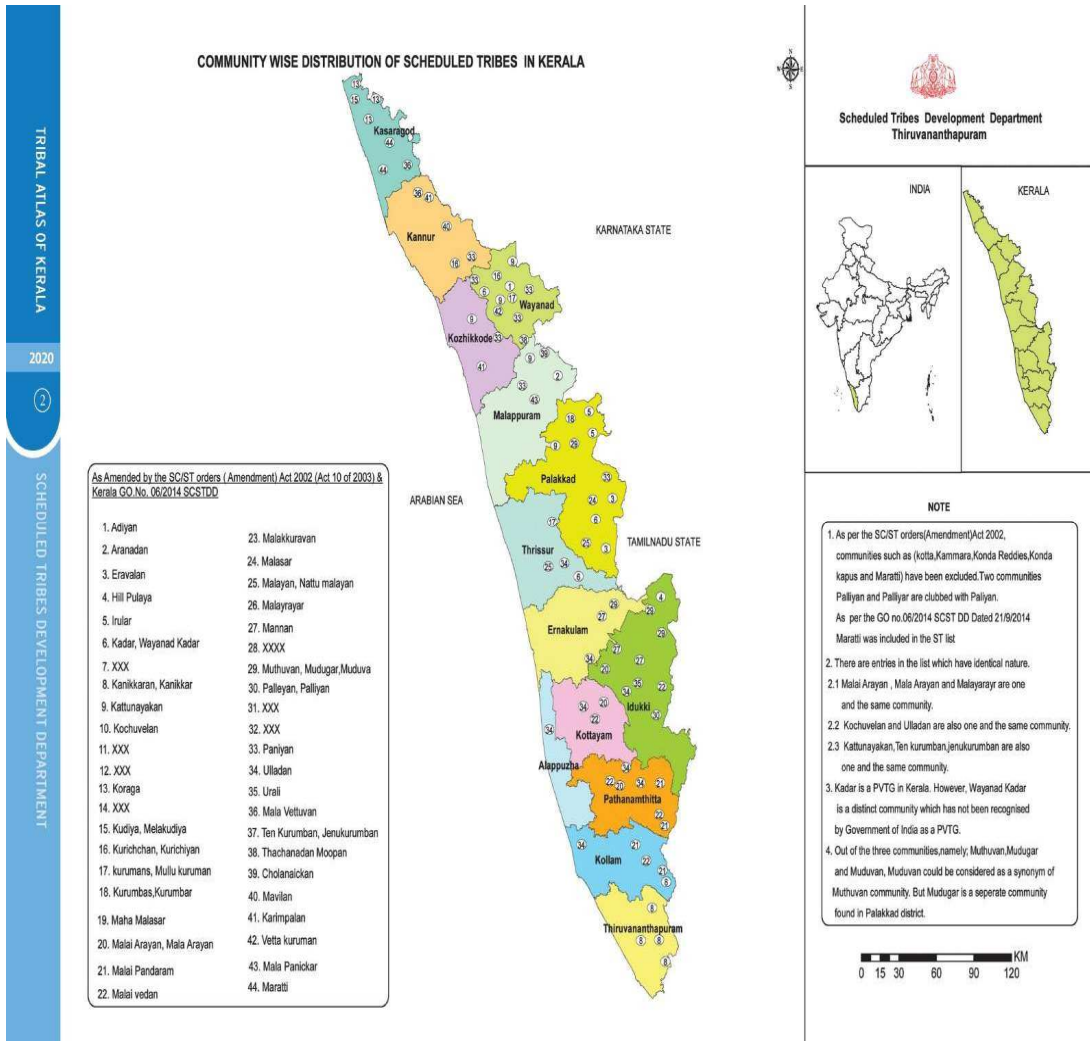
Maps



Settlements of scheduled tribes in Kerala



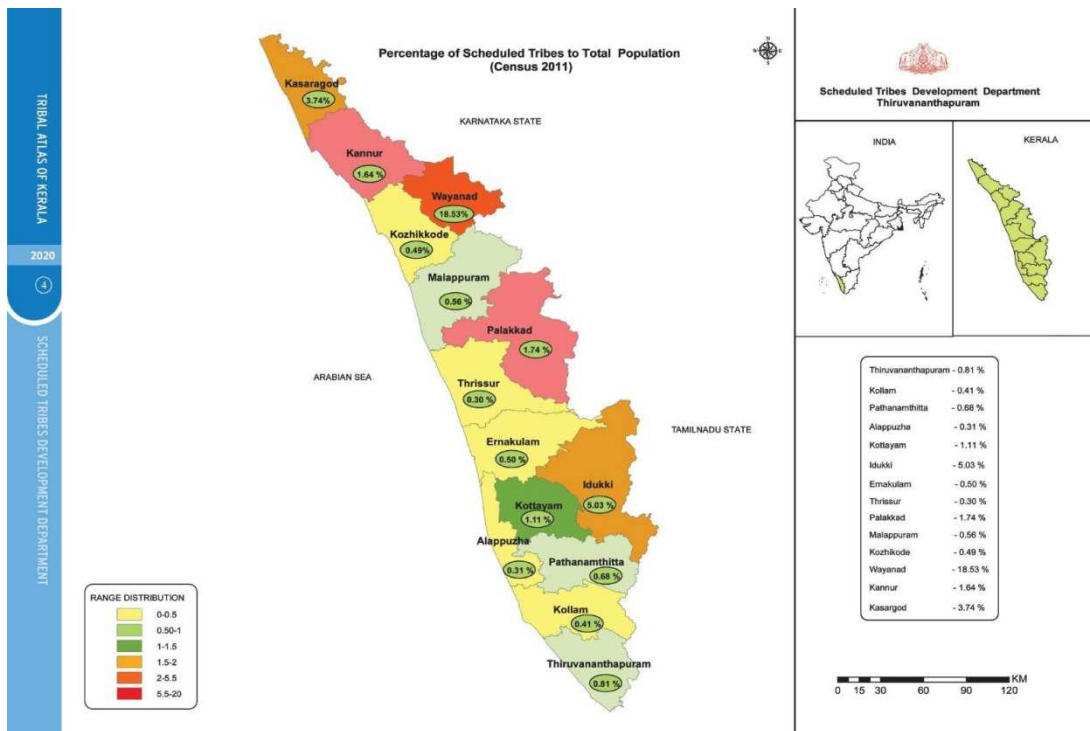
Community wise distribution of scheduled tribes in Kerala



As Amended by the SCST orders (Amendment) Act 2002 (Act 10 of 2003) & Kerala GO No. 06/2014 SCSTDD

1. Adiyen	23. Malekkuravan
2. Aranadan	24. Malasar
3. Eravalan	25. Malayan, Nattu malayan
4. Hill Pulaya	26. Malayarayan
5. Irular	27. Mannan
6. Kadar, Waynad Kadar	28. XXXX
7. XXX	29. Muthuvan, Mudugar, Muduva
8. Kanikaran, Kanikkar	30. Palleyan, Paliyan
9. Kattunayakan	31. XXX
10. Kochuvelan	32. XXX
11. XXX	33. Paniyan
12. XXX	34. Ulladan
13. Koraga	35. Urali
14. XXX	36. Mala Vettuvan
15. Kudiya, Melakudiya	37. Ten Kurumban, Jenukurumban
16. Kurichchan, Kurichyan	38. Thachanadan Moopan
17. kurumans, Mullu kuruman	39. Cholanackian
18. Kurumbas, Kurumber	40. Mavilan
19. Maha Malasar	41. Karimpalan
20. Malai Arayan, Mala Arayan	42. Vetta kuruman
21. Malai Pandaram	43. Mala Panickar
22. Malai vedan	44. Maratti

Percentage of scheduled tribes to total population



APPENDICES

Appendix-1

Priest in India wipes out slums

20 The Catholic Transcript—Thursday, December 7, 1961 Christians' Plight In E. Germany Worse

Cologne, Germany—(NC)—Christians here back to the wall in East Berlin and the Soviet Zone of Germany, a representative of the Diocese of Berlin declared here.

The delegate from Berlin told the general convention of the Central Committee of German Catholics that new reports show that regulations here worsened the plight of German Christians under Red rule.

He cited forced deportations from one part of the country to another, and the "Western Front Activities" in which so-called "non-believers" are beaten after being publicly humiliated.

The most tragic Christians are expelled out for these attacks, he said.

The Communist directed wall splitting Berlin has caused a certain loss of courage among Christians in East Berlin and the Soviet Zone of Germany, he said. But attendance at church services is growing.

HE SAID Communist pressure on the Church is growing more severe, and many fear that the Reds are preparing a still more rigid policy against the Church.

The vice-governor of the Archbishop of Cologne explained why German Catholics have been sending aid to Latin America.

The situation of Catholics in South America may in the near future be decisive for the position of Catholics in the world, Magr. Joseph Teusch said.

Population statistics show that within a single generation half of the world's Catholics will be Latin.

Priest In India Wipes Out Slums

Madras, India—(RNS)—Indian Catholics poured out their affection here to an Italian Jesuit missionary who has tackled communism in Southern India through an energetic program of slum eradication. The occasion was his silver jubilee as a priest.

Father Joseph Taffarel, S.J., came to India in 1930. But in that time he has successfully procured the abolishing slums in two villages by large new edifices in the Diocese of Kerala. His fight against communism has not only come from the pulpit, but from the efforts to help the fishermen raise their standard of living.

THIS WAS the report of the New London, a Catholic priest, during Father Taffarel on his 31st anniversary.

"For years," the New London had been there, looking the slums of Kerala in the sand. Today, scores of these have been demolished as if by magic; they have, however, replaced by blocks of comfortable, sturdy, attractive houses.

The annihilation of the slums of Chali and Cigarette, both suburbs of Trichy, was planned by the vision and courage of one man, Father Joseph Taffarel, S.J., a veteran Italian missionary.

The journal said that when the Jesuit came to the two villages, he found active Communist centers and the people living in slums in the area were harassed by debts and the victims of calculated exploitation by money lenders. They even had to work for the slum lords and not to the owners who claimed the major part of the day's catch, not as part payment of loans, but only as interest on them.

COMMENTARY—Influence in the area has seemed to diminish since Father Taffarel's arrival, the paper said, adding that the moral tone of the community as a whole has risen and attendance at religious services increased appreciably.

COMMENTS—Influence in the area has seemed to diminish since Father Taffarel's arrival, the paper said, adding that the moral tone of the community as a whole has risen and attendance at religious services increased appreciably.

US Aid For Guiana Despite Jagan Is Urged By Prelate

Dallas, Tex.—(NC)—The U.S. should grant the financial aid sought by the British government of British Guiana, a bishop of that troubled South American nation said here.

Bishop Richard I. Gully, S.J., of Georgetown, British Guiana, said that the country is "badly in need of such aid due to its undeveloped state" and refused by the U.S. to help "would be one of the surest ways of inspiring its fate toward Russia."

The 56-year-old prelate's comments were made in an interview during the Congress of the Confederation of Christian Doctrine, which attracted 1,000 delegates from the U.S., Canada and Latin America.

BRITISH GUIANA'S Premier Cheddi Jagan, the bishop said, has declared himself "an extreme socialist" who thinks all production should be controlled by the state.

"Politically, however, his pretenses to embrace a parliamentary democracy," the bishop said "in view of the Communist sympathies he has shown in the past, one can not say whether his current declaration can be taken at face value."

U.S. AID, he said, "very well might tide over the present situation until the Communist danger could be averted."

"At the moment," he stressed, "there is little communion in British Guiana, but leaders of Dr. Jagan's People Progressive party are extremely leftist."

Jagan was in Washington last month to seek a U.S. loan.

Italian Poem Is Placed On Index

Valencia, Spain—(NC)—The Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office has placed a new edition of an Italian poem on the life of Christ on the Index of Forbidden Books.

The first edition of the four-volume "The Holy Child" (The Child Jesus) was placed on the Index in 1938.

The Congregation of the Holy Office reported that the new edition "has serious value and reproduces the same material contained in the previous edition, but the daily movement is to be considered as reacting the new condemnation."

Christian Brothers' 10-Year Court Tax Battle Is Settled

Sacramento, Calif.—(NC)—A 10-year Federal court battle over the Federal government's power to tax the gross income of the Christian Brothers Winery at Napa, Calif., has ended in compromise.

Federal Judge Sherrill Halbert approved a settlement in which the Dr. La Salle Institute, which operates the winery, will pay the government \$5,477,268.

JUDGE HALBERT had ruled the Catholic teaching order was not exempt from Federal taxes simply because the Christian Brothers are part of the Roman Catholic Church and thus covered by a church exemption in the tax law.

While writing in his opinion that the Christian Brothers are not a part of the Church, Judge Halbert took the income from wineries in Napa County, used for religious and educational purposes, was not church income within the law.

Judge Halbert's ruling was on a suit by the Institute to recover \$400,000 in interest taxes. The decision had been appealed to the United States Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals by the Institute.

THE CASE has created nationwide interest and was considered precedent setting. It is regarded as the first decided case on the meaning of the word "church" in the tax law.

Give Poor Decent Housing, Prelate Urges in Argentina

Buenos Aires—(RNS)—Bishop Amalio A. Di Pasquo, head of the new diocese of Avellaneda, a large industrial area near here, urged his first pastoral which dealt with communism, social conditions and housing.

THE PRELATE, who was formerly Bishop of San Luis and an outspoken critic of the Peron regime under the period of open anti-Church persecution, paid particular attention to housing conditions in his pastoral.

"Thousands of families live in houses unfit for animals let alone human beings," he declared in discussing housing in his discourse.

SHRILY AFTER going to Avellaneda, Bishop Di Pasquo started a cooperative movement aimed at providing urgently needed houses for workers. In his letter he said: "It's no use relying on charity, we must build."

Turning his attention to communism, the prelate said it represents the "destruction of the most sacred values of the Christian world and . . . of everything that constitutes the dignity of man."

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Appendix-2

Foreign Missionaries Adjusted to Life in the Colonies

December, 1949

THE CATHOLIC WORKER

Page Seven

Seamen Disagree

(Continued from page 1)
freedom and authority, of man's liberty and why he is concerned with it.

It is of more importance than the rubber and oil concessions in Indonesia, it is of more importance than daily bread or shelter and right to work which men are fighting for all over the world. Of more importance than the land the peasants are expropriating in southern Italy, week after week, over and over again.

These things are important too. Bread and Freedom go hand in hand; they are like body and soul. But throughout history, it has been illustrated and painted in blood—man's refusal to take one without the other.

At this writing, the Independent Caucus has failed in its attempt to maintain their own jobs in the union and to overcome Curran who is riding high now that he has ousted all communist officials (with the help of this same group of dissenters) and is now trying to fire all in the union who criticize him and are fighting for the rank and file. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there are 23,000 jobs less for seamen since the end of the war, due to undermanning, and ships being laid up or placed under foreign flags in order to escape paying high wages. The men themselves have said they are willing to spread jobs by a rotary system of hiring and other voluntary sacrifices.

When there are eight thousand seamen on the beach in New York alone, the rank and file membership can be easily intimidated by the show of force called to the aid of Curran, and by the threat to take away their "books," without which they cannot ship out.

That there is such a fight going on during depression, and such a show of open opposition at a union meeting such as I attended last Thursday night, indicates both the courage of the men and the determination to continue the fight though at the present things seem to be against them.

According to a rank and file vote taken under the auspices of the Honest Ballot Association, Curran carried the men with a great majority, two thousand or so as against six hundred. But it was admitted that bus loads of Curran supporters had been brought in from other ports, and hundreds of the opposition had been kept out of the meeting.

We had been invited in by the opposition faction, as a citizens' Committee, Norman Thomas, chairman of the Socialist party, Albert Herling, national president of the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice, Dr. Robert Segar, executive secretary of the Human Relations Committee of the Protestant Council, Rev. Marshall Scott, dean of the Presbyterian Institute of Human Relations, George Rundquist of the American Civil Liberties Union and I, representing the Catholic Worker. We attended one meeting with Lawrence (Curran refused to be present) another with Police Commissioner O'Brien at headquarters, and the third at St. Nicholas Arena where we sat for five hours, in a smoke-filled hall, with few windows, packed with

3,500 men and we listened for five hours to talk of the union's constitution, explanation of the constitution, principles and procedure.

We were glad enough to do it. The meeting was thirty per cent colored, with Negro, Puerto Rican, Filipino, and others from eastern ports. There were all ages, all nationalities. They were all workers and what education they had they had gotten themselves. They listened with absorbed interest to the charges, and the answers to the charges, and the enunciation of principles. The men were charged with setting up an independent caucus and of conspiring against Curran. They admitted it. They defended themselves when they were accused of neglect of duty, and went into too much detail so that they were out of the listeners. In the end only four of the accused fourteen patrolmen were heard and the majority voted to vote on accepting the charges and the firing from office of the men. The thing that struck me all through the long evening was the patience with the long meetings, the acceptance of the authority which they felt they themselves had set up, and their interest in the issues involved.

Over and over again in our time the revolution has been worked out in the name of the people. It is a time when the world is thinking of the worker, the man of the street, those who are producing, and the voice they are entitled to. We have seen one generation of soldiers after one war, fired upon, dispersed with tear gas, left unemployed and without benefits. And we have seen the next generation of soldiers ushered into universities and colleges throughout the nation, given their living and such rights as that of marriage taken into consideration in the support given. There is a great change in the times. Everything is being done to "buy" the people, to gain them for one point of view or another. Their importance from the material point of view is being recognized. As to the Catholic point of view, there is that of Guardini, one of the great Catholic thinkers of our times:

"The people is the primary association of those human beings who by race, country and historical antecedents share the same life and destiny. The people is a human society which maintains an unbroken continuity with the roots of nature and life and obeys their intrinsic laws.

"The people contains—not numerically or quantitatively, but in essential quality—the whole of mankind, in all its human variety of ages, sexes, temperaments, mental and physical condition to which we must add the sum total of its work and spheres of production as determined by class and vocation.

"The people is mankind in its radical comprehensiveness. And a man is 'of the people' if he embraces, so to speak, the whole within himself."

"Now I Am!"

"I should not speak of myself," writes Father Joseph Taffarel, S. J. "It is very bad manners, they say. But I cannot help it; I must do it."

"What kind of life are you living, Father?" someone asked me. "A hard one, to be sure, by far harder than I thought, yet it is worth living for it is the very life our Lord Jesus Christ Himself lived when He was among men..."

Father Taffarel is a missionary in India. The people to whom he ministers live in a state of extreme destitution. "There are very few among them," he writes, "who can afford to get a full meal every day. As a rule, they start working in the morning without taking anything. They work half a day or a full day, according to circumstances (one can readily understand why their work is slow and inefficient—the wonder is how they can work at all. It is only in the evening, when they get their scanty wages, that they go to the shop, buy a handful of rice, a few chillies, a little salt, and then prepare their sumptuous meal..."

"Now when I come across daily such starving people and suffering children, my heart aches... how can I, the missionary, say the Father, of such wretched people, treat myself well, let alone comfortably?... It was very hard in the beginning to get used to it, but what can one not get used to? I was not used to doing without coffee at all; now I am! I was not used to eating rice with water; now I am! I was not used to living without bread, vegetables, fruits, meat, soup, milk, eggs and what not; now I am! I was not used to eating at any time or at no time; now I am! I was not used to crossing and getting thoroughly wet and remaining so till the air or the sun, if any, dried up my clothes; now I am! (I never realized till now how disastrous it is to have short legs!) I was not used to sleeping without mattress and bed-sheets on the floor or a hard plank; now I am! This short account of the hardships of the missionary's life gives some idea of the wonderful power of divine grace. How good God is and how well He takes care of His own!"

Anyone wishing to write to this missionary may address:
Rev. Joseph Taffarel, S. J., Catholic Mission, Mattul P. O., Malabar, India.

(Father Taffarel's appeal bears the imprimatur of A. M. Patroni, S. J., Bishop of Calcutta.)

APPEAL

From Our Lady of the Wayside Farm at Avon, Ohio.—We are being dispossessed of Blessed Martin House in Cleveland unless we can raise, borrow or beg five thousand dollars. That is the asking price. After eleven years in one place it is a shock. What would you advise. We are leaving it to Blessed Martin.

What would like is for some friend of the Worker to buy the building and let us continue to pay rent. No one would lose anything.

We have been so broke. Your reference to a large family trying to make ends meet struck home with the force of truth and experience. We owe three years' taxes on the farm, besides a few other bills. Our car, jalopy, is on its last cylinder. It just makes it to church on Sunday and makes too much noise doing that. If one could only live in voluntary poverty gratefully.

Industrial Dustbowl

(Continued from page 1)
Ghost." The announcement of such a development made headlines clear across the nation, he says, "and the dark cloud was deepened by columnists, and by radio, pulpit and platform commentators. Evidence, of course, of the lasting shock of the great depression of the '30s. Economic security lies not

time left for friendliness." (Someone in Los Angeles should read Peter Maurin's plea for Houses of Hospitality in his book, "Catholic Radicalism.")



In the stored granaries of biblical times; not in land, as in preindustrial America; not in stocks and bonds, as so many thought in the 1920's, but in jobs. A job is the modern American's contact with the production facilities of the economy. If he has a job, he holds industrial citizenship; when he loses it he is in an economic outcast, and his dependents suffer with him."

When Prof. Haber says that an increase of a million in the number of unemployed is not of major significance, he must mean it in the statistical sense, because a million workers and their dependents certainly occupy a position of major significance when we think of them as human beings. The 80,000 jobless veterans in Los Angeles are human beings, not just figures on a chart or a statistical table; so are the 12,000 unemployed in Muskegon, Michigan, who were formerly employed in the automobile parts industry of that city, most of whom are now trying to make a living by fishing in Lake Michigan. Arthur Tryon, executive director of the Los Angeles Veterans Service Center, says that veterans in that city "are being forced to enter schools against their will, better judgment or desire, as the only means of receiving subsistence which buys groceries for their families. Los Angeles continues to be the mecca for scores of veterans who journey here from all parts of the nation, but these men are not finding the city the 'heaven' it was when they were training or stationed nearby during the war years.

The Duty of Hospitality
"Then the men received free meals, lodging and other favors. A grateful citizenry was set on proving to the soldiers, sailors and marines that war had a beautiful side. Today, though, it is an entirely different story. There is no free lodging at all. And the people are too busily engaged in the problems of the community to have much

time left for friendliness." (Someone in Los Angeles should read Peter Maurin's plea for Houses of Hospitality in his book, "Catholic Radicalism.")

Many of the unemployed workers in Muskegon are men who went there from Southern States when Muskegon mushroomed during the war. Now they are stranded or "frozen" there because they are entitled to relief and other benefits which they would lose if they went elsewhere. Yet there are persons in Michigan who think these workers should "go back where they came from." A representative of the Muskegon Manufacturers Association, reporting to a meeting of the Michigan Full Employment Commission, stated that he thought it unlikely that Muskegon's surplus workers would be absorbed by industry in the area during the next few years. This is also true of the many thousands of unemployed workers in Michigan's copper mining counties. The United Auto Workers Union has begun organization of an "Unemployed Union," the function of which is to check relief payments, and presumably, when those payments are exhausted, to press for some type of supplementary relief. A writer in Fortune magazine says that Unions of the Unemployed were a feature of the '30's, and asks "is the U. A. W. preparing for the '50's?" And William Haber, quoted above, might reply in the affirmative, for he says "Is a serious depression, such as had its beginning with the stock market collapse in 1929, likely to take place in 1950, or 1951, or whenever the present shortages in housing and public works, in automobiles and household durable goods are met? Many people believe it to be inevitable. Most business men are certain that a serious decline will come early in the 1950's, a decline to a new base from which the next advance will begin."

The United States Employment Service made a survey of the 99 most important production centers and classified 36 as having a "very substantial labor surplus" last summer and fall. Three centers—Lawrence, Mass., Bristol, Conn., and Cumberland, Md., showed unemployment figures of more than 25%—one worker in four. The great concentration of unemployment is largely in New England, and in one industry, textile manufacturing. One result of the general decline in this industry may be a permanent shrinkage of its labor force by as many, possibly, as 150,000 hands.

One fact which stands revealed as a result of the U. S. E. S. survey and other studies is that there are now what appear to be seriously blighted industrial areas, such as Lawrence and Muskegon, to name only two, where no help is held for return to anything approaching former employment conditions. But the workers are remaining in those cities and towns for the reasons given above in the case of Muskegon, namely, the payment of relief, pensions and other benefits, all of which they would lose if they moved elsewhere. They are stranded in industrial dustbowl.

O WISDOM

Who proceeded from the mouth of the Most High, reaching mightily from end to end, and sweetly disposing of all things: COME! and teach us the way of prudence.

O ROOT

of Jesse, Who stands for a banner of the people, before Whom kings shall keep silence, and to Whom the Gentiles shall make supplication: COME! and deliver us and do not linger.

Appendix-3

Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Tribes

Article 15(4): *Authorizes the state to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, ensuring equal opportunities in educational institutions.*

Article 29(1): *Guarantees protection of the educational rights of minorities, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, allowing them to conserve their distinct language, script, or culture.*

Article 46: *Encourages the promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections, fostering inclusive development.*

Article 350A: *Affirms the right of tribal communities to conserve their languages.*

Article 23: *Prohibits forced labour, ensuring the protection of the dignity and rights of all individuals.*

Article 24: *Prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 in hazardous occupations, safeguarding their well-being.*

Article 244: *Specifies the administration of scheduled areas and tribal areas, allowing for self-governance and protection of their customary laws.*

Article 275(1): *Empowers the President to provide grants-in-aid to states for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.*

Cultural Safeguards:

Article 350A: *Ensures the provision of facilities for the instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups, preserving cultural heritage.*

Political Safeguards:

Article 164(1), 330, 332, 334, 243D, 371: *Provides political representation and powers to tribal communities through reservations in legislative bodies, local governance, and administrative institutions.*

Service Safeguards:

Article 16(4): *Allows for reservations in public employment for backward classes, including Scheduled Tribes, ensuring representation in government services.*

Article 335 and 320(4): *Facilitates provisions for reservations in promotions, recognizing the need for representation at all levels within the government services.*

Appendix 4

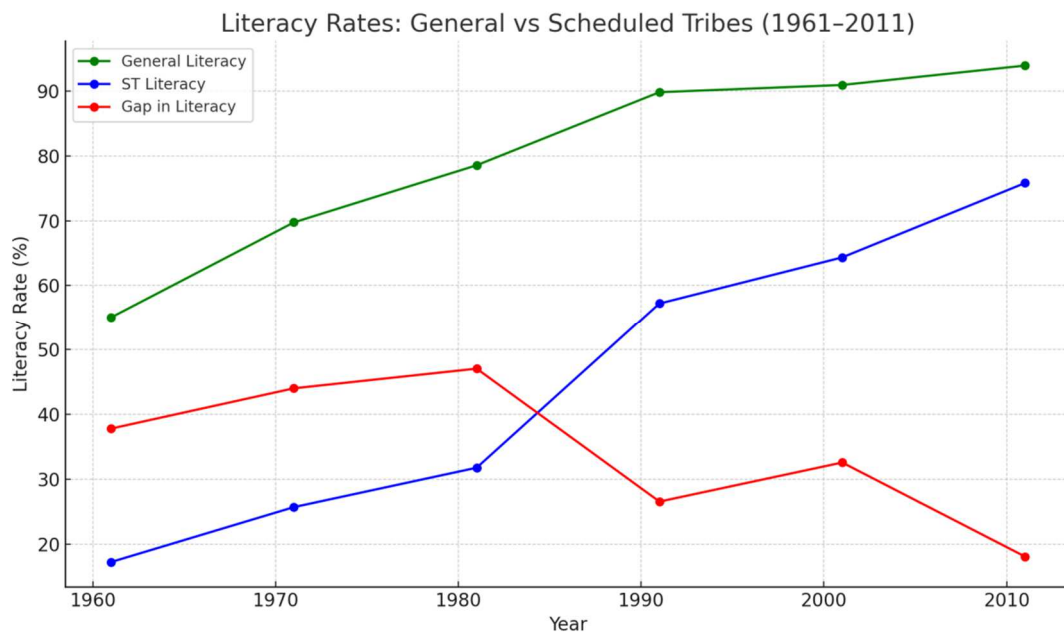
Major Educational Institutions under Scheduled tribes Development Department

Sl No	Name of the institution	Number
1	ITI/VTI	2
2	Post-matric hostels	12
3	Single teacher schools	2
4	Model Residential Schools	22
5	Pre-matric hostels	106
6	Model pre school	31
	Total	175

Source: Scheduled Tribes Development Department

Appendix-5

Literacy Rates Gap between General and Scheduled Tribes(Kerala)



Appendix-6
The district wise details of Landless Families

Sl No.	District	Total ST Families	2022-23	
			Landless	% to Total
1	Thiruvananthapuram	6636	0	0
2	Kollam	1674	134	8
3	Alappuzha	922	321	34.82
4	Pathanamthitta	2187	232	10.61
5	Kottayam	5429	188	3.46
6	Idukki	17381	272	1.56
7	Ernakulam	3393	133	3.92
8	Thrissur	1946	162	8.32
9	Palakkad	17056	502	2.94
10	Malappuram	4964	747	15.05
11	Kozhikkode	3950	108	2.73
12	Wayanad	48593	3426	7.05
13	Kannur	12111	502	4.14
14	Kasaragod	21626	722	3.34
	State	147868	7449	5.04

Source: Scheduled Tribes Development Department (TRDM)

Appendix-7

Financial Support Requested by Missionaries

December, 1952

THE CATHOLIC WORKER

Page Five

+ + FROM THE MAIL BAG + + APPEALS

Dear Friends in Christ:

As you know, for the past six years many sections of India have been devastated by drought. Since the failure of the monsoon rains in wide areas last autumn, the famine is worse than ever. There are 50,000,000 Untouchables in India, and those in the famine districts haven't enough money to buy American wheat at the price the Indian Government has to charge to pay back the \$100,000,000 loan to us.

In an endorsement published several years ago, the late Bishop of Calicut stated that Fr. Caironi was one of his "best and most zealous missionaries." Last year, Fr. Caironi appealed to the readers of THE COMMONWEAL Magazine for funds with which to buy dried tapioca. A ton of tapioca, costing \$30, will feed some 700 people for a week.

Your prayers, especially, are requested for this arduous work, and, as the Lord leads you, your sacrificial offerings. So dire is the need for food for the survival of this people, that Fr. Caironi acknowledges the smallest gift.

Please address all communications to:

Fr. Peter Caironi, S. J.
Cherukunnu P. O.
N. Malabar
India

Dear Miss Day:

Five or six years ago your paper published a letter that told how a group of post-war German seminarians were carrying on their studies under severe hardships, living in a former bomb shelter. Outstanding among the students was a man named Heinrich Seise who had been severely wounded in the German army. Although he still carried pieces of shrapnel in his lung and brain, beside arm and leg injuries, he was allowed to study for the priesthood. Living underground with hardly enough nourishment and so dreadfully cramped, he inspired the younger students with some of his zeal and self-discipline.

The letter asked for aid. By the time I got around to it with my "never-do-today," Heinrich Seise's health forced him to give up ideas for the priesthood.

Today this young man whose letters breathe the most beautiful resignation to the will of God, lies bedridden, subject to hemorrhages and horrible pain when the shell splinters begin to move. He is not only too poor to have the operation his doctor urges but too poor even to own a bed. He lies on a sofa "bequeathed by a kind old lady teacher."

All Heinrich's relatives are dead or killed except for his cousin Leisel who works and cares for him. Leisel is a nun released from her

vows and must be near sainthood too. The height of their misfortune was last year when Leisel was almost mortally burned at work and Heinrich was helpless at home. Recently Heinrich had a fall which renewed his arm and leg wounds and caused lung hemorrhages.

I know nothing about relief agencies, Germany, etc., and can only help in a limited personal way—and Heinrich is extremely uncooperative in telling of his personal needs. Perhaps some of your readers would help or suggest ways of helping.

The address:
Heine Seise
Machse-Straße
Post Strassenhavachen,
Germany, Br. Zone

With deep thanks for any aid you might make.

Albert Gelger

(22a) Essen-Borbeck, den 18.10.1952
Schönebockerstrasse 91
Brit. Zone—Germany

Miss Dorothy Day
The Catholic Worker House of
Hospitality

223 Chrystie Street
New York, N. Y.—USA

Dear Miss Dorothy Day,

Heartfelt thanks for the parcel of valuable goods sent by Miss Doris Ann Doran. The winter is approaching. The poor and bombed out people come now more frequently to me to be helped for winter. Now I receive more petitions by letter from refugees, especially from the Russian Zone. So I beg you not to forget us in future.

God love and bless you. Monthly about 30 masses are celebrated for our benefactors.

With kindest regards
Yours in Our Lord
Fr. Hermann Leenen S. J.

Dear Friend:

"I am very depressed by a very sad case in one of my families. A girl of not yet 14 years of age is expecting a child. The poor parents are more than desperate. The "father" of the baby is a brother of 15 years of age. The family is housed under the most miserable conditions and as I wrote to you before there is a tremendous shortage of beds. Nobody can pay for them here and they just sleep together, sometimes 3 children in one single bed. Oh, can't you get a decent sum of money for me from some fine Catholic people so that I can buy double beds with all that goes with it. The people are not really responsible for the evil and are deeply unhappy about it. There is no money for help in any of the societies that want to help here.

A few days ago it was announced over the Radio that very few children can now be sent out to holiday camps. Last year the number of days that were cut down was already 27,000 and it will be more this year. I am trying for 2 years now to get help in a few serious cases, but the people are poor and I also cannot pay for it any more. There is hardly any help coming from America now. Yes, I have received much but I also had to care for so many people and the situation is getting worse because of unemployment and the expense of food, etc. I am longingly looking out for Food, All Meat and Babyfood and warm clothes. All those Care Packages would give me such joy. The people continue to come to me and ask if I have not received any and it hurts me that I cannot give them anything.

Sincerely in Christ,
Mrs. M. van der Aa
44 Weversingel
Amersfoort, Holland.

Dear Friend:

I belong to the Congregation of Franciscan Sisters of Bon Secours, a community of purely Indian Nuns. Our Mother-house is in San Thome, Myslapore. At the earnest appeal and request of Rev. Father D' Souza, Pastor of the Sacred Heart Church, Bangalore, and with the kind permission of the Bishop of Bangalore, our Superiors opened out a branch here to look after the two Primary Schools of the Parish. At first, we were lodged in a small house hurriedly put up by the Rev. Father only two rooms, each 26x16 feet, with a roof of old corrugated iron sheets about 12 to 14 feet high. These two rooms served all purposes—as a Dormitory which was also an Oratory, Recreation and Industry room, Refectory and Study Hall, Dressing room, etc. Twelve of us were all huddled up at night on the floor—no cots or curtain partitions or mosquito nets.

Fortunately for us we are being offered a decent property with a house and some vacant ground. But unfortunately our financial position is at a very low ebb, and we cannot therefore take advantage of the said offer. If we are able to collect through the help of our kind benefactors a sum between \$1,000 to \$2,000 there is every hope of our acquiring the property, because the owner very generously has agreed to give us the first option. Should we lose this chance, we are doomed forever. There are no plots near about the church which would be available to us at any time even after the next thirty or forty years.

Our so-called Convent, in which we now reside, has no chapel, and we have not even reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. For want of space we cannot hold even a small room to serve us as a chapel, much less an orphanage or high school. Should we miss this offer, the only chance of our life, we must remain stagnant and crippled for life. Our activities, which are now no more than looking after primary schools, must stand still as it was in the beginning is now and forever more. How galling and demoralizing it would be for us and our successors to work under such conditions; to find other Sister-convents progressing, flourishing and advancing by giant strides, whereas we remain where we are or even deteriorate. How hard to bear the harassing thought that we can lend no help to orphans and bring pagan souls to Christ, that our work must remain barren and fruitless, while souls go over the brink, because of a paltry sum of a thousand dollars!

The donation may be sent either through the Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Thomas Pothecary, D. D., Bishop of Bangalore, 30 Miller's Road, Bangalore, or direct, as per address given.

I remain,
Your respectfully in Xt.
MARY THERESA, F.S.S.
Bon Secours Convent,
No. 46 Richmond Road,
Bangalore (Mysore State),
INDIA.

New York, N. Y.

Dear Editor:

I would like to give you a little report on what your friends are doing. You may remember the civil defense drill held at Times Square on Tuesday night, 30 Sept. Although activities were due to start at 7:45, I and a group of my friends gathered at 7:00 to give out leaflets.

By 7:40 the cops began to crack down on us. By that I mean that although they didn't tell us to stop (that would have been illegal) wherever we were, they told us to go elsewhere. The others allowed themselves to be chased out of the area, but Naomi Serebnick (my girl friend) and I kept retreating to other places in Times Square, and when sirens started at 7:45 we were at the southwest corner of 7th Ave. and 42nd St. I had no more leaflets left, and Naomi had only a few.

I waited while she circulated among the crowd to distribute them. Then I saw a cop start to bother her. As I approached, he was ordering her to stop distributing the literature. She did, but she showed so plainly that she was reluctant to stop doing something she had no right to tell her to stop doing, that he suddenly grabbed the leaflets right out of her hand! I very politely pointed out to him that they were private property, and suggested he return them. He said he was considering arresting her, and the leaflets would be evidence. But as the crowd began to move, he wanted only to keep the leaflets to prevent their distribution, he grabbed her arm and tried to pull her away. However, Naomi refused to cooperate, with that, and he desisted.

All these things made the crowd larger and larger, pressing in close to see what was happening, and more people gathering around all the time. At this point, for a second or two, the three of us knew what to do next, so I turned to the crowd and asked if they were interested in hearing what was on this leaflet that all this fuss was about.

The crowd became quiet and I began to read. I sensed a favorable audience reaction, but almost immediately the cop grabbed my arm and started to haul me off. But I stubbornly kept my ankles together, not wishing to help him arrest me, and he succeeded only in pulling me to the ground. When he let go, I got up. When he grabbed me again, I collapsed—went limp, to let him do with me as he would. I could neither cooperate with evil nor resort to counterviolence thus obscuring the issue and helping him justify his own violence.

Well, this went on for about five minutes. Naomi was crying, nearing hysteria, and pleading with the cop to leave me alone. The crowd was getting bigger all the time. Cops and civil defense people were arriving from other parts of the square. There was much confusion about what to do with me. Some

were trying to pull me up when I was down, others were trying to push me down when I was up.

Finally a taxi pulled up and they threw me in on the floor. Two got in after me and shut the door. The crowd surged around. One said eagerly, "This one's mine!" The other, angrily, "He was laughing at us!" (Note: I wasn't, either physically or mentally, but perhaps they felt their roughstuff compared unfavorably before the crowd with my extreme nonviolence.) Then one of them reared back and smashed me in the face. I'm sure the crowd saw that blow. But the other stopped him with words to the effect of waiting till we were around the corner. In a second we were, and then they really went to work on me.

In the cab, they made up between them to charge me with felonious assault, and to say I hit one of them. In the station house they beat me some more, fingerprinted me, then put me in a cell. Only the NEW YORK POST was anything like fair. It did not mention the personal incident, but quoted from the leaflet. And two days later THE COMPASS printed a long, favorable article.

My trial has been called for 17 Dec. at 100 Centre St. Court of Special Sessions, Part II, at 10 a.m.

Dick Kersh

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Enlightened Nation

The Managing Editors—The Catholic Worker,
New York City, N. Y.

Dear Friends:

We Protestants, who read your paper, observe no less than you, the turmoil, strife, lack of faith and beastly attitude of much of the human race in so called civilized nations as well as those we are supposed to help. Can we save civilization by using guns, bombs and shells against those who are easily misled by so called enlightened nations? Perhaps the U. S. A. is making matters worse by "stopping" Communism in Korea. Maybe it will be Iran, Indo-China or Greece next. Maybe we are merely upholding the dignity of America with young men's lives. Stalin will not live, at most many years. If he does not have a change of heart before his departure from this earth, Communism will likely fall apart afterwards and Christ may get his way. The proposal to send millions of young men abroad within the next 2 or 3 years will solve nothing in the wars they fight.

While we workers in the U. S. A. are concerned about a living wage, decent housing and many other things, we should not lose sight of the fact that many other things concern us as well. It might be well to add our weight against those who are ever ready to fight a preventive war and not be misled by beautiful words, politics and slogans.

Yours in the Lord through Christ,
J. W. REEVES.

J. W. Reeves,
7828, South Wabash Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

Appendix-8

Financial Request of Fr. Joseph Taffarel S J

October, 1946

THE CATHOLIC WORKER

Page Five

+ From The Mail Bag +

More Appeals—More Addresses From Stricken Europe

For Hungary

Please receive our thanks for giving a few lines of space in your paper about our needs. We got seven parcels until now, thank your subscribers, and encourage them each time to remember poor Hungary, the heart wound of the chest of Europe. The poor people stand day by day in long lines before the different foreign relief stations, police keep them in order, not refraining from sharp words when people lose patience. The sad thing is they are not heard, for these missions do not help individually, just through schools giving one meal. So it is clear now on both sides of the ocean that from person to person method is the best, for this excludes politics. Please write a few lines of appeals for diapers, usable clothes, shoes, crisco, canned milk, meat, rice, sugar, fish. One can now send 11-pound packages.

Sister Judith Boer.

125 Kristina Krt.
Budapest, Hungary.

For Finland

Many people have written and sent boxes as a result of the notice you so kindly put into the *Catholic Worker*. Monsignor Carling has asked me to tell you that he is offering the Holy Sacrifice for your many intentions.

Yesterday I received an appeal from a Catholic here whose sister in Germany is without anything. Her name is Fraulin Milly Schafstuck, Bad Kissingen, von der Bannstrasse 8. Can you do anything for her?

Sister M. Kostka.
Engelplatsen 11
Helsingfors, Finland.

For Italy

"My Dear Madam,

"You will excuse me if I write you these few lines. By sheer luck I happened to get your address and decided to write to you. Begging you to help me—I'm the mother of 6 children and before long there will be another. They are all boys of 18 down and a girl of 11. My husband's mother is also living with us because she has no one. Unfortunately, on the 9th of May 1943 my home and possessions were destroyed, leaving us destitute. Imagine, dear lady, what terrible conditions we're in. We found ourselves, after having so much, with nothing. We sleep in shelters and suffer the cold and hunger and sicknesses which are about. Then, of course, there is no work; prices have gone up. So we live the lives of hermits. Night and day we pray to God to help us in this great necessity. Maybe it was God Who wanted to help us by letting us get this address.

"We beg you as benefactors

to send us any old clothes you may have to cover our bodies. If you have any relatives please tell them of our dire needs. If they could help me, I would be grateful. For, in America you are all generous. God will surely repay you for all the good you will do us. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Giuseppa La Mantia,
Via Pietro Colletta 27,
Palermo, Sicily"

Dear Sir:

I am a poor girl of 17 years who is in need of some clothing which the generous people of the good U.S. do not care to use them anymore. I have heard that you print on your paper names and addresses that need some help: Will you be so kind and good to add my name? You see winter is coming and I need few clothing which my poor father cannot afford to buy as he earns very little and we are six in my family.

Please accept my appreciations and my thanks and may God bless you and yours.

(Signed) Gilda Russo
Miss Gilda Russo
Via Giuseppe Arcoletto 12
Palermo, Sicily.

For France

September 12, 1946.

Dear Friends:

I am completely overwhelmed at the thought of all the trouble you have given yourself to come to our help. Thanks to you, many children have been able to spend six weeks in the country, thus growing stronger after the years of enduring all kinds of privation. Many youngsters were sought after by those who are not of our kind, but each time I had the sum of \$50 a poor little urchin was saved from them. All this meant that God could enter the life of this poor child and, consequently, the lives of his family also.

Getting Thru

Yes, I received all you sent me. That is why I accepted all those who came to me, even though they had not a cent. I trusted in Divine Providence, and counted upon receiving some money from the United States. Besides, I am not greedy—a little satisfies me, since I can spread a little joy. Hence, I fed the children well, and I tried to make them love Christ. The six weeks in the country cost a frightening sum, but I could not make myself refuse to receive those poor urchins. I think I shall make ends meet, if not—well, it was all in a great cause.

In regard to the money you may send, I would prefer to receive paper money not registered. It comes safely. All you have sent came with no loss or trouble. In the future, should you have paper money or checks for me, send them right along.

I also received some pack-

FOOD FOR EUROPE

It sounds paradoxical, but since the price of food has gone up, Lieut. Gen. Wm. N. Haskell, retired, executive director of CARE (Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe) has cut the price of the parcels sent to ten dollars instead of the former fifteen.

CARE is located at 50 Broad street and takes orders from anyone for food packages to be delivered to friends, relatives and others in Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Finland, Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland, the Netherlands and the American, French and British occupied zones of Germany. The packages contain 40,000 calories, or enough food to supplement for two weeks the present rations of a family of four. They contain 29 pounds of food, including solid meat, stews, hashes, cereal, and biscuits, fruit jam and pudding, vegetables, sugar and candy, cocoa, coffee and beverage pounders, evaporated milk, preserved butter and cheese, soap, matches and a can opener.

ages which were most precious. The approach of winter makes me fearful, yet I hope to relieve much misery with the contents of the packages I receive.

Receive, dear friends, with my profound gratitude, the expression of my respectful friendship.

Reverend George Briand
96, Boulevard Jean-Jaures
Clichy (Seine)
France

From India

Dear Friends:

May I introduce myself to you as the poor missionary of the lowest and poorest outcastes of Malabar, the Pulayas, sure you'll not disappoint me.

I've to build the altar (with the tabernacle) of the church, plaster and floor the whole church, push ahead the work of conversion and uplift, etc. among these poor people, and I'm simply penniless; nay, I've debts! Yet what pains me most is the utter poverty and extreme misery of these unfortunate wretched. You can't even imagine it. They are actually starving, naked, but for a rag over their loins. Yet what I could no longer bear was and is the sad plight of so many poor, destitute orphan children: thin, pale, sickly, fully naked, underfed, starving. Hence I've opened an orphanage for them and have already admitted no less than 26 of them. But now the heavy burden of feeding them falls entirely on my poor shoulders. It is truly crushing. For since I was before for many years teaching in the seminary of Mangalore, I've no benefactor yet, no one to help me. From Europe I can't possibly expect anything. Hence I'm really in great difficulties and dire distress. I do not know what to do, how to go on with my missionary work, to whom to turn for help.

Kindly do you at least what you can even through others, for my poor mission, for my starving people, for my chiefly pitiable children. It is the best charity you can do, for it is for the little ones of Jesus. He was so fond of them. He considers as done to Himself whatever you do for

Distributism

A Draft for Action

The paragraphs which follow are put forward as a draft only, by the editor of *The Cross and the Plough*, England, and we are reprinting only those paragraphs which pertain both to England and America.

1. Distributism, including the principles and action of the Land Movement, is the only real alternative to the modern despair. As such it is to be advanced at once by all men and women of good will, in the hope and conviction that it will be seen to be the only alternative by an increasing number of people.

2. That the moment is more than ripe is proved by the fact that many enquirers speak as though nothing had been worked out hitherto. Editors, Catholic and secular, who know better, are not correcting them.

3. In particular, nothing must be advanced as essential to Distributism on which Distributists may reasonably disagree. Such subjects as Spain, the Monarchy, and so on, must not be allowed to intrude on the new Distributism as they destroyed the old. The conception and words, Right and Left, are socially ridiculous and have no meaning or relevance for Distributism.

4. The full content of Distributism has not been stated hitherto in convenient form, although it may have to be attempted soon. In particular, THE OUTLINE OF SANITY by G. K. Chesterton and THE SUN OF JUSTICE by H. Robbins may be indicated as containing the essential framework. (See your local libraries.)

5. As no lead may be expected from national leaders, the only way to start will be by means of local groups. These will expand and federate as circumstances dictate. The editor of *The Cross and the Plough* (and *The Catholic Worker*) is prepared to put individual applicants in touch with one another by towns and ask a particular person to initiate meetings. (This is how the *Catholic Worker* groups all started, but many disintegrated on account of such issues as Spain, pacifism, etc.)

6. Two or three such persons can begin a local group as effectively as a larger number. We are dealing with the only social hope of the world, and the only emotion to be barred is despair. ("What is the use of doing anything, so few

against so many, with atomic warfare almost upon us, etc.")

7. It would seem essential that control should be centralized.

8. As the first need of men is to eat, the first need of Distributism is small farms instead of large.

9. But as man is a social animal, these farms must be in communities, and must be rounded by adequate supplies of craftsmen and small workshops.

10. Independently of this logical approach, much can be done by encouraging small workshops and small trades and businesses in any area. Big Business, whether in large concerns or in chain stores, must be frozen out by a simple act of will (and by not trading with them).

11. These points are enough to give direction and weight to any beginning. Do not be afraid to talk. It is by talking that action emerges.

12. The future is in the hands of the younger men and women, the young married couples. It is they who will see the end of industrialism and bequeath to their children the beginnings of the Distributist state.

13. It must be borne always in mind that there are two aspects of Distributism. There is Distributism itself, which in any case will not be achieved for a generation; and there is the Road to Distributism. Many expedients of the Road will not be characteristic of Distributism. The only essential point is that while the Road may differ in details from the goal it must not contradict it in principle.

This: Road Transport will be relatively unnecessary in full Distributism; but any man who buys and operates a motor truck now is to be applauded because he is demonstrating personal independence and adding to the examples of diffused productive property. On the other hand paper shares in a motor factory are irrelevant to the problem and its solution. Because a paper share is not productive property and the evils of mass production are not diminished by the diffusion of such shares.

"Every particle of Christ's divine charity is today more precious for your security—for your security, I say—than all the specie in the vaults of the American government."

them. He is never outdone in generosity. He takes into account your difficulties and sacrifices and will reward you accordingly, most abundantly. Perhaps He is waiting for you to do this act of charity in order to grant you the special graces you are in need of and praying for. Has He not said: "Give and it will be given

unto you." Give in the name and out of love for Jesus and our dear Mother; you'll be the gainer!

I do assure you of my grateful prayers and daily remembrance in Holy Mass.

Rev. J. TAFFAREL, S. J.
Catholic Mission,
Mattul, P.O.,
N. Malabar, India.

