# THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY IN KERALA: A STUDY OF THE DMRT MOVEMENT

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

*By*

**JYOTHIRMANI VATAKKAYIL**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**
**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**DECEMBER 2006**

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# DECLARATION

I, do hereby declare that the present work on **"The Activities of the Servants of India Society in Kerala: A Study of the DMRT Movement".** is a bonafide research work carried out by me under the guidance of Dr. T.M. Vijayan, Reader, Department of History, University of Calicut. It has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma earlier.

**Jyothirmani Vatakkayil**
Research Scholar
Department of History
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C.U. Campus,
Date: 28-12-06

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**DECEMBER 2006**

University of Calicut
Department of History
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Date: 28/12/06

# CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the present work entitled: **"The Activities of te the Servants of India Society in Kerala: A Study of The DMRT Movement"** is a bonafide research work carried out by **Smt. Jyothirmani Vatakkayil,** under my supervision and that it has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma earlier.

28/12/06

**Dr. T.M. Vijayan**
(Supervising Teacher)
Reader
Department of History
University of Calicut.

Calicut University
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# PREFACE

The activities of the Servants of India Society in Kerala are a subject, which has not been seriously studied so far. The Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust (DMRT) formed under the aegis of the Servants of India Society was a remarkable movement, which contributed a lot to set right the disordered condition of Malabar after the Rebellion of 1921. For want of a serious academic study the invaluable services rendered by the volunteers of the Servants of India Society and the DMRT workers have practically become a forgotten chapter in Kerala history. The present work is a modest attempt to fill the gap, and I hope that my effort would be justified. In the preparation of this thesis I have received help and support from several persons. But for their unstinted co-operation, the work would not have attained its present shape.

I would like to place on record my deep sense of gratitude and obligation to my research supervisor Dr. T.M. Vijayan, Reader, Department of History, University of Calicut. He has been quite unassuming but extremely meticulous in guiding me through my work. I have been greatly benefitted by his scholarship and the promptness with which he corrected my inadequacies.

I am thankful to Dr. K.N. Ganesh, Head of the Department of History, University of Calicut.

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I am indebted to Dr. K. Gopalankutty, Reader, Department of History, University of Calicut for the patience and sympathy with which he responded to my queries, especially pertaining to historiography. His valuable advices and suggestions have lessened many of my difficulties.

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I am thankful to Dr. M. Gangadhara Menon for having provided me with valuable materials and advices.

I record my thanks to Mr. K. Balakrishnan, my husband, for having suggested me to explore the present topic.

It was a great pleasure to associated with Sri. Karthat Balachandra Menon, DMRT worker during the course of my research. With great affection he has provided me with a lot of information on SIS/DMRT activities.

With great respect I remember the late Sri. Tanur Parameswaran, a DMRT worker who first provided me with sufficient details on the topic. His daughter Smt. Sreerajamani, Head Mistress (Rtd.), Tanur provided me with valuable information about living DMRT workers. I am grateful to her.

I am thankful to Smt. Ammini Amma, Caretaker and K.T. Suresh Babu, Secretary, V.R. Nayanar Balikasadanam, Kozhikode for having co-operated with my research work.

I am thankful to all the persons who co-operated with me by allowing interviews. Some of them are no more with us now. I pay my respectful homages to them.

My thanks are also due to the Librarians and staff of the History Department and the CHMK Library, University of Calicut.

I am thankful to the Librarians of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, National Archives, New Delhi, National Gandhi Museum and Library, Rajghat, New Delhi, Servants of India Society Library, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi, Malabar Institute for Research and Development, Vatakara, Sanchara Grandhalayam, Tanur and a few the local libraries of Malabar.

I am thankful to the authorities of Regional Archives, Kozhikode and Mathrubhumi Archives, Kozhikode for allowing me to consult the records preserved there.

Last but not least I thank my brother Jyothish Kumar and my kids Sreesyam and Shrilakshmi who have borne the brunt of my research.

I am very thankful to Mr. Balu and friends of Bina Photostat, Chenakkal, for having done the printing work promptly and neatly.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| AISA | - | All India Spinners Association |
| CMS | - | Church Mission Society |
| CP | - | Central Province |
| DMRT | - | Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust |
| DPAS | - | Discharged Prisoners Aid Society |
| EMS | - | E.M. Sankaran Namboodiripad |
| HSS | - | Harijan Sevak Sangh |
| JDT | - | Jamiat – e Dwat – e – Tablig – e – Islam |
| KPCC | - | Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee |
| LMS | - | London Mission Society |
| LSNGS | - | Lady Sankaran Nair Girls School |
| MAC | - | Mapila Aid Committee |
| MCRC | - | Malabar Central Relief Committee |
| NAI | - | National Archives of India |
| NGM | - | National Gandhi Museum |
| NMML | - | Nehru Memorial Museum and Library |
| NSS | - | Nair Service Society |
| RDO | - | Revenue Divisional Officer |
| RAK | - | Regional Archives Kozhikode |
| SIS | - | Servants of India Society |
| SNDP | - | Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Samiti |
| SUPW | - | Socially Useful Productive Work |
| UP | - | United Province |
| YMCA | - | Young Men Christian Association |

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# INTRODUCTION

The Servants of India Society (hereafter SIS) had made great impact in Kerala society, especially in the Malabar area, in the years following the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. This period in modern Kerala history was characterised by a variety of activities, both political and social. There was the emergence of hectic political activities. Congress was gradually becoming a mass organization in Kerala, though Congress Political Conferences were being held even before the twenties. In the Travancore Cochin area the Sree Narayana Movement, Ayyankali, the N.S.S and others unleashed a wave of social reform. In Malabar also there were religious reform activities initiated by Vagbhatananda from North Malabar among the Hindus, and Syed Makti Thangal in Ernad area among the Mulsims. But these efforts had not percolated into the common people, nor were their preaching's practiced by the upper classes so much as to bring about a general social awareness, to serve as a pre-condition for change.

It appears quite curious that unlike the fervour for change and adaptability to the newly preached ideals, as was found in Travancore - Cochin areas, Malabar was by and large averse to assume an identical mind set. Therefore a socio-economic and cultural milieu punctuated by inequalities, superstitions, injustices, oppression and hegemonic control existed in Malabar especially during the above period. It was precisely this

state of affairs, which provided space for the SIS and DMRT to work in significant proportions for about for four decades.

The particular phase of Kerala history as explained above, and within it the condition of Malabar was quite peculiar. But so far no significant study has been undertaken in respect of the work done by the SIS and DMRT in perpetuating crucial changes in Malabar. Main factors responsible for such a lapse might be the absence of readily available materials. The availability of primary materials was quite scanty. Even those available ones were very much scattered and inadequate. But it is at the same time a period of great transition from an out and out traditional orthodoxy to a distinctively progressive phase. The contours of the process of that transition, especially as it occurred in Malabar continued to be and uncharted area, vis-à-vis social, political development and resultant reforms an changes else where in Kerala.

But a study in the above respect has serious limitations. The available materials were in the form of a few unassorted archival materials, brief reminiscences of a few authors, newspaper reports and articles and quite sporadic references in books of history dealing with the above period. At the same time there are several men in Malabar, very senior citizens, who were associated with the work of SIS during that period and who are still brimful with the memories of the yeoman services rendered by the SIS and DMRT in Malabar, and in a few instances elsewhere Kerala. Their memories are a vital

source of information on the largely unrecorded developments of the above period.

Since the SIS/DMRT work in Kerala was an unexplored chapter in modern Kerala history, it has become quite imperative to make use of all available sources and techniques, inspite of their handicaps. Other wise some of the significant developments that took place in Malabar during a period of about four decades would continue to be a missing link. And further, the work of SIS in Kerala was confined largely to British Malabar owing to historical reasons. Malabar, which form a part of Madras presidency, was distributed among the Talukes of Valluvanad, Eranad, Kurumbranad, Kadathanad, Chirakkal and Kottayam.

As has already been pointed out, no authentic study has been undertaken on the activities of the SIS in Kerala. There were only a few papers dealing with some of the aspects of their activities. The SIS programmes in Kerala starts with relief work undertaken for the victims of the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. Of course there are quite a number of works on several aspects connected with the Malabar Rebellion. These works however do not deal with the work of the SIS in Malabar in the years following the Rebellion. With the exception of a few passing references, modern Kerala history is silent about the major quantum of the SIS activities in Kerala. Therefore there is nothing by way of significant previous studies to be

resorted to. This is a very serious lacuna, which nevertheless has to be filled in to do justice to this particular phase of Kerala history. More over owing to lack of an objective investigation into the developments of the above period, there have been certain misunderstandings even in the passing references made by reputed historians.

In preparing the present study a descriptive and analytical approach has been adopted. Since the SIS/DMRT activities have been quite unexplored, it is necessary to provide a detailed narrative of the developments in which it was involved, as could be gathered from the available records. Owing to paucity of materials, the feasibility of oral history has been considered and information so gathered was corroborated with documentary evidences. This was found vital to establishing links between experience and evidence. The methodology prescribed by ICHR has been adopted to incorporate documentation.

The study has been executed in five chapters. Chapter I "Sources and Historiography" considers the value of important source materials, both primary and secondary. The subject being an uncharted one, the technique of modern historiography such as oral history had to be enormously made use of and the historiography defined accordingly.

Chapter II deals with "Socio Political and Economic Background" of Kerala against which the outbreak of the Malabar rebellion and the events

which followed it were to be evaluated. The chapter makes an attempt to look at the social stratification and its peculiar nature. An assessment of the general condition of life which paved the way for the Rebellion and the possibilities of alternatives precipitated by the uprising and the injured psyche of the people of Malabar, which provided space for the SIS work were undertaken in this chapter. In the face of the problem to be investigated, this chapter has got considerable historiographical bearing.

Chapter III "The Formation of Servants of India Society", deals with the historical factors, which impelled Gokhale to establish the SIS as a team of dedicated workers to serve as an agency for social transformation. The chapter examines Gokhale's social, political, economic, and educational thoughts from which evolved the cardinal principles of SIS.

Chapter IV "The Servants of India Society in Kerala" deals with the beginning of the SIS works in Kerala. For historical reasons its major area of operation happened to be Malabar. With the formation of the DMRT especially, its activities had become more Malabar oriented and turned out to be of immense benefit to the area. The chapter gives a brief account of the important personalities who gave leadership to the SIS work in Kerala, like G.K. Devadhar, R. Suryanarayana Rao, A.V. Thakkar Bappa, V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri, V.R. Nayanar and Mrs. V.R. Nayanar.

Chapter V, "The DMRT and its Mission", is an extensive description and analysis of the work carried out by the DMRT. This chapter is subdivided into four sections: (1) Relief Operations (2) Educational Activities (3) Rural Reconstruction and (4) Social Reform.

The study concludes bringing out the character of the activities of the SIS/DMRT, their utility and credibility to the people of Kerala, and the way their activities formed a healing touch to the fragmented psyche of Malabar. The social transformation accelerated by the SIS/DMRT was crucial to this transitional phase of Kerala society.

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# CHAPTER I
# SOURCES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Though the SIS was founded by Gokhale in 1905, it began to function in Kerala only after the Malabar Rebellion of, 1921-22. But in the books dealing with the historical developments of the period following the Rebellion, there are no adequate references to the work done by the SIS in Kerala. The Society's activities in Kerala were mainly confined to the Malabar region for historical reasons. They began their work in Malabar as a relief agency serving the victims of the Rebellion. But in course of time they extended their activities to other equally important areas like education, rural reconstruction and social reform. The work of the Society continued for about four decades, with some measure of work extended to the Travancore-Cochin area also.

Nevertheless, it was quite intriguing that the role played by the SIS continued to remain a desideratum in the historiography of modern Kerala. Apart form a few papers, which partially deal with the work of the SIS, there is so far no serious full length study on the activities of the SIS in Kerala. The Society's work in Kerala remained for all practical purposes a forgotten chapter in Kerala history.

The SIS was an organisation formed by Gokhale on the ideology of constitutionalism. The constitutionalists were wedded to a programme of peaceful agitation ranging from petitions and appeals to passive resistance including non-payment of taxes. The appropriate constitutional method in a given conflict situation was to be derived or chosen on grounds of practicability or expediency.[1] The early leaders of the Indian National Congress were liberal nationalists who hoped that by constitutional means or constitutional agitation it would be possible to exert pressure on the British government to concede responsible government to India. Leaders like Sir. C. Sankaran Nair advocated constitutionalism. Almost a decade after Sankaran Nairs Presidential address at the Amraoti Session of the INC in 1897, it was left to Gokhale to clear the doubts about constitutionalism. In 1907 at a public meeting at Allahabad, Gokhale defined constitutional agitation as one which the Indians were "entitled to adopt to bring about the changes they desired through the action of constituted authorities".[2] It was therefore opposed to direct mass action involving open and violent or even non-violent defiance of the legally constituted government. Unlike the revolutionary nationalists who sought to achieve independence by overthrowing the existing government, the constitutionalists aimed at the reform of the existing system

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[1] M.P. Sreekumaran Nair, *Values in Conflict: Gandhism Versus Constitutionalism*, Ottappalam, 1973, p.13.

[2] Quoted in M.P. Sreekumaran Niar, "Chettur Sankaran Nair: A Misunderstood Liberal-Constitutionalist", *Autobiography of C. Sankaran Nair,* Reprint, Ottappalam, 1998, p.ix.

of government, which according to them would gradually bring about freedom for India.[3]

It was only after many decades of agitating for political reform that nationalist leaders realised that economics and politics were largely interdependent.[4] It became obvious to them that British policy was keeping India unindustrialised, and that economic decisions were based on the assumption that India would export raw materials and import British manufactured goods. As this was increasingly being felt, the arguments in favour of Indian Independence seemed more imperative than ever. From this emerged a stream of Economic Nationalism, which was asserted through the Swadeshi Movement.[5] Especially after the 1905 partition of Bengal, a form of "constructive swadeshi"[6] became a genuine movement for promoting Indian products and industries. The Bengal swadeshi programme was a valorized autonomous self-help effort in indigenous enterprise, education and village organisation over the politics of both moderate and extremist varieties,

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[3] *Ibid.*

[4] McLane (ed), *The Political Awakening in India,* New Jersey, 1970, p. 86.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 111-21; Sumit Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal,* New Delhi, 1973, Chapter II

and was embodied most notably in the writings and activities of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Sathish Mukherjee.[7]

In Kerala the programmes and activities carried out under the aegis of the SIS, especially through the DMRT could be viewed as coming within the purview of constitutionalism and economic nationalism, or constructive swadeshi. But the DMRT programme in Kerala has the distinction of being much less valorized, with the exception perhaps of the great recognition by the British officials of the *modus operandi* of its activists, who never went for a confrontation with them in their passion for amelioration of distress, healing the sick and feeding the starved. Thus, it appears, partially accounts for the fact that their programmes were subsumed in oblivion. The DMRT workers were disinclined to fame, popularity or publicity by their very nature and outlook. Most of what they have done unassumingly though seminal for the country's development remained outside or beyond the immediate gaze of scholars for quite a long time and still lie buried in the archival records, awaiting objective examination. Even academic history with all its claims for objectivity and impartiality has not taken kindly to a host of dedicated workers who were arrayed by the SIS for the cause of the country and its people.

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[7] *Ibid.*, Sathish Muckherjee was editor of *Dawn*, founder of Dawn Society and key figure in the national education movement of Swadeshi years.

The relegation of SIS work in Kerala into unknown recesses of history is a serious lapse in the mainstream history of nationalist movement. As Sumit Sarkar points out the aporia of historiographical approaches and schools in Indian history are not exciting, for what is born out of them were merely bibliographies, surveys of trends or movements within the academic guild. "What is neglected is the whole question of the conditions of production and reception of academic knowledge its relationship with different types of commonsense. We lack, in other words, a social history of historiography".[8] What is ignored in the process is the central Marxist emphasis, namely, dialectical search for contradictions, within structures. Consequently questions of exploitation and power have been collapsed into a unitary vision of the modern bureaucratic state as the sole source of oppression.[9]

Writing as early as 1983 Sumit Sarkar complained, "in view of the veritable field of recent detailed studies particularly on the national movement",

> Social history unfortunately still remains a very neglected subject in India, often being virtually equated with the study of social reform endeavours. Work on the formation of classes and class-consciousness is only just beginning, and while the development of vernacular literatures is obviously one of the

[8] Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, Delhi, 1997, p. 1.

[9] *Ibid*, p. 5.

> really crucial features of modern Indian history, there is little sign as yet of such things becoming the subject of scientific historical or sociological research.[10]

Many of the Marxist historians also are not able to fully integrate their treatment of the primary anti-imperialist contradiction and the secondary inner contradictions and tend to counterpose the anti-imperialist struggle to the class or social struggle. In so doing they see the movement as a structural bourgeois movement, if not the bourgeoisie's movement and miss its open-ended and all-class character. This narrows down their view. "Many of the Marxist writers also do not do an actual detailed historical investigation of the strategy, programme, ideology, extent and forms of mass mobilization, and strategic and tactical manoeuvers of the national movement".[11]

The colonial period was also a period of transition from administrative politics to agitational politics and to the politics of nation building. The transition process varied greatly from region to region and from group to group, but compared to other colonial countries the process in India was smooth rather than disruptive, evolutionary rather revolutionary. It was first in places like Bengal, Bombay and Madras, where the British presence was the oldest and most pervasive that attempts at political mobilisation and the

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[10] Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, Op cit,* p.p. 9-10.

[11] Bipan Chandra *et al.*, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, New Delhi, 1988, p. 22.

formation of voluntary association occurred"[12]. Earliest participants in these political developments came from the higher castes that had been exposed to Western education and culture.

A similar process of transition also occurred in the realm of historiography during the colonial period. By the late 19th and early 20th century, historiography came to be punctuated by an absence of dynasties and wars. Instead, especially in and around the Swadeshi years, the notion of *Swaraj* (society, community) came to be counter posed to *Rashtra* or Rajshakthi (state, political domain). In this perspective the real history of India was located in the first, not the second, for *Swaraj* embodied the distinctive qualities peculiar to the genius culture and religion of the Indian people.[13]

So far as Kerala history was concerned the historical period of the developments under study come under a major phase of transition from feudal, bourgeois consciousness to intense political consciousness, which favoured drastic changes in society. A wave of socio-religious reform movements [14] initiated by S.N.D.P, N.S.S., Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sabha, Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha, Atma Vidya Sangam, Malabar Muslim

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[12] McLane (ed), *Op. cit*, p. 1.

[13] Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History, Op. cit.*, p. 21.

[14] P. Chandra Mohan, "Growth of Social Reform Movements in Kerala", In P.J. Cherian (ed), *Perspectives on Kerala History* Vol. II, Part II, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p.p. 456-85.

Association and Kerala Muslim Association, [15] Cochin Pulaya Mahasabha, hectic Congress activities and Temple Entry Satyagrahas, the emergence of the Communist movement [16]and trade union movement were all taking place, radically effecting Kerala society.

It is instructive to notice that inspite of the above progressive developments Kerala society especially the social life of Malabar continued to be vitiated by evils practices like pollution, untouchability, unapproachability and even unseability. Forms of exploitation and oppression at the hands of landlords and of state machinery was also rampant. Over and above these conditions causing miserable experiences, the people were also agonised by natural calamities, epidemics, famine, illiteracy, unemployment and a host of social customs and traditions. The progressive ideas put across by the above socio political movements had not however percolated into the masses, especially of the depressed classes. It was such a strange state of affairs which provided space for the SIS activities in Kerala, mainly in the Malabar region. Though they had done highly creditable work since the Malabar Rebellion for about four decades, proper space for their service to the people

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[15] P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom movement in Kerala*, Vol. II, (1885-1938), Thiruvananthapuram, 1972; Also see, Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, Cochin, 1985.

[16] EMS Namboodiripad, *EMS Inte Sampoorna Krithikal Vol. 9 (1948)* Tiruvananthapuram, (Mal.), 2000 p.p. 341-58; ,T.J. Nossitor, *Communism in Kerala: A Study in Political Adaptation*, Delhi, 1982, p.p. 84-85.

of Kerala has not been earmarked in the academic histories pertaining to that phase of Kerala history.

It has been pointed out that the methodological parameters set for regional history writing, more or less reflected the overriding concerns of national historiography. In that process several local and remembered histories embedded in folk memory got neglected.[17] Similarly while the socio-religious reform movements spread egalitarian and progressive ideals, they also perpetuated caste exclusiveness and caste chauvinism. Thus caste-based socio-religious reform movements brought about caste-based social structure, which still play a very important role in reinforcing orthodoxy.[18] This became clear when the socio-religious movements came under the grip of sectarian upper class interests of the concerned caste groups. The reformist faith could not shift the focus of authority from communal, casteist traditions to enlightened individual conscience. For instance, the Church institution was as a model by the leaders of SNDP and NSS. But though men like G.K. Devadhar were greatly appreciative of the work of the Christian Missionaries, the SIS/DMRT work never bordered on this distinction. It was quite non-

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[17] P.K. Michel Tharakan, "Making of Modern Kerala: Historical Survey of Structures and Process", In, *International Congress on Kerala Studies, Abstracts,* Vol. I, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994. p. 54.

[18] P.J. Cherian, "Dialectic of the Socio-Religions Reform Movements in Travancore", *Ibid,* p.p. 98-99.

sectarian, secularist and democratic in letter and spirit. This fact isolates the SIS/DMRT work in Kerala from other socio-religious reform Movements.

The Servants of India Society was a movement, which rendered yeoman services to a people who on the one hand was affected immediately by the rebellion, and on the other was subject to age-old inhuman customs and practices.[19] Congress leaders of Malabar were in the forefront of relief operations for the victims of the rebellion.[20] Some of them became active workers of the DMRT, which functioned like a movement in areas such as relief operations, education, rural reconstruction and social reform. Its exemplar in Malabar was V.R. Nayanar veteran social worker and freedom fighter.[21]

In the early 1930's especially in Travancore, the level of popular consciousness was rising to newer heights through the work of community organisations. But soon a shift in the role of community organisations was evident because attainment of political power was crucial to enhancing and consolidating their status. At the same time there was a counterveiling power emerging in the Kerala society, namely, a growing class-consciousness. Emergence of a militant working class as well as an organised agrarian movement, (stronger in Malabar than in Travancore) contributed to the

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[19] See Chapter II of this work.

[20] Perunna K.N. Nair, *Op.cit.*, p. 53.

[21] Thikkodiyan, *Arangukanatha Nadan,* Thrissur, 1988, p. 134.

growth of class-consciousness, which received an added impetus through party politics.[22] In the same way the SIS/DMRT work in Malabar, being non-communal and secularist was in fact instrumental in preparing the ground for the emerging class-consciousness in Malabar, without perpetuating any inclination for political power game.

The regions, which encompass Kerala today–Malabar, Travancore and Cochin had different historical experiences till their integration in 1956. Malabar was part of the Madras presidency and its people were involved in a direct relationship with the British and their institutions. The Muslims who were a numerically strong community were mostly small peasants and agricultural laboures, who suffered under the exploitative system of land tenure introduced by the British. The Moplah uprising against the exploitation in the hands of the Janmies changed the political complexion of the region. The alienation of Muslims from the British as well as the Congress helped the Muslim League to make inroads in to the Muslim community. Thus a consciousness oriented towards the community rather than the welfare of the Malayalees as a whole was a significant development in the growth of communalism in Kerala.[23] One manifestation of this was the formation of caste organisations like SNDP and NSS. These two organisations are weak in Malabar as compared to South Kerala. The

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[22] George Mathew, "Community and Community Politics in Kerala", *Ibid*, p. 103.

[23] Oomen John, "The Politics of Communalism in Kerala", *Ibid*, p. 106.

SIS/DMRT work helped in the secularization of the outlook of the people of Malabar, as its workers were drawn from the various sections of society, Hindu, Muslim and Christian, who were committed to humanitarian work without any sectarian leanings.

Unlike the reform movements among the other communities or castes, the socio religious reform movements among the Muslims lacked cohesion, and there was no central organisation or leadership. However, a new breed of *ulemas* who had their training in secular as well as religious education began to emerge by the turn of the 20th century. These progressive *ulemas* took the initiative in introducing reforms in the community. In Travancore it was spearheaded by Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi and in Malabar it was Syed Sanaulla Makti Thangal, who both emphasized the need for secular education, especially of women. But owing to the low level of literacy among Muslims, the message of reform could not reach the masses. These reforms were also strongly opposed by the traditional *ulemas* who exercised considerable influence on the community. Sanaullah even condemned the Mappila riots and thus reduced the possibility for communal solidarity.[24] The DMRT in Malabar paid special attention to the cause of the education and rehabilitation of the Muslims who were uprooted by the rebellion. It also worked among them to foster a sense of communal harmony.

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[24] M. Kabir, Socio-Religious Reform Movements Among the Muslims of Kerala: C. 1890-1930, *Ibid.*, p.108.

While the traditional Mappila intellectuals did not attempt to revolutionize the community politically and culturally, the Hindu community remained yoked under a feudal and colonial ideology. The Hindu traditional intellectuals were allied with the landlords. The Mappila organisational ideology encouraged the community to stage protest from a religious system and authority. It persuaded the people within its fold to follow and abide by everything that were imposed as ordained. As a result, following the rebellion, the entire cultural fabric of the area was torn asunder. Thus the revolt could be seen as a moment in the historical process of domination/resistance.[25]

It has been argued that in the social and religious spheres, Indian nationalism proclaimed the principles of individual liberty, equality and self-determination. In the process it attacked the undemocratic principles of birth and exclusive privileges based on birth in which such institutions as castes were reared. Thus Indian nationalism developed into an essentially democratic movement, which struggled against both medievalism and foreign rule. The socio-religious reform movements were the expression of the national awakening in India and aimed at a revision of the medieval social

[25] Ranajith Guha and Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak (ed), *Selected Subaltern Studies,* New York, 1988, p.380.

structure and religious outlook from a democratic outlook and based on the principle of individual liberty and human equality.[26]

An important historiographical assumption, of the present study is the one developed by Bipan Chandra. According to him the analysis of colonialism and its impact is closely linked to the choice of strategies and policies of development followed in a post-colonial society. In this view historical roots and causes of backwardness, the inherited pattern of underdevelopment and the consequent obstacles to development are determining features in framing strategies and policies to tackle those problems. Therefore in a post-colonial society every major economic, political, social, cultural, and intellectual development can be understood only with reference to colonialism as the constant historical backdrop.[27]

During the later phase of colonialism competition for resources and benefits mounted between European and Indian investors, which led to distress and political unrest. Between the years 1921-41, these became sharper, when the average increase in population had more than doubled, from 255 million in 1871 to 390 million in 1941. As a result growth was uneven. The sharpest increase in population between 1921-41 were in Eastern and Central India, while the South lagged well behind at less than one percent

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[26] A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1993, p. 242.

[27] Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, New Delhi, 2000, p. v., Also see "Colonialism Some Basic Aspects", *Ibid.*, pp. 1-22; "The Colonial Legacy: the Case of India," *Ibid.*, p. 79-114.

per annum. The lower rate reflected the famine mortality of the late 19th century and the greater incidence of morbidity from cholera, malaria, small pox and dysentery. Poor health and poverty went together with inadequate development funding. Southern India received a smaller proportion of public investment in railways, roads, power and irrigation than other parts of British India.[28] The significance of the activities of the SIS in the areas of distress relief, rehabilitation, rural reconstruction, education and social reform can be gauged, against the above state of affairs.

It is also instructive to notice that the period to which the present study is related was also one of intense politicization and unionization in Kerala. In the decades after the Malabar rebellion especially after 1930, there was a steady growth of class-consciousness among the various occupational groups like the peasants[29] and teachers[30] among the unemployed youths[31] and the students.[32] Malabar was very much in the thick of these activities. Though these movements championed the interests of specific groups, they were also allied to the national movement, especially in their formative phases. The

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[28] Burton Stein, *A History of India,* New Delhi, 2004, p. 312.

[29] A.K. Poduval, *Kerala Karshaka Prasthanathinte Oru Lakhu Charithram,* Thiruvananthapuram, 1969.

[30] P.K. Nambiar, *Keralathile Adhyapaka Prasthanam,* Thiruvananthapuram, 1982; also see Vallathol Kumara Menon, *Adhyapaka Prasthanam Uthara Keralathil,* Thiruvananthapuram, 1976.

[31] A.K. Gopalan, *Keralam Innale Innu,* Thiruvananthapuram, 2004, p.p. 48-50. Also see A.K.G, *Manninuvendi,* Thiruvananthapuram, 2005, p.p. 18-33; P.K.K. Menon, *Op cit.,* p.p. 513, 514.

[32] Dr. K. Gopalan Kutty, "Malabar", in P.J. Cherian (ed), *Op cit.*, p. 565.

Socialist wing of the Congress was always on the forefront to promote the cause of the exploited. As a matter of policy the Servants of India Society kept away from direct agitational politics. However, men like Suryanarayana Rao and V.R. Nayanar were associated themselves with the organisations of teachers and tile workers of Malabar. The spirit of egalitarianism, secularism and general welfare and communal harmony, which they strove to foster throughout their activities, were all conducive to the development of an enlightened political consciousness, especially in Malabar.

It was in such a socio-political scenario of disharmony and distress especially among the Hindus and Muslims,[33] on the one hand, and of protest and confrontation between the aggrieved sections of the society and the government,[34] on the other hand, that leaders of the national movement and other reform movements had to undertake their work though an important chapter of the national movement, the work of the SIS in Kerala remains an unexplored area. In the studies pertaining to Kerala history between 1920-1957 there are only isolated references about the Servants of India Society. Though they made remarkable contribution to the history and culture of Kerala no serious study has been undertaken so far.

There are of course a few books, which give scant information about the SIS work in Kerala. These books are either eyewitness accounts,

[33] T.K. Bheeman Nair, *Keralathinte Karanavar*, Calicut, 1989, p. 24.

[34] Dr. K. Gopalankutty, *Op.cit*, pp. 547-65.

reminiscences or mere narratives of contemporary events. With the exception of very few instances many of them lack objectivity and chronology, two basic parameters on which rest the authenticity of a historical work. An earliest work which gives a short description of SIS activities in the wake of the Malabar Rebellion was C. Gopalan Nairs *Moplah Rebellion 1921.*[35] The author describes the arrival of G.K. Devadhar in Malabar, the function of Malabar Central Relief committee and the formation of the Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust (DMRT).

K. Madhavan Nair's classic work *Malabar Kalapam* (2002)[36] is primarily an eye witness account of the eventualities of the rebellion. He makes a brief reference to the relief work undertaken by the SIS. But the book gives a reliable picture of the socio-political and economic conditions of Ernad, which paved the way for the rebellion and the manner in which it distorted the erstwhile harmonious co-existence among different communities.

Two important works which give a little more information about the SIS activities were the reminiscences of C.H. Kunhappa[37] and Thikkodiyan[38]. C.H. Kunhappa who was for several years editor of Mathrubhumi, the

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35 C. Goplan Nair, *The Moplah Rebellion 1921*, Kozhikode, 1923, p.p. 95-98.

36 K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam,* Kozhikode, 2002 (1971), p. 182.

37 C.H. Kunhappa, *Smaranakal Mathram*, Thrissur, 2000, p.p. 88-90, 139-149.

38 Thikkodian, *Arangukanatha Nadan,* Thrissur, 1998.

nationalist daily published from Malabar, was intimately associated with some of the activities of the DMRT, especially at its Gopalapuram centre. He gives a portrait of V.R. Nayanar, some of the important institutions, personalities and socio-political developments of Malabar figure in his work. Almost in the same vein, Thikkodiyan, who worked as office secretary of V.R. Nayanar, scribbles out a portrait of his master and describes the miserable conditions of Malabar where the DMRT provided great consolation to the people in distress. Both these works give an idea about the hostile conditions of Malabar during the period in which SIS rendered their services. But they are uncritical hagiographical works.

Dr. K.K.N. Kurup in his *Modern Kerala: Studies in Social and Agrarian Relations* (1988) discusses among other things the educational and social progress, socio-religious and reform movements and agrarian problems in Kerala. While he is very eloquent about the developments in Malabar he remains quite silent about the educational and social reform activities of the SIS especially in Malabar.[39]

The Kerala State Gazetteers Department published a book entitled *Perspectives on Kerala History* (Part II, Vol. II)[40] which in its unit III "Modern Period" deals rather extensively with peasant revolts colonial

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[39] K.K.N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala: Studies in Social and Agrarian Relations*, Calicut, 1988.

[40] P.J. Cherian, ed, *Op. cit.*

economy, social change political consciousness and social reform movements. But there are only two passing references to the SIS in the Kerala context in the above book.

The works of EMS Namboodiripad have been recognised as very valuable in the study of Kerala history and society. However, the work of the SIS in Kerala does not figure in his analysis. The subject is also absent in Dr. M. Gangadhara Menon's work on the *Malabar Rebellion 1921-22*. But in a biographical work on *Muhammed Abdurahiman* there are some references to the SIS work in Malabar.[41] Similarly the book *Mathrubhumiyude Charithram* has paid some attention to the SIS activities in Malabar.[42]

*Kelappan Smaraka Grandham* (1972),[43] contains accounts by various persons on certain aspects of SIS/DMRT work. Apart from this, a major historical text which gives a very brief account of the DMRT work in P.K.K. Menon's *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala* Vol. 2 (1885-1938).[44]

Another book, which mentions the SIS in Malabar, is the biography of Kelappan written by Prof. M.P. Manmadhan.[45] The book describes the

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[41] S.K. Pottekkad, *et al, Muhammad Abdu Rahiman, Kozhikode, 1978,* p.p. 168, 182, 423, 555.

[42] V.R. Menon, *Mathrubhumiyude Charithram,* Vol. I, Kozhilode, 1973, p. 37, 43, 206, 237, 239, 379.

[43] *Kelappan Smaraka Grandham, Calicut, 1972.*

[44] Prof. P.K.K. Menon, *op cit,* p. 520.

[45] Prof. M.P. Manmadhan, *Kelappan,* 1991, Kottayam, p.p. 44-45.

founding of the Gopalapuram school and colony, which was an important centre of SIS work in Malabar. The biography of Vydyaratnam P.S. Varrier, eminent ayurvedic physician, mentions the visit of G.K. Devadhar in Malabar soon after the rebellion and some of the relief operations organised by the SIS.[46] In addition to this, there are a few articles, which deal with certain works of DMRT.[47]

In works dealing with the history of the Indian National Congress in Kerala the role of the Servants of India Society and the DMRT Movement has not been adequately described. Perunna K.N. Nair's book *Kerelathile Congress Prasthanam,* for example, describes several important events and movements which took place in Malabar as part of the freedom struggle but makes no mention of the activities of the Servants of India Society and DMRT.[48] Similarly the souvenir published by the Malabar Committee of the Freedom Fighters organisation (1972) provides a long list of freedom fighters of Malabar and gives an account of the major events in Malabar, but is

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[46] Keezhedath Vasudevan Nair, *Vydyarathnam P.S. Varrier Jeevitha Katha,* Kozhikode, 1989, p.p. 131-33.

[47] Dr. T. M. Vijayan,"DMRT and its Functions in Malabar", In Dr. V. Kunhali (ed.), *Kerala Society: Historical Perceptions,* Calicut, 2002: T. Muhammadali, In Dr. K.N. Ganesh (ed) *Culture and Modernity: Historical Explorations,* Calicut, 2004, p.p. 225-26.

[48] Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam,* Kochi, 1985.

conspicuously silent about personalities associated with the SIS and DMRT like Suryanarayana Rao and V.R. Nayanar.[49]

K.N. Panikkar's book *Against the Lord and State (1989)* deals with the role of religion and the character of peasant uprising in Malabar during 1836-1921. The book gives a detailed account about the socio-political condition of Malabar before 1921, which eventually led to the rebellion. But the book does not consider the consequences and the impact of the revolt of 1921. The value of the book lies in the fact that it is a well-documented work on the erstwhile peasant uprisings in Malabar, which culminated in the rebellion of 1921. In the short section on the aftermath of the rebellion Panikkar states,

> The relief and reconstruction activities undertaken after the rebellion also underlined the communal divide. Not only the help offered by individuals, but even the relief measures organised by the Khilafath Committee and the Congress tended to run on communal lines; the former for the Mappilas and the latter for the Hindus. This was probably not so intended, but it inevitably took such a turn in the circumstances then prevailing. Congressmen on their part were not free from religious bias either; they appeared to be more concerned with the welfare of the Hindus than of the people as a whole.[50]

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[49] *Souvenir* or the Freedom Fighter's organisation, Malabar Committee, Calicut, 1972.

[50] K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921,* Delhi, 1992, p.189.

This observation is not wholly based on facts. For there was first, the Servants of India Society and later, the Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust (DMRT) in which both Hindus and Muslims worked together in the true secular spirit. Most of its workers were either Congressmen or sympathesizers of the Congress programmes and a few of them did not profess any explicit politics. Archival records and experiences of several elderly persons of Malabar bear ample testimony to this fact. It is a serious lacuna that such a remarkable event was bypassed by most works dealing with contemporary history. And it is quiet unwarranted and tantamount to a grave error that communal touch was attributed to such a secular venture.

A few souvenirs are important source of information on the activities of the SIS in Kerala. The *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika* (1984)[51] has been a guide to the work of DMRT especially under the leadership of V.R. Nayanar. It has thrown considerable light into the various aspects of the personality of Nayanar. *Harijan Sevak Sangh Gandhi Janma Sadabdhi Souvenir*(1969) has been found very useful especially in respect of anti untouchability programmes.[52] Another such source is the Golden Jubilee Souvenir of Kerala

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[51] *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika,* Kannur, 1984.

[52] *Harijan Sevak Sangh Gandhi Janma Satabdhi Souvenir,* Palakkad, 1969.

Branch of Harijan Sevak Sangh (1985), [53] which draws the contours of social reform work among the depressed classes of Kerala.

A potential source of information on the topic is the back volumes of *Mathrubhumi* daily. The back issues of the paper from 1923 to 1957 have been found very helpful in tracing the various events and developments during the period under study and thus to maintain chronology. The *Mathrubhumi Weekly* from 1933 to 1950 have also been made use of. Some of the articles of V.R. Nayanar are available in these volumes.

Several issues of the *Vettom* Magazine published by the Sanchara Grandhalaya, Tanur contains reminiscences of some of the DMRT workers which could be used in reconstructing a history of the movement. Its founder late Tanur Parameswaran was a DMRT worker and a disciple of V. R. Nayanar.

Since the activities of the SIS in Kerala has been an uncharted area, quite a lot of information had to be gained from the memory of men who were both witness and subject to many of the developments of the times. Therefore several persons have been interviewed and the information gained from them correlated at appropriate points in the study. This technique, recently recognised as oral history have a significant place in the socio-political and

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[53] *Harijan Sevaka Sangham Kerala Sakha Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika, 1934-84*, Kozhikode, 1985.

historical studies. It has democratized the historical and anthropological study of the past by recording the experience of people who have been marginalised and "hidden from history". Oral history thus complements archival or documentary sources. The scope of oral history has been well brought out by Paul Thompson, an authority in the area:

> Oral history is a history built around people. It thrusts life into history itself and it widens its scope. It allows heroes not just from the leaders, but from the unknown majority of the people... It brings history into and out of the community. It helps the less privileged, and especially the old, towards dignity and self confidence . . . equally oral history offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history; to the authoritarian judgement inherent in its tradition. It provides a means for radical transformation of the social meaning of history.[54]

The experiences of interviewees have attested the role of the SIS in the socialisation and politicisation process of Malabar life as part of the nationalist movement. Thus they have brought out a down to earth sense of the process of socio-political transformation in Malabar, during the period under study. The Chapter II of the present study, "Socio Political Background" has, therefore, to be corroborated to the historiographical

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[54] Cited in K.K.N. Kurup, (Editor and chief investigator), *The Socio-Economic Transformation of South Indian Villages During the 20th Century. (A Case Study Based on Oral History)*, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004, quoted p. 15.

assumptions presented above. Such an approach, it is hoped, would clearly underscore the historicity of the activities of the SIS in Kerala.

The following are the centers visited for consulting the materials required for the present study:

Several important primary materials available at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library New Delhi, have been consulted. These include *Devadhar Papers, Sastri Papers, Gokhale Papers, Assorted Diaries of Sreenivasa Sastri, Bombay Chronicle, Sradha* (A Hindi daily) *Servant of India* and back volumes of *Malayala Manorama.* Books on Gokhale, Sastri and Devadhar available at the Museum Library were consulted. In the National Archives, New Delhi *Gokhale Papers* and B.*S. Moonje Papers* are avilable. Correspondences of G.K. Devadhar, Mahatma Gandhi, books by J.C. Kumarappa and on Gandhian thought were consulted at National Gandhi Museum, Rajghat. Books on Gokhale and on SIS are available at Servants of India Society Library Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi.

Files and records preserved at the Regional Archives Kozhikode have been consulted. These include DMRT files, relief work files, Harijan Sevak Sangh files, files on Nayadi rehabilitation, Madras Museum Bulletin, *Al Ameen,* Correspondences of Sastri, Suryanarayana Rao, A.V. Thakkar, H.N. Kunzru, V.R. Nayanar and of SIS (Madras). A very potential source of information was the *Mathrubhumi* Archives Kozhikode and Sanchara

Grandhalayam Tanur. Private papers of DMRT workers and records of Nayanar Balika Sadanam Kozhikode were consulted.

Books available at the Library of the Department of History, Calicut University, CH.MK Library Calicut University, Malabar Institute for Research and Development, Vatakara, Vagbhatananda Library Eranjipalam, Gandhigriham Kozhikode, Desaposhini Library Kuthiravattam; Deseeya Vayanasala Mannamangalam, Koyilandy; Kelappaji Smaraka Vayanasala, Goapalapuram; Vallathol Library, Keezhariyur and Mahatma Grandhalayam Chemmarathur, Vatakara were extensively utilized.

# THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY IN KERALA: A STUDY OF THE DMRT MOVEMENT

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

*By*

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# CHAPTER II

# SOCIO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Till the early decades of the Twentieth century the Kerala society continued to be feudal both in structure and function. It was caste-oriented, and naturally dominated by the upper castes, who were least bothered of the other sections. Consequently there was a deep chasm, which separated the high castes from the low castes.[1] So far as the administration of law and justice was concerned, they were not egalitarian and rational. The upper castes enjoyed all privileges such as exemption from payment of land tax and immunity from death penalty. The penal code was extremely severe as far as the lower castes were concerned. Death penalty was imposed even for ordinary offences like theft, killing of cows etc. The members of the backward classes were subjected to the worst form of tyranny by the king's officials or persons in authority.[2]

A very crude system of caste hierarchy known as *"Jathinirnayam"* was prevalent in Malabar. According to this system, the Brahmins who were born from the face of the creator (Brahma) were a pure race and occupied the topmost position in society. Below them were the Ambalavasis and Nairs who

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[1] K.P. Kesava Menon, *Bandhananthil Ninnu,* (Mal.) Calicut 1986, pp.3-5.

[2] K.N. Panicker, *Against the Lord and the State* 1989, p.390-91.

can approach a Brahmin but not touch him. The Thiyyas and the sub castes were further below, and they pollute both by touch and sight. The Pulayas, Parayas, Nayadis and Ullatans were grouped as *chandalas* who pollute one another by touch or approach. Unapproachability was rigorously observed as was evident from common expressions of special measurement such as *thiyyappad, cherumappad, nayadippad* etc., which indicate the distance lower castes should keep from a caste-Hindu.[3] In addition to economic domination the Brahmins enjoyed educational and cultural hegemony. They were the custodians of the *Dharmasasthras* and so the law givers and its interpreters. They had exclusive right to marry the female members of the Royal family of Kochin.[4] Since they followed the law of primogeniture, the younger sons were allowed to have concubinary relations with sudra woman irrespective of matrimonial obligations. This practice was known as *Sambandham,* which was later resented to and stopped by the reform movement within Nair community. [5]

The basis of Hindu social organisation was provided by the principles of *Varnasramadharma. Varna* and *Asrama* are two different notions while varna embodies the features of the caste, the asrama refers to different stages

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[3] J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, Bombay, 1963, p.79.

[4] K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *Kochi Rajyacharithram*. Vol.II, (Mal.), Thrissur, 1914, pp.640-41.

[5] George Wood Cock, *Kerala A Portriat of Malabar Coast*, London, 1967, p.106; Achutha Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, p.193; Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente Jeevathasmaranakal,* Perunna, 1964, pp.38, 39, 42.

of life obligatory to human beings.[6] Varna embodies a uniform pattern of hierarchy throughout India without any regional variation. Therefore, there were only four varnas with the Harijans placed beyond the pale of the caste.[7] Caste, however had been defined in terms of distinct ways of life. In Weber's terminology they could be status groups. In contrast to classes status groups are normally communities. They are, however, often of an amorphous kind."[8] Though an occupational group, caste is not identical with class. While classes are open, castes are quite rigid. A man can change his class status by changing his occupation, as for example; an agricultural labourer can became a land owner or a tenant. But a Vellala becoming a Brahmin or a Palla becoming a Vellala was strictly forbidden.[9] However it was pointed out that in the pre-capitalist Indian society the caste was so flexible as to allow intermingling between class and caste and through the caste form class manifested itself.[10]

In fact the caste system was a bundle of disparate features such as endogamy, hierarchy, restriction on commensal relations between castes, restriction on choice of occupation, civil and religious disabilities, domination

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[6] B. Kuppu Swami, *Social Change in India*, Delhi, 1972, p.132.

[7] M.N. Sreenivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Bombay, 1956, p.3.

[8] Quoted in Andre Bateille, *Caste, Class and Power*, Bombay, 1969, p.188.

[9] Andre Beteille, *Ibid.*, p.23.

[10] Anil Bhatt,*Caste Class and Politics*, Delhi, 1975, p.p. 22-23.

of privileged sections and widespread practice of untouchability.[11] As a result of these awkward features social growth was arrested, giving space for increasing tendencies of exploitation. Caste has been defined by M.N. Sreenivas "as a hereditary and endogamous, usually localised groups having a traditional association with an occupation and particular position in the local hierarchy of castes.[12] Relations between castes were governed among other things by notions of 'pollution and purity'. Generally maximum commensality occurs within the same caste. The status of an individual in a caste society is co-terminious with the social status of the group in which he was born. The inviolable text of authority in these matters had been the code of Manu known as *Manusmrithi*. It follows that caste status and socio-economic and educational status correspond to each other. A person of low caste occupies the same status in the political or economic hierarchy[13] This unalterability of individual status accounts for the social stagnation of Indian society till the early decades of independence. Caste is also a determining factor in marriage, in food habits, in customs and rituals regarding birth, death and vocation. The Brahmins being the apex group were the main manipulators in a rigid social set up.[14]

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[11] G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, Bombay, 1969, p.2f.

[12] M.N. Sreenivas, *Op.cit.*

[13] Anil Bhatt, *Op. cit.*, p.23.

[14] Kathleen Gough, "Social structure of a Tanjore Village," In McKin Marriott (ed), *Village India*, London, 1955, pp.36, 52.

According to tradition, which was reinforced by *Keralolpathi* and *Keralamahathmyam,* the land of Kerala was gifted to the Brahmins by Lord Parasurama. The relationship between landlord and tenant was regulated customarily by the principle that an agreement to enjoy the land should be renewed at the end of every twelve years.[15] This legendary claim was supported by the fact that in South Malabar and Cochin the Brahmins and Devaswoms were the majority of the landlords. The tenure known, as *Kanam* was peculiar to the Brahmin strong holds of Cochin and South Malabar. In Travancore majority of the land was held by the government and so landlords were weak.[16]

In the *janmi* system the Brahmins occupied an economically powerful position with "supreme absolute and unqualified proprietorship to the soil. Thus it was the highest and most complete type of private property in land.[17] The Brahmin dominance on land was reinforced during the *Chola* invasion, when lands and houses built in them were raided by the armies. As a means of safety from such raids, land and property were made secure by entrusting them to Brahmin joint families or temples. Many land owners who did so became the tenants of the Namboodiri Brahmins. Many Nairs who became

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[15] T.K. Veluppillai, *Travancore State Manual* II, Tiruvananathapuram, 1940, p.30.

[16] E.M.Sankaran Namboodiripad. *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, (Mal.) Thrissur, 1969, pp.57, 58.

[17] Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance*, New Delhi, 1976, p.27.

the tenants of the Namboodiri Brahmins used to sublet their holdings to the Ezhavas or to employ Pulayas as slave labourers.[18]

The absolute supremacy of the Brahmin landlord was well brought out by Nagam Aiya in the 1875 census report:

> His tenants . . . bow down to him not simply as landlord but as their royal liege and benefactor, their suzerain master, their household deity, their very God on earth . . . His person is Holy, his directions are commands, his movements are processions, his meal is nectar. He is the holiest of human beings. He is the representative of God on earth.[19]

Kerala society generally and Malabar society in particular was structurally feudal in social and economic aspect. Therefore the different sections had to suffer several disabilities in the matter of their right over land and their social position. In the pyramidal structure of the society the intensity of the disabilities increased in the descending order. The untouchables who were the lowest and the lowliest and their suffering was the most acute. As Mateer put it,

> . . . they (the untouchables) were required to be uncovered above the waists; shoes, umbrellas, fine cloth and costly ornaments were interdicted to them. The holding of umbrellas was prohibited to all castes, except Brahmins, on public

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[18] George wood cock, *Op.cit.*, p.102; Kallen Pokkudan, *Kandalkadukalkkidayil Ente Jeevitham*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 2005, p. 34, 16.

[19] Nagam Aiya, *Travancore Census Report*, 1875, p.191.

occassions, though the rain was pouring upon them. The proper salutation from a female to person of rank was to uncover the bosom.[20]

Slavery was in practice in Kerala as early as 9th century A.D. and continued till 19th century. Slavary and slave trade had a long history in Cochin and Malabar.[21] Transaction of slaves in open market was a usual thing in days of famine in Travancore. In Malabar the Cheruman and Pariah communities were kept in perpetual slavery.[22] They were attached to the soil as permanent surfs by birth. It was of praedial nature both in Travancore and Malabar.[23] A male slave was transacted for about eight *Parras* of paddy annually while to eight females the cost was quite less. Unlike in ancient Athens where a slave was considered by Aristotle as a "tool with life"[24] in it and kept as the master's family retainer, in Kerala he was despised with contempt.[25]

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[20] Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, London, 1883, p.291.

[21] Kerala Society Papers series, No.5, p.277; L.K Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes I,* Madras, 1908, p.95; also see A.V. Anil Kumar *Yiramyav: Adimakalude Jeevitham* (Mal.), Kozhikode, 2004, p.p. 36-38, 75-76.

[22] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, I, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, p.176; Dubois *Hindu Manners Customes and Ceremonies*, Oxford, 1897, p.51; also see Kallen Pokkudan, *Op. cit.*, p.p. 28,29.

[23] Ward and Conner, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1898, p.160.

[24] Brinton *et al.*, *A History of Civilization,* I, New Jersey, 1964, p.67.

[25] See notes 21 above.

Engulfed by all sorts of prohibition the untouchables were permitted only to suffer endlessly from innumerable disabilities imposed by the caste system. They cannot even take good names. They can take the name of animals, birds, insects or other creatures. Names related to God and man were exclusive right of caste men. In the Malayalam month of 'Karkitaka' when *Ramayana* used to be recited at the caste Hindu households, the Pulayas were not permitted to go by that way. They had to live in perpetual subservience as an injured and insulted lot. Public offices and roads in proximity to temples or high caste houses were unapproachable to them.[26] Their plight was very vividly described by the poet Kumaranasan in his poem *Duravastha* (1098 ME) which was written immediately after the Malabar Rebellion. He was shocked to see the depressed classes being treated as "untouchables, unapproachables and unseeables." The poem is a vehement indictment on the caste system.[27]

It is also a passionate response interspersed with righteous indignation at the eventualities in the wake of the Malabar riot. He was not only shocked by the "unimaginably terrific and demoniac events" which occurred during the riot but was also aggrieved at the plight of the Hindu community which

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[26] Francis Day, *The Land of the Perumals*, Madras, 1863, p.321; also see Kallen Pokkudan, *Op. cit.*, p.p. 36,54.

[27] Kumaranasan, "Duravastha". In *Asante Padyakrithikal*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 1980, p.312.

was churned out of the teeth of the rebellion.[28] Though Asan was not properly informed about the cause and the consequence of the rebellion, he was convinced of the fact that social inequalities brought about by casteism and religious fanaticism were important undercurrents of such social upheavals. [29]

Caste based observances and practices were extremely acute in Malabar. The Nairs of Malabar, as elsewhere in Kerala, were protectors of land and so were in the services of kings as soldiers. When the British initiated consolidation of power, the Nairs role as military men began to cease. But they could occupy administrative posts of various kinds under the chieftains of the land.[30] In Travancore Diwan Munro had begun a policy of recruiting non-caste Hindus into the state service.[31] But the British followed a general policy of reserving law paid administrative posts for members of low castes.[32] In 1883 they declared that no person would be disabled from holding any office or employment on account of his religion, place or birth, descent or colour.[33] There was in this policy recognition of the principle of 'equality

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[28] Kumaranasan, "Preface" to *Duravastha, Ibid.*, p. 305.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 313.

[30] K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *Op. cit.*, p.901.

[31] Robin Jeffrey, *Op. cit.*, p.7.

[32] M.S.A. Rao, *Tradition, Rationality and Change*, Bombay, 1972, p.135.

[33] S.V. Desikachar, (ed), *Readings in the Constitutional History of India; 1757-1947*, Bombay, 1983, p.250.

before law', which was to undermine caste-hierarchy. The British policy was by and large a challenge to the privileged position of the Nairs.

The British policy, however, was not intended to destroy the caste system itself. The British bureaucracy never interfered much with the social customs of the land. They adopted a policy of neutrality in caste affairs throughout the Indian Empire.[34] They only wanted to remove those aspects of the caste dominated feudal system, which were hurdles in the way of their political dominance.[35] As a good example, there was the legislative enactment of the Caste Disabilities removal Act of 1850, by which converted non-Hindus could inherit ancestral property. Through these measures the British plan was to amalgamate Kerala into the wider Indian market, so as to facilitate great change in the mode of production. As a result there evolved a new production relation based on wage, labour and capital investment.[36] Accordingly the native rulers were compelled to modify their administrative set up in compliance with the principles of the British rule. The most

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[34] P.N. Chopra, Editor, *The Gazetteer of India II, History and Culture*, New Delhi 1973, p.642.

[35] E.M. Sankaran Namboodiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi (E.M.S. Sampoorna Krithikal, 1948)* - Sanchika 9, Thiruvanathapuram, 2000, pp.158-9.

[36] E.M. Sankaran Namboodiripad, *Keralathile Desiyaprasthanam*, (Mal) Ernakulam, 1957, p.139.

remarkable aspect of the British policy in administration was the implementation of the principle of equality before law and rule of law.[37]

In spite of all these progressive steps, British policy by and large was a sort of compromise with the casteist, landlordist and feudalist system. In order to entrench their political dominance and to broaden their commercial and industrial interests, the British had even ventured to strengthen these indigenous systems. The native kings and landlords were given extensive economic privileges. Thus the British dominance in Kerala was instituted through the native kings and landlords.[38] But the British were soon to realise the need for a much more efficacious system of governance by reducing the rights and privileges of landlords and the native kings, especially in the matter of law and order and judiciary. With this in view they organised a large bureaucratic system of public administration with separate departments for judiciary, police, education and revenue, with staff brought under salary system, all constituting an "iron shield".[39] Even such a bureaucratic system did not fully undermine the existing caste-landlord – native-king combine. What the British system meant was the establishment of political dominance

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[37] K.M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History*, Bombay, 1969, p.206; Also see Thara Chand, *History of Freedom Movement in India I*, New Delhi, 1961, p.292.

[38] E.M.S., *Op.cit.*, p.159.

[39] E.M.S., *Ibid.*, pp.160-61.

over the role of the *savarnas* in the social life, the landlords in the economic life, and the Nair-samanthas in the administration.[40]

Traditionally the tenant - landlord relationship was rather cordial in Malabar. Normally 1/3 of the total harvest was to be given to the landlord by the tenant. This system was reviewed at every twelve years at which time one more portion of the *Kanam* property was given to the landlord. Consequent on the administrative innovation of the British, this arrangement was violated. What was part of a social agreement or practice came to be regulated by law and bureaucracy. The landlords under the new laws became more powerful and began to extract more from the tenants. The right of eviction, change of tenancy right (*Melcharth*) all contributed to the misery of the tenants. Bureaucracy and a judiciary, which supported the landlords, was turning highly oppressive to the tenants.[41]

Modern Malayalam literary works have adequately portrayed the condition of Kerala society in its transitional and transformative phases and processes. Early Malayalam novels were remarkably women centered. Most of them bore women's names as titles[42] like *Kundalatha*(1887, *Indulekha*

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[40] E.M.S. *Ibid.*, p.175.

[41] E.M.S. *Ibid.*, p.190-91.

[42] T.M. Appu Nedungadi, *Kundalatha,* 3rd edition, (Mal.), Calicut, 1999; Ammavan Raja (of Mankavu Padinjarekovilakam, Calicut), *Indumathi Swayamvaram* (Mal.) Calicut, 1890; Potheri Kunhambu, *Saraswathi Vijayam*, 3rd (ed.) (Mal.) Eranamkulam, 2001.

(1889), *Indumathiswayamvaram* (1890), *Meenakshi* (1890), *Lakshmikesavam* (1892) and *Saraswathivijayam* (1892). Of these the authors of *Kundalatha*, Appu Nedungadi, of *Indulekha, O.* Chandu Menon, of *Meenakshi,* C. Chathu Nair and of *Saraswathivijayam,* Potheri Kunhambu all hailed from north Malabar. These novels dealt with subjects like women's education, their social position and gender equality, which entered into Kerala society as part of social renaissance, though their ideological bent was more on the upper class. Potheri Kunhambu's *Saraswathivijayam*, on the other hand is a record of the ideological strains of subaltern renaissance, as it was strongly opposed to the values of Brahminism.[43] The novel was written with the avowed aim of iradication of castes as influenced by the anti-caste ideas of Ramesh Chandra Dutt of Bengal.[44] The author was concerned about the miserable lot of the Pulayas of Kerala, and for having worked for their cause, he was derisively called "Pulayan Kunhambu", even before the formation of SNDP (1903).[45] Later in Pandit Karuppan's poem "Jathikkummi" (1912), and his play *Balakalesam* (1912) we find strong satirical indictments of caste practices like pollution and untouchability.[46]

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[43] K.K. Kochu, "Keralam Maranna Samoohya Parishkaranam", in Potheri Kunhambu, *Saraswathivijayam*, Ernamkulam, 2001, p.16.

[44] Potheri Kunhambu, 'Preface' to the 1st edition, p.3.

[45] K.K. Kochu, *Op. cit.*, p.p. 8-9.

[46] T.M. Chummar, *Kavithilakan K.P. Karuppan* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1978, p.p. 60-62, 71,75,81.

There were however not many women writers during this phase.[47] Kerala society in general and Malabar society in particular was nothing but an aegian stable. The condition of women was quite deplorable. In a patriarchal society they had to live in accordance with the whims and fancies of the male elders. However they were quite alive to the progressive tendencies like the desire for English education and the consequent awareness that were fizzled down to social life. In the literary scene women made their presence felt as early as 1904-5 when literary journals like *Sarada* and *Lakshmibhai* were launched exclusively for women. Their stories vividly reflect the evils perpetuated by caste system, feudalism, matriliny and male domination.[48]

O. Chandu Menon' *Indulekha* addressed the reformist zeal of the day rather extensively. The novel treats a variety of themes like the inclination for English education, scientific knowledge, women's education, anti traditionality, opposition to the matrilineal tharavad system and a remarkable sense of individualism. The ideology of this reformist zeal was derived from the European renaissance, which was imported to India as part of colonialism. Chapter XVIII of *Indulekha* was in part a dialogue between European and Indian (Kerala) knowledge systems.[49]

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[47] P.K. Rajasekharan, *Andhanaya Daivam*, (Mal.), Thrissur, 1999, p.210.

[48] M.M. Basheer, (compilation and study) *Adhyakala Sthreekathakal* (Mal.), Kozhikode, 2004, pp.10, 19.

[49] O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, Kottayam, rpt 1989, Chapter XVIII.

The realist novelists of the 1940-50s- Kesavadev, Thakazhi and Pottekkad were all inspired by a sense of social transformation. The milieu of their works was formed by an admixture of feudal, landlordist and caste system, a nexus combined with nationalist fervour, the class perspective of Marxism and a surging romanticism. Kesavadev's *Thottiyude Makan* tells the story of alienation experienced by a scavenger, a subaltern, and the consequent rise of class-consciousness among them. The point is further explored and expressed by Thakazhi's *Randidangazhi* (1949), through the narration of the evils of fuedal oppression in the forms of slavery, sexual and economic exploitation leading to social tragedy. Casteism and economic inequalities perpetuate the tragedy of *Chemmeen*.[50]

The novels of C.V. Raman Pillai were symptomatic of the nationalistic dreams of the Travancore society. His novels *Ramaraja Bahadur* and *Dharmaraja* were brought out when the nationalist resistance against the British dominance was gaining momentum in Travancore. Textuality of history and historicity of texts were thus getting conflated in these works. Similarly the works of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer deals in very subtle forms the Kerala society marked by contradictions between religions, castes and present a picture of economic inequalities. The transformative fervour of the author reflects a renaissance spirit. His novels like *Premalekhanam, Me*

[50] P.K. Rajasekharan, *Op.cit.*, p., Also see K.H. Subrahmanyan, *Vadakke Malabarile Karshikasamarangal*, (Mal.) Kannur, 2004, pp.108,109.

*Grand Dad had an Elephant* and *Balyakalasakhi* thus present the contours of a dialogue between tradition and modernity.[51]

P.C. Kuttikrishnan, popularly known as Uroob, the author of the Malayalam novel *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* (1954) has recorded that the novel was born out of the material and psychological milieu created by the characters.[52] The historical event, which served as the background of the novel, was the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. In fact it was one of the few novels in Malayalam which deserves a rigorous cultural study because a series of national and international events - World War I, Malabar Rebellion, Khilafat, Nationalist movement, & Communist upsurges, Quit-India revolt, Hiroshima tragedy - all constitute the broad backdrop of the novel. Besides, these events interlock with the formative phase of ideas such as nationalism, freedom and anti-imperialism.[53] The optimistic culmination of the novel despite the pressures of the perilous historical experiences, which span about three decades roughly from 1915-1945 corresponds with the reformist phase of Malabar in those days. The historiographical potential of the novel cannot be overlooked in any serious study of Malabar history pertaining to the above

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[51] P.K. Rajasekharan, *Op.cit.*, pp.30, 52, 53.

[52] P.C. Kuttikrishnan (Uroob), *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum*, (Mal.), Thrissur, 2004, 'Preface' p.9.

[53] Sunil. P. Ilayidam, "Novalile Lokajeevitham," in *Ibid.*, p.14.

period. The novel is a record of the "structures of feeling"[54] of a complex phase of the history of Malabar.

The literary works of another noted Malayalam writer Cherukat (Govinda Pisharodi) exposed the rotten state of the community life of Malabar and presented challenging models for a changed pattern of life.[55] And of all genres the novel with its great narrative possibilities and polyphonic nature combined with the democratic philosophy of literary production formed a natural pair to the phase of modernity in Kerala, also called "Kerala Renaissance".[56] His drama *Nammolonnu* (1948) and novel *Manninte Maril* (1954) deals with the landlord-tenant issue. The tenant learns much from the unwritten text of his suffering, and joins hands with those who are in the same predicament. With remarkable subaltern predilections, the novel encompasses the history of three generations of tenants. The theme is again treated in his novel *Bhooprabhu* (1976). Another novel *Muthassi* (1959) deals with the question of education in Malabar. These are themes, which can generally be termed as the confrontation between tradition and

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[54] "structure of feeling" is a concept formulated by Raymond Williams, which means social experience, that is, meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt. See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford, 1977, pp.132-133.

[55] E.P. Rajagopalan, *Cherukat Govinda Pisharody*, (Mal.) New Delhi, 2002, p.12.

[56] *Ibid.*, p.20.

modernity, which has its early forebodings in O. Chandu Menon's, *Indulekha* considered to be the first typical novel of Malayalam.[57]

According to Sumit Sarkar the turbulent history of Malabar Mappilas unravels another aspect of complexity of Indian circumstances - namely the protest against landlordism and foreign power in which religious fundamentalism was made use of. Since majority of the rebels were the Mappila peasants the riot was called the Mappila riot. The roots of Moplah discontent were, however, clearly agrarian.[58] The agrarian aspect of this violence was unfortunately lost sight of by the leaders of that time including Gandhi. The riot had repercussions in future relations between the Congress and the Muslim League.[59]

The landlords were largely Hindus. Thus knowingly or unknowingly an element of communalism was involved in the riot. The Congress-Khilafath-Non-Co-operation movement was guided by the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence. Through these movements Mahatma Gandhi's idea was to forge Hindu-Muslim unity, and to channelise the same for the nationalist cause. The Muslims, who in the beginning acquiesced with this idea, gradually assumed a sectarian stance of armed revolt against the oppressive

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[57] K.H. Subrahmanyan, "Desiyathayum, Sahityavum," *Op. cit.*, p.108.

[58] Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Delhi, 1983, pp.49, 50.

[59] N.C. Saxena, "The Nature and Origin of Communal Riots in India," In Asghar Ali Engineer (ed), *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India*, Hyderabad, 1997, p.52.

forces. According to EMS, in comparison with the Malabar riot, peasant movements of Mattannur, Morazha, Thalassery, Kayyur and Karivallur were all secular in character.[60] The rebellion was therefore viewed simultaneously as a political protest against the British, a peasant revolt and a communal riot.[61] Kayyur riot for instance was inspired by the revolutionary thoughts of the Socialist faction, which controlled the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee. It took place immediately after the anti-imperialist campaign of the KPCC.[62]

The Malabar Rebellion was a significant event from a historiographical point of view. Several academic studies of insurrection were initiated in the 1960's, with Hamza Alavi's theorisation on peasant revolution.[63] In the 1970s a flurry of works on Mappila revolts was to give a new sense of direction to both regional and national history. Henry Shanma's path-breaking work *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia* established the micro-macro connection in history.[64] A.R. Desai's collection of essays *Peasant Struggle in*

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[60] E.M.S., *Desabhimani Weekly* 15 December, Kozhikode, 1996, pp.4,5.

[61] A. Sreedhara Menon, *Keralavum Swathanthrya Samaravum*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 1997, p.74.

[62] C.P. Sreedharan, "Grandhakaranum Krithiyum," In Niranjana, *Chirasmarana* (Novel), (Mal.), trans. C. Raghavan, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p.6; C. Raghavan, *Ibid.*, p.12.

[63] Hamza Alavi, "Peasant Classess and Primordial Loyalties," *Peasant Studies*, 1, 1, 1973, p.23-62, qtd in David Luddon, see notes below.

[64]David Ludden (ed), *Reading Subaltern Studies. Critical History, Contested Meaning and the Globalisation of South Asia,* London, 2002, p. 6

*India* brought home the common features of popular insurgency.[65] These works, broadly coming under subaltern studies, made a case for history "from below". On the question of insurgency in colonial India, they were opposed to the Cambridge school of South Asian history, which was castigated for their inattention to national ideals and popular forces.[66] A change was effected by Sumit Sarkar who wrote a new kind of national history with popular movements at centre stage.[67] Similarly Anil Seal's work launched a historiographical project of unpacking the politics of Indian nationalism at the local, regional, and national levels.[68] At the same time it is an appreciable aspect of the Cambridge school that they had opened the historical study of political institutions in South Asia by exploring the agency of individuals, formation of cliques, and power of specific class interests inside political parties and factions.[69]

It has been argued that India's social development in the period intervening 1919-1947 was conditioned by two parallel forces which operated simultaneously: (1) the general retreat of the European imperialism as a result of the mounting economic difficulties at home owing to the adoption of

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[65] A.R. Desai (ed), *Peasant Struggle in India*, New Delhi, 1979.

[66] David Ludden, *Op.cit*, pp.6-7.

[67] Sumit Sarkar, *Op.cit.*

[68] Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism; Competition and Collaboration in The Later Ninenteenth Century*. Cambridge, 1968.

[69] David Ludden, *Op.cit.*, p.6.

national autarchic policies by them, (2) the rising tide of Indian nationalism, which after the II World War made British withdrawal from India imperative.[70]

It has to be seen that the Punnapra Vayalar struggle which took place in Travancore in 1946 was led exclusively by the working class of Travancore against the socio-economic ills of the society and the repressive regime of Sir C.P. Rama Swami Iyer. A deplorable social condition was punctuated by rigid caste system, which in turn sanctioned evil practices like slavery and oppression of agricultural workers and also workers of industrial and agro-industrial sectors. If at this stage it was a militant trade unionism, which grew out of the appalling living conditions of the people as an instrument of struggle,[71] in the case of Malabar peasants in the 1920s, it was directly a militant armed protest, which grew out of identical circumstances.

Large-scale protest against oppressive measures of the government and the landlords who were their agents was not an isolated phenomenon noticeable in Kerala. In various provinces of India as in other parts of the world in identical situations like imperialism, feudalism and exploitation, protest of the people were met with brutal atrocities by the police.

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[70] B.M. Bhatia, *History and Social Development I: Elites in Modern India*, Delhi, 1974, p.256.

[71] P.K.V. Kaimal, *Revolt of the Oppressed: Punnapra Vayalar 1946*, Delhi, 1994, pp.2, 3.

Subservience was only a temporary experience, as a symptom of the outburst that was going to take place. The Thebaga struggles 1947, the Worli riots 1946, the Surma rebellion 1936, Thelungana riots 1946-51 all share the common character of stiff resistance against oppression.[72]

Kerala was devided into three native states before independence - Malabar Cochin and Travancore. These provinces were under different types of administration. Therefore the nationalist movement, which took shape in these provinces were not of the same character.[73] It is in Malabar that the Europeans landed first with mercenary interest. Their commercial interest in course of time got entrenched in the social structure of the province and they eventually became administrators.[74] As a result of this historic fact resistance against foreign rule also was first initiated in Malabar. Due to the influence of foreign administrators with their characteristic profit motive, there began structural changes in Malabar life. It was the native kings who first realised that their rights and privileges were being curtailed by the alien powers and so they began resistance measures against them.[75] So the early rebellions in

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[72] A.R. Desai, *Op.cit.*

[73] K.H. Subrahmanyan, "Keralavum Deseeyaprasthanavum," *Op.cit.*, p.32.

[74] K Sivasankaran Nair, *Vanijyathiloode Parathanthryam*, (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 2002, pp.76, 78, 129, 130.

[75] K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samarangal*, (Mal.), Tiruvananthapuram, 1988, p.p. 19,33.

Malabar were pitted against the British policy of "divide and rule" and were waged by native kings and lords.

Malabar was also practically referred to as North Malabar and South Malabar. In North Malabar protests against the British were epitomized in the personality of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja, who was considered a patriot who "rose above the communal and regional considerations, organising the diverse population of Malabar" and "symbolised the resolve of the people to be free and sacrificed his life in defence of it".[76] Pazhassi was in good terms with the British in the beginning, for he wanted their help in checking the invasion of Tippu Sultan. But on defeating Tippu, the British changed their mind, and did not keep their earlier word to allow dominion status to his kingdom. Instead, they began to keep more and more of their hold on the country, and initiated new kinds of taxation and started impoverishing the natives. A dishonored and embittered Pazhassi Raja waged a series of battles with local support from the tribal Kurichiyars against the British till his heroic death. Even after Pazhassi's defeat, the Kurichiyars continued their stiff resistance but they could not withstand British force. In Travancore it was through the exploits of its Chief Minister Veluthampi Dhalava, that the British met with strong patriotic opposition.[77]

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[76] K. Rajayyan, *Kerala Varma and Malabar Rebellions*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1969, p.109.

[77] K.H. Subrahmanyan, *Op.cit.*, pp.33-37.

In South Malabar riots like those of the Kurichiyars were waged mainly by the Muslim peasantry, known as the Mappila riots. But unlike the above protests the Mappila riot was a two-pronged movement, as it was simultaneously against the native landlords as well as against the foreign powers, which controlled the state.[78] Since the majority of the peasantry comprised the Mappilas and their major opponents were Hindu landlords, an element of religion was also involved in it knowingly or unknowingly.

It is quite obvious that the Malabar riot and the eventualities, which followed it, were all intertwined with nationalist movement. Immediately after the Rebellion, nationalist work in Malabar - mainly Congress activities - were on a stand still. But from 1925 onwards, things began to change as more and more young men began to join Indian National Congress. A powerful socialist block became active in the Congress. Eventually the Congress conference held at Payyannur under the presidentship of Nehru passed the resolution "Poornaswaraj" to be the sole objective of the Congress. As this resolution was fully adopted by the Lahore Congress, the Nationalist Movement in Kerala began to gain momentum.[79] Concomitant with the new political consciousness, there was also a cultural resurgence. The essential import of the cultural consciousness was realised in the temple entry

[78] K.N. Panikkar, *Op.cit.*, p.69.

[79] K.H. Subrahmanyan, *Op.cit.*, p.39.

movements, for which a series of Sathyagrahas were launched at Guruvayoor and Vaikkom temples. [80]

The press was an important agency, which inspired the socio-political movements of the 19th century in India.[81] The establishment of news papers like *Mathrubhumi* and *Al-Ameen* awakened the consciousness of the people. Following the Malabar Rebellion, nationalist work in Malabar was on a law key. There were misunderstandings about Congress-Khilafat work among the public. K.P. Kesava Menon, the secretary of the Congress committee, felt that it was necessary to begin a newspaper to popularise Congress opinion. With the help of his friends he was able to launch the Mathrubhumi daily from Calicut on 18th March 1923. During this period there were, however, four Malayalam newspapers published from Calicut - *Kerala Pathrika, Manorama, Kerala Sanchari* and three English weeklies - *West Coast Spectactor, West Cost Reformer* and *Champion.* These papers were not sympathetic to nationalist movement. Some of them were not inclined to write against the British.[82] Almost at this time Muhammed Abdu Rahiman was thinking about launching a newspaper. The paper was started on 18th

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[80] Malayinkeezhu Gopalakrishnan, *He Ram*, (Mal.), Calicut, 2000, p.p. 59,75; Also see V.R. Menon *Mathrubhumiyute Charithram I*, S.K. Pottekkad *et al.* Muhamad Abdu Rahiman, Kozhikode.

[81] P.K.K. Menon, *History of Freedome Movement in Kerala II*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1966, p.491.

[82] V.R. Menon, *Op.cit.*, pp.47, 48.

October 1924 with the title *Al-Ameen.* The paper was meant to work for social reform, attainment of political freedom and public welfare.[83]

The events, which followed, were much organised and were effective enough to change the countenance of Kerala in general and Malabar in particular. In short the period between 1930s – 1940s were so decisive in the history of nationalist movement in Kerala.

In spite of several reform movements and extensive awareness campaigns, social evils like caste prejudices, untouchability and communal hatred continued to cause tension in public life even up to the early 1950s. The public life was still determined by caste-landlord- feudal lord nexus. As D.D. Kosambi had put it, "caste system was a class system in the primitive conditions of production".[84] Till the early part of the 20th century we see an intersection between caste, wealth and power in the social life of India. Therefore the philosophy of a class-based struggle does not fit well with the complex society like India. For Marx and Engels envisaged a system in which exploited - exploiter class evolve through stages such as primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism. This, of course, was the pattern of European society. According to EMS the caste dominance of Kerala cannot be separated from the landlord/feudal lord dominance. It is

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[83] S.K. Pottekkad *et al.*, *Op.cit.*, pp.138-140.

[84] Quoted by E.M.S., *Keralacharithravum Samskaravum*, (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 1973, p.23.

necessary to consider the economic exploitation and political power behind the caste dominance.[85]

It has to be noticed that there were about 1½ lakhs of slaves in Malabar as per the 1938 census.[86] They were owned, used and exchanged by the landlords at their will. As early as 1843 the government of British India passed an India Act abolishing slavery. But the system did not disappear. It has to wait till the advent of socio-cultural reform movements in Kerala. Several movements for cultural renaissance worked in various places almost simultaneously and through their sincere and devoted work, what was felt impossible could be averted to a great extent. And all these renaissance movements were to energise the nationalist cause.

Compared with the regional and endemic peasant protests, which were waged elsewhere in India the Mappila Rebellion of 1921 was by far the most violent of the millenarian outburst. While the previous Mappila outburst were of a "ritualistic" character, with limited participation of suffering people, the 1921 rebellion assumed the character of a massive popular Rebellion.[87] In the social context of Hindu janmies ruthlessly exploiting the Muslim lease holders and cultivations, and a long tradition of Muslim religious militancy,

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[85] E.M.S., *Ibid.*, pp.24, 25.

[86] K.K.N. Kurup, *Desiyathayum Karshakasamarangalum,* (Mal.), Thiruvanathapuram, 1991.

[87] Sumit Sarkar, *Op.cit.*, p.216.

the outburst immediately had a communal aspect. A tenant - rights agitation developing in Malabar from 1916 was taken up by the Khilafat movement after the Manjeri political (Congress) conference of April 1920. As a British GOC reported on 26th September asking for artillary reinforcements, "the situation now is clearly actual War", the Mappila resistance was "framed upon guerilla warfare.... getting stronger..... the armed fighting gangs probably total 10,000 ....."[88]

Attention to local and regional history was only a later development in India. R.C. Majundar in his *History of Freedom Movement in India* presented the nationalist movement as a monolithic phenomenon. According to Raychaudhari the people of India obtained freedom from the colonial masters through a united struggle. These historians consider Indian society as an integral and unified fact. Such a consideration was basically related to the colonial history, which begins with James Mill.

The series of movements and developments together described as renaissance in Kerala was a later phenomena as compared to other parts of India. Even the notion of Indian Renaissance was borrowed from European Renaissance. Though there are similarities in respect of ideas, the root of Indian Renaissance has to be sought in the social, material and cultural life of Indian society. Renaissance consists of a transition from social reform to

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[88] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28th September 1921 *Reading Collection*, Quoted by Sumit Sarkar, *Ibid.*, p.216.

religious reform movements. But the extent of the ideas which motivate these movements are quite often left unnoticed. For example the contributions of Sayyid Makti Thangal in Kerala Renaissance is not properly accountant for. Similarly the intellectual pursuits of P.S. Varrier and the dimension given to Sanskrit studies by Punnasseri Nambi all form aspects of Kerala Renaissance. But the radical ideas of Renaissance did not go much ahead in Kerala. It is because the Renaissance ideas did not go hand in hand with political struggles and thus adequate attention was not given to cultural struggles.[89] Again this inadequacy of Renaissance movements provided space for fundamentalist and fascist tendencies in Kerala in the form of communalism, for the idea of rationality and humanism which the cultural enlightenment projected did not strike deeper roots in social life. This accounts for the continuation of fanaticism and communal fascism even in the present time. Therefore historians like K.N. Panikkar makes a case for the extension of Renaissance and enlightenment ideas to the contemporary situations,[90] especially in respect of the Adivasi, Dalit, Feminist and Ecological problematics.

The recent interest in regional and local history is relevant in this context. They contribute to comprehensive history of state as well as the country. But a people's life locally and regionally cannot be dismissed from

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[89] K.N. Panikkar, *Colonialism, Samskaram, Parambarya Budhijeevikal*, (Interviewed by Mehjub. S.V. on "Keralam Navodhanam Navasamuhya Prasthanangal") (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 2006, pp.113-115.

[90] *Ibid.*, pp.116, 118.

mainstream history because they too make cultural contributions. They too struggled against imperialism and colonialism. However traditional historiography has been averse to these realities. Besides local and regional history, there is the history of forgotten areas and peoples. Such a methodological emphasis is gradually emerging as a major trend in modern historiography.[91]

The political administration was corresponding to the caste-ridden and iniquitous character of the judicial system. Slavery in the most primitive form prevailed in the land even in the beginning of the 19th century. The land owning class, the *Janmis* could buy, sell and own them in large numbers, and put them to death, without being called to account for. Women of lower classes including *ezhavas* were prevented from wearing the blouse. Members of *sudra* castes were also denied certain social privileges and amenities.[92] Individuals among them who wanted to enjoy privileges like wearing gold ornaments, riding in palanquins, using certain types of clothes, head-gear, or umbrella and growing moustaches, etc. had to obtain license by making payments to the king or *naduvazhi* (local chieftains). Besides a series of inequitous taxes and cesses were imposed on the underprivileged sections of

[91] K.K.N. Kurup, "Pradesika Charithrarachanayude Reethisasthram," In K.P. Abdul Majeed, *Kurungottu Nadu*, (Mal.), Kozhikode, 2005, p.96.

[92] For details of Society and its hierarchical division see A.C. Mayer, *Land and Society in Malabar* (Bombay, 1952).

the society, all rendering the poor poorer still, and at the same time ensuring the state revenue.[93]

The members of the low castes had to pay a certain fee for the conduct of their marriages. They had also to pay a kind of house tax for their huts. The looms, oil mills, boats, nets, palanquins etc. were also taxed. Every occupational class had to pay some cess or other to the state or do service without being remunerated. The uses of public highways, approach roads to temples were forbidden to them. The practice of pollution was widely observed. They were required to be uncovered above their waist. The practice of caste system and the institution of sub castes perpetuated social exclusiveness and effectively prevented their social mobility. The Hindu society also suffered from economic impoverishment arising from wasteful expenditure connected with the observance of such irrational social customs as Talikettu Kalyanam, Thirandukuli etc. The traditional Marumakkathayam systems had also caused very serious tension and dissatisfaction among the Nairs, Ezhavas etc.[94] Social evils like child marriage and polygamy also prevailed. The tenant classes were unrest consequent on the arbitrary evictions, rack-renting and social tyranny. The demand for agrarian reform gained momentum under such circumstances. With the spread of education

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[93] see K.K.N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala: Studies in Social and Agrarian Relations*, Calicut, 1988, p.8.

[94] L.A. Krishna Iyer, *Social History of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1948, p.111.

and liberal ideas, the backward communities were turning restive as they were denied entry into temples, schools and public services.

A series of administrative and social reforms were introduced in the early decades of the 19th century,[95] with a view to bring about certain changes in Kerala society. This includes the abolition of slavery in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Hereditary offices were abolished and corrupt officials were dismissed from service. A judicial system based on Western principles was introduced. The innumerable feudal imposts and cesses which interferred with individual freedom and stifled economic activity were given up. Compulsory labour for the government without payment of remuneration was abolished and the system of service based on payment of wages and salaries was introduced. Many social evils and restrictions in regard to the use of conveyances, ornaments, and dress were gradually removed. But, for achieving these ends several hard struggles were to be staged. The Shanar agitation of South Travancore, the spread of Western education and the work of Christian missionaries, religious and social reform movements sphere headed by the Ramakrishna Mission, Theosophical Society, Chattampi Swamikal, Sree Narayana Guru, the Nair Service Society, Brahmananda Sivayogi,Vagbhatananda, Vaikunta Swami, Ayyankali, anti-untouchability

[95] L.A. Krishna Iyer, *Kerala Past and Present*. Bombay, 1948.

agitation, Temple entry sathyagrahas, all contributed to this widespread change. Many agrarian reforms also were mooted during this period.

A brief description of the above mentioned movements will give an idea of the socio-political scenario of Kerala in the later half of the 19th century which continued till the early decades of the 20th century.

The Shanars of South Travancore were an oppressed community. Their women folk were denied the right to wear jackets. To secure this right the Shanar community staged a struggle[96] called the "Breast Cloth Agitation" with the support of the Christian missionaries. Military and police had to be rushed to restore law and order. Following the agitation Diwan Munro issued an order permitting Shanar women who became converts to Christianity to wear jackets. But they were not satisfied with this order. They wanted to wear an additional scarf over their shoulders in the manner of the Brahmin women. This action of the Shanar women provoked the upper caste Hindus and they turned against the Shanar community. Eventually the Royal Proclamation of July 26, 1859 granted their demand, but there was the stipulation that they should not imitate the dress of the women of the upper class. This stipulation was subsequently removed by the British government.

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[96] P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 1991, p.p. 171-72.

The Christian missionaries played an active role in the spread of Western education and liberal ideas.[97] In the early decades of the 19th century the Protestant London Mission Society (LMS) started schools in South Travancore, the Church Mission Society (CMS) mission established schools in Kottayam and German Basel Evangelical Mission (BEM) laid the foundation of Western education in the Malabar area. They started the first primary school in Kallayi in 1846 and an English school in Tellicherry 1856. Their activities served as a catalytic agent to bring out radical social change in Kerala.

By the early decades of the 20th century both lower and upper class felt the need for social reforms.[98] Organisations like the Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophical Society and the Aryasamaj made efforts to make the Hindus aware of the evils of the caste systems, and of the need for the uplift of the backward communities like the Harijans. The movements led by Chattampi Swamikal (1853-1924), Sree Narayana Guru (1854-1928), Brahmananda Sivayogi (1852-1929), Swami Vagbhatananda (1885-1939) Vaikunta Swami (1809-1851) and the formation of the Nair Service Society (in 1914) on the pattern of the Servants of India Society and the founding of the Yogakshema Sabha by the Brahmin Community in (1908) all had significant and far

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[97] Murkoth Kunhappa, "Heritage of Basel Mission in Kerala" in K.J. John Ed. *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, Kochi, 1981, pp.232-244.

[98] See P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *op cit* for details on the various reform movements.

reaching impact in reforming the evil ridden Kerala society, which was described by Swami Vivekananda as a "lunatic asylum". A general sense of social reform was emerging and the activities of the various organizations and movements together constituted a Kerala Renaissance.[99] Narrowness was being replaced by a sense of humanity. An important programme of these social reform movements of Kerala was the agitation for the removal of untouchability. However, Kerala society continued to suffer from social evils and oppression at many levels. The condition of the peasants were all the more miserable.[100] The landlords subjected them to various kinds of oppression. In Malabar untouchability, evictions and rack-renting of peasants were widespread inspite of legislations.

Malabar came under British rule in 1792 when it was taken over from Tippu Sultan after his defeat in the third Anglo-Mysore War.[101] This conquest was the culmination of the East-India-Company's quest to control the Malabar spice trade, for which the European powers had struggled over almost three centuries. As part of its trading interest the company established its first settlement, the Tellicherry factory in the beginning of the 18th century.

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[99] P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Ibid.* p 234.

[100] C. Unni Raja, "Lokam Sradhicha Lahala", *Malabar Kalapam Charithravum Prathyaya Sasthravum* (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram 1991, pp. 55-56.

[101] K.K.N. Kurup, Ch. VI. "Acquisition of Malabar 1785-92" *History of the Tellicherry Factory* (1683-1794) Calicut, 1985, pp.182-211; Also see K.N. Panikkar, *Peasant Protest and Revolt in Malabar*, New Delhi, 1990, p. VII.

By the middle of the 18th century the company had almost covered the lucrative spice trade of Malabar and had also acquired unrivalled political influence among the local rulers, the rajas and chiefs. A harsh system of taxation and intense oppression by the landlords facilitated the British in their quest for a social base. This is because in agrarian societies land is the most important means of wealth, and source of power and prestige, and they follow a hereditary right in land. In such a land system changes in the institutional framework of agriculture, pattern of ownership control and use of land will impinge on the social order.[102]

The British officials who were initially entrusted with the administration of the newly acquired territory followed the revenue management system set up by Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan.[103] Accordingly the major portion of the produce was shared equally by the government and the *janmies*. Besides overassessment, there was inequality in assessment and the disparity between prevailing market prices and rates adopted by government for valuation of produce in monetary terms for purpose of revenue collections. This practice laid heavier burden of land revenue on the weaker rather than on the better off sections of the agricultural population. No step was taken to revise the pattern of settlement and the situation

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[102] P. Radhakrishnan, *Peasant struggles Land Reforms and Social Change: Malabar 1836-1982,* New Delhi, 1989, p.14.

[103] See K.K.N. Kurup, *Op. cit.,* 1985, pp.139-181.

remained unaltered till the end of the 19th century. A settlement officer noticed in 1899 that in four talukes of Palghat, Walluvanad, Ponnani and Kurumbranad more than 7000 acres of wetland were assessed at almost half the lowest settlement rate, which was seventy five paise per acre. At the same time more than 4,000 acres were assessed above Rs.61 the highest settlement rate, in some cases the rate was as high as Rs.40.[104] The disparity in the government rate and the prevailing market rate for conversion of produce in kind to money for purposes of revenue payment was another source of distress for the peasantry. The government assessed the land revenue in kind at six-tenths of the *pattam* or rent and collected it in cash, fixing the conversion rate on the basis of average price over the previous ten years. Consequent on this instance of peasants mobbing and threatening revenue officials in protest against the unduly harsh methods of revenue collections were also reported.[105]

The burden of land revenue fell primarily on tenants and small land holders who cultivated on their on. Legally, the revenue was to be realized from the landlords, in whose names land was registered. But since their ability to discharge it depended upon their ability to collect the rents from their tenants, district officials followed a policy of expediency and tried to realize the revenue from whoever it was easy to realize it – in some cases

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[104] C.A. Innes, *Malabar* Madras, 1951, p.339.

[105] William Logan, *Malabar* Vol.1, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, p. 753-763.

from the land lords, in others from tenants, and in yet others from the actual cultivators. Also landlords generally assigned this responsibility to tenants by stipulating this in the land deed. Consequently, the greater part of the land revenue came to be paid directly by the tenants, who therefore had to face all the problems arising out of overassessment, differential rates of conversion etc, which were known as *Akramapirivukal.*[106]

The East India Company in 1806 assumed a policy of monopoly of the trade in important commodities in the territories under its administration. Thus in Malabar the company assumed monopoly over salt, tobacco, timber and spices. This policy pushed up the prices of these articles and led to unemployment for a fairly large number of people. Since most of these articles were daily necessities the peasants and labourers who were the largest consumers could not afford the enhanced prices.[107]

Similarly, monopoly over timber adversely affected those engaged in the timber trade and the building of ships and other vessels. Tubacco and timber monopoly affected particularly the large number of Mappilas engaged in the coastal trade. As a result, the Coastal people were pushed into penury. Apart from tax on land, salt and tobacco, the company's system of harsh taxation embraced, almost every necessity of daily life. As many as fifty

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[106] K.E.K. Namboodiri, "Gathivigathikalum Vidhiviparyayavum",*Malabar Kalapam Charithravum Prathyaya Sasthravum* (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1991, p.86.

[107] K.K.N. Kurup, Ch.1 "European Impact in Malabar Society in the 18th Century-An Analaysis" in *Modern Kerala,* Delhi, 1988, pp.1-12.

different taxes were realized from the people. They included taxes on houses, shops, cattle, looms, fishing nets, tapping knives, toddy and arrack. The ferry tax was so obnoxious for the people especially of the lower orders that lives had been lost in attempting to swim the river for the purpose of avoiding it. Thus in persisting with a policy of gaining maximum returns from the district, the government seemed to be insensitive to the sufferings of the people. T.H. Baber, a Malabar district official had reported on the distressing impact of over taxation before the House of Lords in 1880.[108]

Even more exacting than land revenue and taxes was the appropriation of surplus through rent, both legal and illegal, by landlords. The Company's revenue policy and judicial system connived with the landlords in devising new methods and instruments to maximize their share of the peasants' produce. The land revenue policy adopted by the Company upset traditional land relations by bringing about fundamental changes in the nature of land rights. Traditionally two major interests in land were embodied in *janmam* and *kanam* tenurial rights from the days of the Brahmin settlements in Kerala. The norms which were finally evolved (by the Company) were based on the principle of equal sharing of the net produce between the *janmi*, the

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[108] *Quoted* in K.N. Panikkar, 1989, p.17.

*kanakkaran* and the cultivator. This was the arrangement that prevailed in the 18th century.[109]

There was also a system of renewal of the *kanam* agreement known as *polichezhuth* or renewal of the *kanam* deed. The British officials maintained that the *janmakkaran* possesses the entire right to the soil and that no earthly authority can deprive him of it. The policy thus adopted was clearly based in favour of the *janmi*. While he was recognized as the absolute proprietor of the soil with all the rights incidental to this, *kanam* was interpreted as a tenure terminable at the end of every twelve years, which gave the *janmi* the option either to renew the lease or give the land to another tenant who was prepared to pay a higher rent. Thus the British administration did not preserve any of the customary rights of tenants and cultivator and left them entirely at the mercy of landlords. The judicial courts also supported the landlords and enabled them to enforce their rights and relieved the *janmis* of the restrictions formally exercised by village institutions like the *thara* or the *sabha* through their rules and regulations or *kachams*. As William Logan argued,

> The idea that the *janmi* is absolute proprietor of the soil and as such entitled to take as big a share of the produce as he can command is founded on error, and has been brought about by

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[109] Books and Reports of C.A. Innes and William Logan deal extensively with the land system of Malabar.

This was a perspective, which continued to influence government policy till the end of the British rule. *janmis* were thus recognized as a "political force on the side of the government." The position of the *janmis* was strengthened as the government persued a policy of recruitment to the subordinate offices of the revenue and judicial departments. Most of the village officials were drawn from the land owning classes. Armed with the power and position thus assigned to them and supported by the judiciary and the police, the landlords were able to extract a large share of the cultivator's produce as rent. These conditions led to the peasants' continued subjection inevitable.

The concentration of land, both *Janmam* and *Kanam*, in the hands of a few, forms an important characteristic of the conditions of production in Malabar during the colonial period. The village registers of the settlement conducted in 1900-01 provide details of the extent of land held by each individual. They demonstrate how unevenly land was distributed in the villages, with major portion held by a couple of individuals in each case. According to the 1901 census, the number of landlords in the district was 57,040. Most of them, however, were dwarf holders who did not possess more than one acre of land. The cultivating landlords, numbering 27,638 in 1901, belonged mainly to this category. On the other hand the substantial landlords who were drawn from among the upper caste Hindus, did not cultivate the land themselves but lived on rent collected from their tenants to

whom land was leased under a variety of tenurial arrangements like *kanam, kuzhikanam, otti* and *verumpattam.* The number of tenants in 1901 was 2,82,704.[112]

The huge landlords were non-cultivating *janmis* who sub infeudated their land to the *kanakkars*. Consequently the *kanakkars* rose into social and economic prominence. Most of them were drawn from the upper caste Nairs who did not undertake cultivation, but sub-leased the land on *verumpattam* or for crop sharing. The area of land under such leases was quite extensive. According to Logan, almost one third of the wetland was cultivated on sub lease from the *Kanakkar.* These intermediaries were thus simultaneously a rent receiving and rent paying class who appropriated a lion share of the rent from the cultivators. The Nairs acquired *kanam* rights through marriage alliances with Namboodiri *janmis*. They were the first to take to Western education and thus secured a large share of government employment. The *Purbattis* and *Menons* in Ernad and Valluvanad taluks were almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of the upper caste Hindus – Nairs, Menons, Panickers and Kurups. They were also appointed as Tahsildars, the police and the personnels of the local courts. This dominance continued throughout the British rule. Their intimate knowledge of the working of the judiciary, the power and privileges derived from official status, and their financial position

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[112] · K.N. Panikkar, *Op. cit*, pp.25-26.

helped them to increase the extent of their land holding. So far as their relations with their sub tenants were concerned, they did not maintain the traditional feudal ethos – patronage and protection, but with a view to maximize their share of rent, they resorted to methods and forms of exploitation that were typically feudal.[113]

The *Polichezhuth* or *kanam* renewal deed was one of the many occasions used by landlords to make additional demands from the tenants. This was customarily undertaken every twelve years or on the death of either of the parties to the deed. The renewal fee charged by the *janmis* early in the 19th century was ten percent of *kanappanam* in the case of renewal in favour of the original holder and twenty percent in the case of a new incumbent. By the beginning of the 20th century, it had gone up substantially. They also resorted to extraction of gifts from tenants at each renewal. The inability to meet these demands led to the tenant's eviction from the land. For the tenant, therefore each renewal became a greater burden than the original lease itself.

Besides the tenants also had to discharge several obligations to the *janmi*. At the time of annual festivals like *onam, vishu, thiruvathira* and important ceremonies in the house of the *janmis* like wedding or death anniversary they had to make contributions in both cash and kind. Traditionally this was an expression of feudal obeisance, but during the

[113] K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam,* (Mal.), Kozhikode, rpt 2002 , p.82.

colonial period in the money economy and capitalist ethos, landlords sought to systematize this additional extraction and extended its scope. Therefore the Brahmins resented legislation of British government in Malabar to deprive them of the *janman* right over landed property. They argued that *Devaswam* properties were the ones set apart by them for maintenance of their own temples.[114] Consequently, on meeting the rent and revenue demands, the cultivators were left with hardly enough for their subsistence. With more than 60 percent of the agricultural population being agricultural labourers, there was no possibility of gaining additional income by hiring out for labour The condition led to widespread and acute indebtedness of the tenants. They had to borrow money from moneylenders and to sell their produce at a low price. As K.N. Panikkar notes, "the peasantry in Malabar thus lived and worked in conditions of extreme penury entailed by the twin exaction of the lord and the state."[115]

The Malabar rebellion of 1921, was a massive protest movement which continued for about 8 months. Nearly 50,000 people were involved in it. Their diverse social background and motivation render an analysis of their sociology difficult. According to K.P. Kesava Menon these people belonged to four types – Khilafath workers, tenants, religious fanatics and people with

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[114] O.M. Narayanan Namboodiripad, *Welcome Speech*, 20th Annual of Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha, Angadipuram, M.E. 1103, p.10.

[115] K.N. Panikkar 1989, p.48.

criminal tendency. Though this is not a correct classification, the presence of uneducated, people can be understood from the above description. The major community involved in the rebellion was the Mappilas (Muslims) who belonged mainly to Ernad, Valluvanad, Kozhikode and Ponnani taluks. But as pointed out by Hitchcock, certain Hindus had important role in organizing the rebellion; similarly many Muslims had no role in the rebellion. This means that description of the rebellion from a religious point of view is untenable. Court records in respect of the rebels reveal that most of them were poor labourers and agrarians. Though there were incidents of conversion and looting of Hindus during the rebellion, it was essentially a peasant revolt. The general backwardness of the people, economically and culturally, and the oppressive landlordism was at the heart of the rebellion. Eventually the Tenant-Congress-Khilafath movements made the people militant.[116]

In contrast to social ideals, labour was greatly exploited. As E.J. Hobbsbawm states, the contrast between the ideal and the reality play a decisive role in determining the nature of rebellions which broke out in rural communities from time to time. The agricultural policy of colonialism, which the British administration used as an instrument of their divide-and-rule

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[116] K. Gopalankutty, "Malabar Kalapavum Desiya Prasthanavum" in *Malabar Kalapam: Charithravum Prathyaya Sasthravum,* Thiruvananthapuram, 1991 pp.18,25

policy and the regional feudal set up as well as the reactionary attitudes of religion and caste, all went into the making of the peasant rebellion. Of course these facts were there at the root of the national struggle for independence. According to Soumyendra Natha Tagore, Malabar Rebellion was complementary to the national struggle for independence.[117] In the opinion of Conrad Wood economic factors of the time greatly contributed to the rebellion.[118] While Stephen F. Dale finds religion to be the determining factor in the peasants' struggle.[119]

Over and above all these factors, it remains a fact that the impetus for resistance had first come from the Malabar District Congress Conference held at Manjeri in April 1920. This conference supported the tenants' cause and demanded legislation to regulate landlord - tenant relations. The change was significant because earlier the landlords had successfully prevented the Congress from committing itself to the tenants' cause. Simultaneously the Khilafat and tenants' movements were inextricably merged into one.[120]

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[117] Soumyendra Natha Tagore, *Malabarilae Karshika Kalapam,* 1921 (1937) trans: K.K.N. Kurup, Calicut, 1982.

[118] Conrad Wood, "The First Moplah Rebellion Against British Rule in Malabar, " *Modern Asian Studies,* x, 4, 1976 pp. 543-556.

[119] Stephen F. Dale, *Islamic Society in the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar* 1498-1922, Oxford, 1980.

[120] Mridula Mukherjee, Ch.16 "Peasant Movements and Motivation in the 1920s" in Bipan Chandra *et al, India's Struggle for Independence,* New Delhi, 1989, p.201; Also see Sukhbir Choudhary, *Moplah Uprising* (1921-23), Delhi, 1977, p.11.

It may be noticed that the main centres of the rebellion were places with a distinct Mappila majority; most of them were tenants, landless agricultural labourers, small-scale merchants and fishermen. There were very few among them who were recruited into government service. This handicap was obviously due to their educational, backwardness.[121] Though there were traditional intellectuals like the *ulemas*, *musliars* and *khasis* among the Mappilas, they gave a predominantly religious orientation to the peasant protest. Their ideology was simultaneously pitted against the British and the landlords, both being agencies of the same kind of hegemonic control. The traditional Mappila intellectuals did not attempt to revolutionise the community politically and culturally. This fact accounts for the argument that khilafath-non-co-operation movement of 1920-21, which paved the way for the Rebellion, had strongly effected the 'fanatical' muslim population living in the Ernad area of South Malabar.[122]The Hindu peasants were also yoked under a feudal and colonial ideology. The Hindu traditional intellectuals were allied with the landlords. While the Mappila organizational ideology encouraged them to stage protest from a religious point of view, the Hindu religious system and authority persuaded the people within its fold to follow and abide by everything that was imposed. As a result following the rebellion, the entire cultural fabric of the area was torn asunder. Thus the

[121] K. Madhavan Nair, *Op. cit.*, pp. 9-11.

[122] Conrad Wood, *The Moplah Rebellion and its Genesis*, New Delhi, 1987, p.4.

revolt could be seen as a moment in the historical process of domination/ resistance."[123]

The above account of the socio-political conditions of Kerala is necessary to understand the activities of the SIS in Kerala in proper perspective. That way this chapter corroborates the historiographical assumptions of the present study. The SIS which started its work in Malabar as a relief agency was soon to develop into an organisation which took up the causes of education, rural reconstruction and social reform. It was the diplorable condition of Malabar, which paved the way for the Society to branch out into these areas.

[123] Ranajith Guha and Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak ed, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, New York 1988, p.380.

# THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY IN KERALA: A STUDY OF THE DMRT MOVEMENT

*Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut*
*for the award of the Degree of*
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*By*

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# CHAPTER III
# THE FORMATION OF THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the founder and First Member of the Servants of India Society was born on 9th May 1866 in the village of Kotluk in the Ratnagiri district of the Bombay Presidency (Maharashtra). His parents Krishnarao Gokhale and Satyabhama, were Chitpavan Brahmans and were of humble stock. He received his high school education at Kolhapur. In 1884 he took his B.A. degree from Elphinston College, Bombay and in the next year he joined the New English School (started by Tilak and Chiplunkar) in Poona as an assistant master.[1] In 1886 Gokhale joined the Fergusson college Poona as a Professor. The college was started by Deccan Education Society founded by Tilak, Agarkar, Chiplunkar and Namjoshi. He served the college as Professor of History and Economics for about twenty years and retired as Principal in 1904. During this period he got himself associated with Mahadev Govind Ranade whose learning, versatality, patriotism and saintly character had a lasting influence upon Gokhale that he considered Ranade as his 'master'.[2]

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[1] B.R. Nanda, *The Indian Moderates and the British Raj*, Delhi, 1977, p.2-8.

[2] H.N. Kunzru, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale: The Man and His Mission*, New Delhi, 1966, p.2. Also see T.V. Parvate, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Ahemdabad, 1959, pp.111-12.

An ardent nationalist the young Gokhale was one of the Secretaries of the Reception Committee of the Indian National Congress, which met at Poona.[3] Already he was associated actively with the Deccan Education Society and the Sarvajanik Sabha – in both associations Tilak was a dominant figure.[4] Eventually differences of opinion developed between the two leaders on several points, which ultimately led to an open cleavage between the Extremists led by Tilak and the Moderates led by Gokhale in the Surat Congress of 1907.[5] From 1889 Gokhale was serving as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council. In 1902, following the resignation of Sir Phiroz Shah Mehta, Gokhale was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council at the age of 36 and he continued in that capacity for over thirteen years, voicing the opinion of enlightened India in the supreme legislative organ of the country at that time.[6] Inspired by Dadabai Naoroji and informed by his study of Mathematics, Statistics and Economics, Gokhale was able to make admirable presentations in the meetings of the Imperial Legislative Council.[7] His growing responsibilities in the Legislative Council are bade farewell[8] as Professor in the Fergusson College. In addition to these positions, Gokhale

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[3] B.R. Nanda, *op. cit.*, p.71.

[4] H.N. Kunzru, *op. cit.*, p.3; Also see C.P. Ramaswami Ayyar, *Gokhale And His Message*, 1966, p.18.

[5] B.R. Nanda, *op. cit.*, pp.286-90.

[6] C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, *Op. cit.*, p.20.

[7] H.N. Kunzru, *Op. cit.*, p.18.

[8] D.B. Mathur, *Gokhale: A Political Biography*, Bombay, 1966, p. 9.

was also the editor of the reformist weekly *Sudharak* founded by Agarkar, one of the leaders of the Deccan Education Society.[9] He sharply criticized the administration when plague and famine broke out in the Bombay Province in the late 1890s. He did conspicuous service in connection with the sanitary methods to deal with the plague and his services were widely recognized even by his critics. About this time as religious divide began to be perpetuated in Maratha nationalism, Gokhale strongly pleaded for Hindu – Muslim unity.[10]

Though an ardent Congressmen, elected as a Joint General Secretary of the Congress at its Madras session in 1903, Gokhale was unhappy about some of the Congress leaders' attitude to politics.[11] He found that they tended to treat politics as an occasional diversion from their personal and professional preoccupations. They were not inclined to tap the potential of hundreds of young men who came out every year from Indian universities and who had all the zest and time in the world of politics, but lacked the knowledge, training and experience. Gokhale had long been thinking about the possibilities of harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of these young men for national regeneration. He found that the life of the ancient Sanyasins, enshrined a life of self abnegation, renunciation of material interests, and subjection to rigorous discipline to consecrate themselves for the service of God and man.

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[9] *Ibid.*, p.p. 6-11.

[10] *Speeches of Gokhale,* "The Hindu-Mahomedan Question", Madras, 1920, p.p. 996-1001.

[11] D.B. Mathur, *Op. cit.*, p.p. 14-17.

He further thought that this ideal of renunciation could be adapted for secular ends. It would be highly beneficial for the nation if a few young men turned their backs upon personal ambitions and made the social and political uplift of their country their sole mission in life. This idea which was at the back of his mind for long, found expression at the Dharwar Social Conference held in April 1903. While urging a crusade against untouchability, Gokhale had asked,

> Cannot a few men – five percent, four percent, three, two, even one percent – of hundreds and hundreds of graduates that the university turns out every year, take it upon themselves to dedicate their lives to this sacred work of the elevation of low castes? My appeal is not to old or the middle–aged - the grooves of their lives are fixed – but I think I may well address such an appeal to the young members of our community . . . . What the country needs most at the present moment is a spirit of self-sacrifice on the part of our educated young men.[12]

The idea of an organization for training young men for public life was in fact assuming the shape of a mission in Gokhale's mind. The history of public organizations in Maharashtra validated his desire to form a body of workers committed to public service. Earlier in the mid 19th century several public associations were formed in the Bombay Presidency like the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, the Deccan Education Society, the Deccan Sabha and the

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[12] Gopal Krishna Gokhale, *Speeches,* 3rd edn., Madras, 1920, p.902.

Bombay Presidency Association, which continued to be active, till the late 1890s. These were either formed or controlled by the university graduates or matriculates of the urban areas. As they ceased functioning, the days of the old style public associations ended in Maharashtra. They had been destroyed by the formation of factions within the dominant elite group and by a consequent struggle for power and leadership. In the process, the vision of a multi-group organization wedded to the theory of championing a diverse range of grievances and interests was dissipated. There had been dominant groups and key personalities in these bodies but they tended to be more sensitive to a broader range of grievances and problems, and were less subject to the demand of specific ideologies and wider issues.[13]

The establishment of Gokhale's Servants of India Society can be seen against this perspective. The change in character was quite evident. Like the earlier public bodies, the Society also displayed concern with national upliftment and public work, but it did not attempt to attain any kind of representative character. Its members, small in number, were carefully selected and were dedicated to national good. Its tight knit structure and its strict control of its workers were a departure from the nineteenth century model.

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[13] J.C. Massalos, *Indian Nationalism: An History,* New Delhi, 1985, pp.231-245.

In the Ranade Memorial speech, which Gokhale made in June 1903 at Bombay, he paid glowing tribute to his master and acknowledged his indebtedness to the great man in shaping his vision and personality. He considered Ranade a well-balanced mind. He said that "the principle which he laboured all his life, greater equality for all, and a recognition of the essential dignity of man as man are bound to triumph in the end no matter how dark the outlook occasionally may be."[14]

Gokhale made every effort to turn his spiritual urges into practical ends. He resorted to methods of peace and privileged means over ends and sought constructive initiation of a new polity as a substitute for the British regime. Essentially a scholar-politician, Gokhale attempted to transform politics and spiritualise it by insisting on self-surrender, tolerance and on purity of motives and action. He is therefore described as belonging to the group of leaders termed conciliators or reconcilers, who seek harmony and pursue the middle path between the practical and the real.[15]

On the 25th July 1904, a public welcome was accorded to Gokhale in his capacity as Joint Secretary of the Indian National Congress. In his reply he was quite skeptical of the way political agitations were being carried out in the country, for they were neither effective enough to meet the hopes and the

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[14] R.P. Patwardhan, compiled and ed, *The Select Gokhale*, New Delhi, 1968, pp.128,138.

[15] C.P. Rama Swami Iyer, *Biographical Vistas: Sketches of Some Eminent Indians*, Bombay, 1968, pp. 176-77.

aspirations of the people nor the ideas and hopes of the founders of the Congress. That was the 20th year of the Congress, and Gokhale who had been with it since its inception observed: "In many of our papers, in the utterances of many of our leading men, in the discussions that take place in the freedom of private conversation, you find everywhere that the predominant note in regard to political agitation is one of despair. It seems that a kind of despondency is setting over the national mind".[16]

He further urged that in order to achieve such goals it was necessary to energise the vast mass of the people:

> We have got to realise that on one side of us are arrayed forces of racial ascendancy, of monopoly of power, and on the other side is a vast mass of ignorance, apathy and moral helplessness. Between the two, we have to work, to face, to try to overcome the forces marshalled against us on one side and to quicken into life and to move into energetic action the vast mass on the other.[17]

Gokhale argued that India being a subject nation should embark upon "political work of the highest character". There was no point in discrediting the achievements of the Congress. It was imperative that we must work more strenuously. Illustrating the example of Japan, he exhorted that the weakness

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[16] D.G. Karve and D.V. Ambekar, (ed.), *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhle* Vol II, Bombay, 1966, pp.173-174

[17] *Ibid*, p.175.

of the public life from which India suffered, namely, lack of devoted leadership, disciplined obedience, strong national feeling had to be cured. For this in every province one or two men should come forward to lead the young men. Concluding his speech Gokhale argued that faith in work and sacrifice was absolutely necessary for the political emancipation of the country.[18] These ideals prominently figure in the constitution of the Servants of India Society adopted on 12th June 1905.[19] (See Appendix).

As a public worker Gokhale stood for the spiritualisation of public work. In fact the Servants of India Society was an outcome as well as the exalted medium for the realisation of this ideal. According to him the 'emancipation' of the country lay in the kind of public life people chose to give themselves. For him, a people's national character and capacity as a community were synonymous with their public life. He reminded the Indians that in the West the people had made achievements in three spheres of public life, namely, national public life, political public life and social and humanitarian public life.[20] But the public life in India was weak because our public spirit was weak. "Our main difficulty in Public life springs as much from reluctance or I would put it in stronger terms, from a constitutional incapacity of our people to subordinate personal judgement to the common

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[18] *Ibid.*, pp.177,180.

[19] D.G. Karve and Ambekar (ed.), *Op. cit.*, pp.181-86.

[20] G.K. Gokhale, *Public Life in India: Its Needs and Responsibilities*, Bombay, 1922, p.4.

good".[21] He went on arguing that it was necessary to build up the strength of our people so that they might be able to discharge their responsibilities properly. He also advocated harmonious co-operation between the Indian communities as well as between the rulers and the ruled. He asked the youngmen of India to enter into public life and place great hope in them.

While serving as Professor in Fergusson College, Poona Gokhale did not confine himselt to the role of a mere academic. He was considered as one of a brand of men who during the closing years of 19th century and the first few years of the 20th century securely laid the foundations of the Indian economic thought. He was the youngest in the group – the other prominent figures were Dadabai Naoroji, Ranade, R.C. Dutt, Dinsha Wachha and G.V. Joshi. Like others of the group Gokhale was highly critical of the British economic policy. In his interventions, and appearances before the Welby Commission, Bombay Legislative Council and Imperial Legislative Council he presented critiques of the "deep and deepening poverty" of India, the kind of revenue settlement and the operation of system of currency and finance. Gokhale maintained that the fundamental remedy for rural debt was not to restrict the right of transfer of land but to introduce greater elasticity into their system of revenue collections. He made a case for making provision for reasonable needs of the agriculturalists in the shape of agricultural banks or

[21] *Ibid*, pp.10,11,20,34-35.

more liberal and flexible system of takavi advances. This constructive view was again stressed by Gokhale in connection with the Co-operative Credit Societies Bill of 1904.[22]

Ghokale was considered the founder of the basic conceptual framework of the welfare state in India, which consisted of three basic elements: welfare finance, industrial development and agricultural improvement. Together, they make up Gokhale's testament of economic policy. As a desciple of Ranade, Gokhale was an ardent advocate of industrialisation through a judicious policy of infant industry protection and public support for home made goods on the Swadeshi principle.[23]

Gokhale was unhappy about the way political and social organizations worked in India. He was doubtful about their efficacy as agencies of social transformation and the welfare of the people. He licensed public organisations to work for the alleviation of the sufferings and miseries of the people. These agitations alone would not suffice; the need of the hour was some kind of concrete programmes, which would be of service to the people. Gokhale thought that a group of young men trained to do dedicated service would definitely stand in good stead for transformations in society. As he said

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[22] T.M. Joshi, "Economic Thought of Gopal Krishna Gokhale" in A.B. Shah & S.P. Aiyar (ed.), *Gokhale and Modern India Centenary Lectures*, Bombay, 1966, pp.74,78.

[23] *Ibid*, pp.86,90.

in his farewell address on the occasion of his retirement as Principal of Fergusson College in 1904:

> The principal moral interest of this institution is infact that it represents an idea and embodies an ideal. The idea is that Indians of the present-day can find themselves together, and putting aside all thoughts of worldly interest, work for a secular purpose with the zeal and enthusiasm, which we generally find in the sphere of religion alone.[24]

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, was an eminent educationist, humanitarian and social reformer. He was also known as a great "unifier", a "reconciler" and a faint-hearted moderate. He condemned the partition of Bengal, attacked the salt tax and bitterly criticised the policy of the British Government in excluding the Indian's from the higher jobs in the country. He fought all his life to better the lot of the common man. On his passing away on 19th February 1915 Bal Gangadhar Tilak at the cremation ground said, "Gokhale was the diamond of India, the Jewel of Maharashtra and the prince of the workers".[25] He was a true representative of the moderate school of thought in the beginning of the twentieth century. He was a constructive statesman of

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[24] *Speeches of G.K. Gokhale*, 3rd edn., G.A. Natesan & Co., Madras, 1920, p.897.

[25] Jagadish Sharma, *Encyclopaedia of India's Struggle for Freedom*, New Delhi, 1971, p.79

the first rank an idealist, forseer, a prophet of new era of inter-racial good will and co-operation.[26]

Gokhale's patriotism meant "devotion to mother land so profound and so passionate that it's very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts us out of ourself". Lala Lajpath Rai found Gokhale's patriotism of the purest type. Even Curzon wrote to him "God had endowed you with extra-ordinary abilities, and you have placed them unreservedly at the disposal of your country." Mahatma Gandhi compared Gokhale with Ganges – which invited one to its bosom. Gandhiji once wrote that in the sphere of politics as well as in his heart, the place that Gokhale occupied was absolutely unique.[27]

Servants of India Society were regarded as the powerhouse of the Indian Liberal Movement though it was not an exclusively political organization.[28] Gokhale's intellectual gifts were as phenomenal as was the rectitude of his personal life. Curson, speaking in the House of Lords after Gokhale's death, said to him that he had never met "a man of any nationality more gifted in parliamentary capacities".[29] Gokhale's politics were not of the

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[26] *Ibid.*

[27] All quotations from Kishan Mohan, (ed.), *Encyclopaedic History of Indian Freedom Movement: Political Leadership and Indian Freedom Movement,* Vol III, New Delhi, 1999, p.13.

[28] Monica Whately. Ellen Wilkinson, Leonard W. Matters, and V.K. Krishna Menon, *Condition of India: Being the Report of the Delegation Sent to India by the Indian League in 1932*, New Delhi, 1999, p.113.

[29] Cited in Durgadas, *India From Curson to Nehru and After*, New Delhi, 1971, p.54.

kind calculated to make him a leader of the masess, but there were few among the intelligentsia who were not inspired by the principal cardinal to his faith – that morality must govern not only private life but public activity as well.[30]

The idea that dedicated workers were required in the spheres of politics and social reform as well as in education, had occurred to Gokhale many years before,[31] but he was able to give practical shape to it only at his retirement, that is, in the founding of the Servants of India Society. Gokhale was the devoted disciple of Mahadeva Govinda Ranade who was a dynamic figure in the renaissance of Indian political and economic thought.[32]

He had doubts whether he would be able to attract enough able young men who had the spirit of self-sacrifice. He was also doubtful of the *modus operandi* of the organization, the money and resources required for its functioning, and also about the government's attitude towards the training of "national missionaries". However, Gokhale formulated the constitution of the 'Servants of India Society' in the early month of 1905. His idea was to recruit university educated "young men with intellectual capacity, devotion to duty and mental elevation."

The Servants of India Society was established on 12 June 1905, with three men who had agreed to join Gokhale: G.K. Devadhar, A.V. Patwardhan,

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[31] R.P. Paranj Pye, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Poona, 1915, pp.64-65.

[32] J.C. Massalos, *Op. cit.*, pp.95-96.

and N.A. Dravid – all in their thirties – as members of the Society. The goals of the Servants of India Society, were, in the words of Gokhale, "to train men, prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit, for the work of political education and agitation, and will seek to promote, by all constitutional means, the national interest of the Indian people":[33] The members of the society were looked upon as young missionaries of Indian nationalism, the "ascetic pilgrims of politics," as H.W. Nevinson, the British journalist, described them.[34]

Gokhale designated himself as the First Member of the Society. According to his scheme, the young missionaries had to complete their training and acquire a degree of maturity before they act on their own. Gokhale was well aware of "the disorganized and undisciplined public life and the want of self-restraint" which characterized most young men. Therefore in the constitution of the Society he laid down that "Every member shall during the time that he is under training place himself under the entire guidance and control of the First Member and shall do such studies as the First Member may direct."[35]

The preamble to the constitution of the Servants of India Society, drafted by Gokhale reveals his political faith. He recorded that during the

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[33] D.G. Carve & D.V. Ambekar, (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p.182.

[34] B.R. Nanda, *Op. cit.*, pp.172-73.

[35] B.R. Nanda, *Ibid.*, pp.170-171.

preceding fifty years there had been the 'startling' growth of the feeling of common nationality in India, based upon common tradition, common disabilities and common hopes and aspirations. There was a growing realization that they were "Indians first, and Hindoos, Mahomedans, Parsees or Christians afterwards" and "the idea of a united and renovated India, marching onwards to a place among the nations of the world, worthy of her great past, is no longer a mere dream of a few imaginative minds, but in the definitely accepted creed of those who form the brain of the community – the educated classes of the country." - The rules of the Society required the members to live on a modest allowance: Rs.30 p.m for a trainee; Rs.50 p.m for a full member. They were not allowed to earn for themselves, or to engage in personal quarrels. Their material pursuits and personal ambitions were to be substituted by an undivided attention to public affairs.[36] The high sense of selfless service implied in this attitude was commended by Mahatma Gandhi himself and cited as a model to be emulated by social workers:

> Mr. Gokhale began with Rs.40 and never took more than Rs.75. He lived all his life with Rs.75. He used to be a member of commissions, etc. . . . and whatever he got by way of allowances, etc. . . ., he made over to the Servants of India Society. He used to consider it a part of his religion to take just enough for subsistence.[37]

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[36] Carve and Ambekar (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p.182.

[37] *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.51, New Delhi, 2000, p.348.

The young Indian nationalists who enrolled themselves as members of the Servants of India Society included V.S. Sreenivasa Sasthri, Hriday Nath Kunzru, A.V. Thakkar ("Thakkar Bappa") and N.M. Joshi. Bappa had given up his office of Road Engineer for Bombay Muncipal Corporation to become a Servant of India. Gandhiji called him a loan to the Harijan Sevak Samaj by the Society.[38] They were courting a pathway of dedicated service to the nation. As B.R. Nanda observes,

> 'Hardly any of these Servants of India' could have foreseen the vistas, which were to open to them in future. To the new entrants in the years before the First World War, the Society must have seemed the gateway to a monastry, rather than to honour, fame or influence. Renunciation of all personal ambition and the acceptance of voluntary poverty evoked feelings of shock: and disbelief amongst relatives and friends."[39]

While launching the Servants of India Society Gokhale was worried about suspicions and even hostility on the part of the government. Though the Society was established on strong nationalistic impulses, it was not altogether opposed to the government. However, the fact remained that, "there was no getting away from the fundamental fact that Gokhale was setting up an organization for systematically training full-time politicians who were likely to follow his foot steps. "One Gokhale was bad enough, a

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[38] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.77, New Delhi, 2000, p.52.

[39] B.R. Nanda, *Op. cit.*, p.174.

battalion of young Gokhales could hardly be a welcome prospect to British officials."[40] Inorder to avoid governmental interference Gokhale kept away from all publicity. With a view to take the government into confidence, Gokhale met the Private Secretary to Lord Lamington, the Governor of Bombay and explained to him the objects of the Servants of India Society. But neither Lord Lamington, nor Curson, the Viceroy were impressed by his attempts, but were suspicious of Gokhale and his movement.[41]

Inspired by a relentless zeal for devoted social reform work, the Servants of India Society. The Society stood for the following ideals:

> Its members will direct their efforts principally towards (1) creating among the people by example and by precept, a deep and passionate love of the Motherland, seeking its highest fulfilment in service and sacrifice; (2) organizing the work of political education and agitation, basing it on a careful study of public questions, and strengthening generally the public life of the country; (3) promoting relations of cordial goodwill and co-operation among the different communities (4) assisting educational movements, especially those for the education of women, the education of backward classes, and industrial and scientific education; (5) helping forward the industrial

[40] *Ibid*, p.175.

[41] *Speeches of G.K. Gokhale, Op. cit.*, p.7.

development of the country; (6) the elevation of the depressed classes.[42]

According to the constitution of the Servants of India Society every member at the time of admission shall take the following seven vows:

a) That the country will always be the first in his thoughts and he will give to her service the best that is in him,

b) That in serving the country he will seek no personal advantage for himself,

c) That he will regard all Indians as brothers and will work for the advancement of all, without distinction of caste or creed,

d) That he will be content with such provision for himself and his family, if he has any, as the Society may be able to make in accordance with the bye-laws framed for the purpose. He will devote no part of his energies to earning money for himself,

e) That he will lead a pure personal life,

f) That he will engage in no personal quarrel with any one, and

g) That he will always keep in view the aims of the Society and watch over its interests with the utmost goal, doing all he

[42] C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, *op. cit.*, quoted p.186.

can to advance its work. He will never do anything which is inconsistent with the objects of the Society.[43]

The headquarters of the Society will be at Poona where it will maintain a home for its members and attached to it a library for the study of the subjects bearing on its work. As V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri has pointed out Gokhale insisted always on the need for prolonged discipline and training, similar to what he had himself undergone at the hands of Mr. Ranade, to evoke such qualities as idealism, reverence, courtesy, sacrifice and accommodation which are essential to those who are pledged to mutual brotherhood in a task beset with danger and temptation.[44]

During Gopal Krishna Gokhale's lifetime, that is, the first ten years, the Servants of India Society systematically worked in the following respects:

i. Organisation of lectures, publication of pamphlets, news paper articles, tapping of public opinion, and, personal investigations and contacts.

ii. Collaboration with existing units in the various fields of public welfare.

iii. Co-operation with voluntary social workers.

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[43] D.G. Karve and D.V. Ambekar, *Op. cit.*, p.183.

[44] V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri, *"My Master Gokhale": A Selection from the Speeches and Writings of Rt Hon'ble V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri*, Madras, 1946, pp.87,88.

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iv. Creation of intelligent interest among the people and stirring a missionary spirit and enthusiasm among co-workers and,

v. Co-operation with Government officials, bodies and workers doing missionary work.[45]

Gokhale believed that within the British Empire India might reach her salvation through constitutional agitation and by the steady pursuit of the method of co-operation with the British. He was a man of liberal ideas and adopted the method of compromise in tackling problems. As V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri observes:

> Compromise is essentially a matter of extreme difficulty. It can also be a matter of danger. I feel that the old liberalism in this country for which Gokhale and Mahta and other people of that time stood, the liberalism with which the names of Ranade and Dadabhai Naoroji are connected, that in its essence and its fundamentals still hold the fields in spite of every endeavour to understand the other case.[46]

In his *Life of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (1933) John. S. Hoyland compared Gokhala's career to that of Count Cavour, the Italian statesman. Hoyland characterized the two statesmen thus:

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[45] G.K. Devadhar, *The Servants of India Society*, Poona, 1914, p.10. quoted in D.B. Mathur, *Gokhale : A Political Biography*, Bombay 1966, p.366.

[46] V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri, *"My Master Gokhale"*, in *Selections from the speeches and Writings of Rt Hon'ble V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri*, Madras, 1946, p.108.

> They were both 'masters of the possible' setting before themselves limited objectives, using the existing machinery, however defective, for the attainment of those objectives and when they were obtained, giving forward the step more to some other practical and limited objective. They were both inherently constitutionalists i.e. men who perceived that revolutionary methods, even if they succeed for a time in realizing the popular will, have in their inevitable ultimate results, a reaction which may carry things backward. In consequence, both of them were anathema to the hot heads in their respective lands. The followers of Mazzini hated Cavour even more than they hated the Austrians and it is perhaps true that some Indian extremists hated Gokhale worse than they hated the British.[47]

Two dominant traits of Gokhale were his love of order and his dislike of political hysteria and of direct action in any shape or form. An admirer of Burke and Mill, he believed that the formation of opinion is of greater importance than laws or executive power in maintaining order and running governments.

The establishment of the Servants of India Society "stamped Gokhale's brow with the mark of a political *Sanyasin* (monk) for he was, by this time, convinced that the work of associations or public bodies including that of the Congress had not reached the grass root level. This realization prompted Gokhale to undertake still more sincere work towards the goals of social

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[47] J.S. Hoyland, *Gopala Krishna Gokhale: His Life and Speeches,* Culcutta, 1933, p.

reform and thereby for the attainment of freedom. But, for leaders like Pherozshah Metha, the foundation of the Servants of India Society had appeared as a presumptous if not futile exercise. Though men like Aga Khan, had supported the formation of the Society, he had come to the fantastic conclusion that if the Servants of India Society (the "Brother hood " as they called it) could be infiltrated with elements loyal to the British Raj, Gokhale could be diverted from political agitation into the innocuous by-ways of social reform. In the face of those who were sceptical of his programmes Gokhale maintained that "My life is given to humble practical work in India . . . .[48]

An all round programme of rural development formed the pivotal element in Gokhale's comprehensive scheme of moral and material well being of the people. In his Budget Speech in March 1906 Gokhale pointed out that the first essential condition for a progressive movement in agriculture was to free the farmer from the heavy land taxation and unproductive debt. As T.M. Joshi points out Gokhale's economic programmes were worked out when even the British welfare state was in its infancy.[49]

Speaking on the occasion of a reception given to him in Allahabad on 4th February 1907, Gokhale reviewed briefly the condition of India and explained to them the tasks ahead. He said that the vast mass of the people

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[48] B.R. Nanda, *Op. cit.*, pp. 235, 242.

[49] T.M. Joshi, *Op. cit.*, p.92-94. Also see T.K. Sahani, *Gopalakrishna Gokhale: A Historical Biography*, Bombay, 1924, pp.267, 275.

were lying inert and apethetic, deplorably divided and sub-divided with hardly any true sense of discipline, prolonged abject poverty and ignorance, and wedded to usages and institutions. He made out his vision of a future India in these words.

> I want our men and women, without distinction of caste or creed, to have opportunities to grow to the full height of their stature, unhampered by cramping and unnatural restrictions. I want India to take her proper place among the great nations of the world, politically, industrially, in religion, in literature, in science and in arts. I want all this and feel at the same time that the whole of this aspiration can, in its essence and its reality, be realized within this Empire.[50]

Gokhale clarified that the means by which that goal was to be reached was through constitutional agitation. He explained "constitutional agitation was agitation by methods which they were entitled to adopt to bring about the changes they desired through the action of constitutional authorities,[51] by bringing to bear on them the pressure of public opinion. For this it was necessary to build up the strength of the people. He proposed a three-fold plan for that, first, the promotion of a closer union among the different sections of the Indian community – between the Hindus and the Mohammedans – and among the different sections of the Hindus themselves. Secondly, the development of a stronger and higher type of character, firm of

[50] *Speeches of G.K. Gokhale*, "The Work Before Us" (4 Feb. 1907), 1920, p.949.
[51] *Ibid.*

purpose and disciplined in action; and thirdly, the cultivation of an intense feeling of nationality throughout the country rising superior to cast and creed and rejoicing in all sacrifice for the motherland, accompanied by a spread of political education among the masses.[52]

On 9th February 1907 as part of a series of public addresses delivered at Lucknow Gokhale spoke of the Swadeshi Movement. He brought to bear upon the people that the more immediate question before the people was "Swadeshism as applied to the present economic situation of India". He argued that since British Economic Policy was impoverishing India, Swadeshism had to be developed for the true "industrial regeneration of the country".[53] So far much attention was paid to the political domination of India by the British. He stated that "the industrial domination is less visible and does its work in a more insidious manner, in contrast to political domination which lie very much on the surface:

> On the other hand, the industrial domination of one people by another may come in an attractive garb. If that has been the case with India, this foreign domination comes in the shape of more finished articles – especially articles that administer to the daily wants of a community – you unconsciously welcome the domination, you fall a victim to its temptations and its attractiveness. And it is only when the evil grows beyond

[52] *Ibid.*, pp.950, 951, 953.

[53] Speeches of G.K. Ghokale, "The Swadeshi Movement" (9th Feb. 1907), 1940, p.958.

> certain limits, that your attention is drawn to it. Now this is precisely what has happened in the case of India.[54]

India's industrial domination by England was the "most deplorable result of British rule in this country". As he asserted "we also see that the forcible disarming of a population is bound to crush the manhood of the Nation". Year after year a huge quantity of wealth go out from India. As Gokhale put it no country, not even the richest in the world could stand a "bleeding" as this. Indian manufacturing was destroyed by the British and contributed to an "enormous economic evil" and this could only be countered by Swadeshism. With great visionary gleam he exhorted the people that "in the struggle that lies before, we must be prepared for repeated disappointments".[55]

The year 1907 has been one of trials for Gokhale both in his public and private life. The strain of the Calcutta Congress, the debate in the Imperial Council, the propaganda war with the Extremists[56], the problems of running the Servants of India Society and the uncertainty of the political situations had been telling on his health. Following the death of his elder brother, Govind, in the same year he had to shoulder very heavy family burdens. He was also the Chairman of the Plague Relief committee of Poona. The Surat session of the Congress left him thoroughly exhausted and chastened. The extremist

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[54] *Ibid.*, p.959.

[55] *Ibid.*, p.960, 964, 966..

[56] B.N. Pande, ed. *A Centenary History of Indian National Congress,* Vol. I. Delhi, 1985, p.167.

tirade against him and the uninformed press criticism, though hurt him, reaffirmed his faith in his creed:

> So let them call me insincere or timid or anything else they like. I do my work because I love my country and I feel amply rewarded by the opportunities I have of doing it. This is the only rock on which one should build in public life. Whoever builds on anything else builds on sand.

The promotion of "cordial good will and co-operation" among the different communities was embodied in the constitution of the Servants of India Society which Gokhale had personally drafted. Every 'Servant of India' was required to "regard all Indian as brothers" and to "work for the advancement of all, without distinction of caste and creed".[57]

The Surat Congress (1907) had rendered the Congress organization "A home divided against itself'. The moderates were beaten by the extremists. Though Gokhale was making every attempt for the reconstruction of the Congress, he did not succeed as he intended it to be. Eventually the country was caught within the vicious circle of terrorist outrages and official reprisals, which boded ill for its political progress. Accordingly Gokhale's mind was turning to constructive tasks outside the legislatures. The Hindu-Muslim tension, which had assumed a greater proportion than the moderate-extremist

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[57] The Servants of India Society 'Original Constitution' in Karve & Ambekar, *Op. cit.*, pp.180-186.

conflict, especially after the Minto-Morley reforms, had to be curtailed. In a letter to Wedderburn, Gokhale wrote:

> We propose to devote all our energies of the Servants of India Society now to educating and organizing public opinion on the necessity of universal elementary education, in technical, industrial, and agricultural education, improved situations, the growth of cooperative movement, the relief of agricultural indebtedness and the development of local self government. This is a large programme and it will tax our energies to the utmost. In addition to this, some members are going to devote themselves to the spread of higher education among women, the promotion of harmony between Hindus and Muhammadans and work among the depressed classes. We cannot expect any large constitutional changes for the next ten years or so now; meanwhile the work we have taken in hand will amply repay itself and prepare the ground for the next advance.[58]

Gokhale had been possessed by these concerns and ideals for quite a long time. As member of the Royal Commission, he was causing deep annoyance to the Viceroy by presenting strong arguments in debates. Paradoxically, the British Government in India decided to offer him a knighthood, a KCIE title (Knight Commander of Indian Empire) which Gokhale readily appreciated but declined. He knew that a knighthood accorded ill with the simplicity of life to which all members of the Servants of

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[58] *Gokhale Papers, Gokhale to Wedderburn 29 April 1910*, National Archives, New Delhi.

India Society were pledged. Gokhale's friend and disciples appreciated his courage of conviction. As Srinivasa Sasthri said about it: "you would be more honoured with the honour refused than with it accepted".[59] The title infact was intended as a "badge of servitude" and by making him accept it, the government might have planned to get him on their side of fence.[60]

Gokhale had a firm conviction that ultimately the destiny of India would be moulded by her people and particularly by the younger generation. He used to tell his English friends that "Our best material is in our country". In accordance with this conviction, Gokhale had founded the Servants of India Society with a view to harness the youth to patriotic service. Branches of the Society were opened in Madras in 1910, in Nagpur and Bombay in 1911, and in Allahabad in 1913/ Gokhale's idea was to enroll at least one "Servant of the India" for each of 275 districts in the country. He insisted on rigorous principles in the recruitment and training of the members. A University degree and an aptitude for public work were essential qualifications. No one was admitted as a member until after he had been something of the kind of life he was expected to lead, and had been adjudged suitable by Gokhale himself. The subsistence allowance was Rs.30/- a month; it was raised to Rs.50/- after the first five years. The earnings of the

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[59] *Gokhale Papers, Sastri to Gokhale, 9th July 1914*, National Archives, New Delhi.

[60] From Fleetwood Wilson to Hardinge, 1 Sept. 1912 (Wilson was Finance Minister of the Viceroy's Executive Council, 1908-1913), quoted from B.R. Wanday, *Op. cit.*, pp.439, 440.

members (including Gokhale's savings from his allowance as member of the Legislative Council) went to the Society. As the First Member of the Society, Gokhale kept a vigilant eye on the members. The conduct of each member was carefully observed. Even Devadhar and Patwardhan, two of the founder members, were occasionally warned for want of discipline.

Some of the entries in the diary of Sreenivasa Sastri who was the second member of the society at the time, give a picture of the way Gokhale conducted the daily affairs of the Society's Home at Poona:

> Diary of Sreenivasa Sastri, 3 July 1909.
>
> First Member ask me today to be strict about Devadhar. Somebody had told him of his being late twice at night during this absence.
>
> 6 July 1909.
>
> First Member is to discourse on Finance on Friday. Debate led by Vaza on 'The Brahmans – Non Brahmans'. Kaikini has returned.
>
> 16 August 1909.
>
> In the evening Mr. Gokhale called us all together in his room and made a programme for each member.
>
> 8 September 1909.
>
> Some talk with Mr. Gokhale led to Mr. Patwardhan's absence last night and Devadhar's frequent irregularities. At once they

were sent for and rated in my presence. I feared it might lead to unpleasantness, but, thank God, both took it well.[61]

In the Poona Home of the Society the programmes included debates on such subjects as "Political creed of the Servants of India Society", the "Practicability of the colonial Swaraj", the "Principles of social reform" "Native states", the "Merits of a Congress session in London", the "Indian Police", "Race prejudice". There were occasional lectures by Gokhale on such subjects as "Indian Finance as it is and as it should be", "Our work" and the "Drain theory". In Gokhale's scheme of things, the young members were to be trained in the habits of ascetic simplicity, intellectual curiosity, methodical work and discipline. He was very particular that none should come out with half-baked opinion and that they should be under control of such judgement.[62]

The Servants of India were engaged in a variety of political and social activities, like organizational work for the Indian National Congress, journalism, education and social reform. In the political field, the Society co-operated with the Indian National Congress and worked for strengthening the National Movement. During Congress Sessions and meetings, the Society rendered invaluable help. For collection of funds for the Congress and for *India* (the official organ of the British committee of the Congress), the

[61] V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

[62] *Gokhale to Patwardhan,* 26 June 1908, Gokhale Papers, *National Archives*, New Delhi.

members of the Society travelled all over the country. To augment Gokhale's fund for relief to indentured Indians in South Africa, the Society's role will, forever be, remembered. The Society also helped Henry S.L. Polak to put up the case of Indians in South Africa before the country.[63]

In a public meeting held under the auspicious of the Daccan Sabha in Poona on 4th July 1909 Gokhale expressed great concern on the tradition of antagonism between the Hindu and Muslim communities and which lie dormant in their minds. He exhorted that tradition had to be overcome. In prophetic strain he said "it was a common place of Indian politics, that there could be no future for India as a nation, unless a spirit of co-operation of a sufficiently durable character was developed and established in all public matters.[64] His endeavours culminated in the Hindu-Muslim Pact of 1916.[65]

On 16th March 1911 Gokhale asked for leave in the Imperial Legislative Council to introduce a Bill to make better provision for the extension of Elementary Education in India. He said that there was a strong demand for such a Bill in the country:

> Even if the advantages of an elementary education be put no higher than a capacity to read and write, its universal diffusion is a matter of prime importance, for literacy is better than

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[63] D.B. Mathur, *Op. cit.*, p.367.

[64] *Speeches of Gokhale* (1920), *Op. cit.*,, p.996.

[65] C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, *Op. cit.*, 134, 183.

> illiteracy any day, and the banishment of a whole people's illiteracy is no mean achievement. But elementary education for the mass of the people means something more than a mere capacity to read and write. It means for them a keener enjoyment of life and a more refined standard of living. It means greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual. It means a higher level of intelligence for the whole community generally.[66]

The Elementary Education Bill proposed to empower municipalities and district boards "to introduce compulsion within their areas, in the first instance, in the case of boys, and later, when the time is ripe, in the case of girls". He was highly optimistic about the bill and he hoped that the bill would strengthen generations and he concluded his speech quite philosophically: "I do not ask to see that distant score: one-step enough for me". In his reply to the criticisms which were offered to his motion for leave to introduce the Bill he clarified that the aim of the Bill was to ensure free and compulsory primary education. He earnestly demanded that education had to be a direct concern of the Government of India.[67]

In the field of education, the Society established Elementary Education League in Madras and Allahabad for enlisting effective public opinion in favour of Gokhale's bill to that effect in the Imperial Legislative Council.

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[66] *Speeches of G.K. Gokhale*, "The Elementary Education Bill", 16 March 1911, Speech at the Imperial Legislative Council introducing the Bill, 1920, p.608.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp.612, 632.

Pamphlets and brochures in regional languages and in English were widely distributed, and lectures were arranged to educate public opinion. Schools were started in rural and industrial areas in Gujarat and female literacy was also looked after. In Allahabad, Madras and Bombay, mobile library facilities were provided. The Society also successfully conducted University 'extension-lectures' in Bombay. For economic welfare of the people, the Society worked on various schemes of co-operative movement and redemption of agriculturist's indebtedness in parts of Bombay, U.P., C.P., Madras and the East Coast. Training in self-reliance among poverty stricken villagers was one of the far-reaching achievements of the Society. The Indian Economic Society was started in Bombay to study economics, collect data of economic significance and produce literature bearing on improvement of conditions.[68]

Social service and relief formed important fields of the Society's work. During famines in eastern U.P. Gujrat, Cutch and Berar (1907 – 1913), relief centres were opened and facilities provided. Flood relief was undertaken in Bihar (1913), Madras (1914) and U.P. (1916). Social Service League were formed in various centres and works of hygiene and sanitation, home nursing, plague-relief, cattle relief and childrens welfare activities were extended to

[68] D.B. Mathur, *Op. cit.*, pp. 12,16,18,21.

needy rural areas. [69] The Society undertook relief work during the Gujrat famine (1920-21). Programmes for the upliftment of the 'Bheel tribe' was another area of operation.[70] In Karnataka the Society organised in the 1930s a Depressed Class Mission based at Mangalore for the service of the tribals and other downtrodden sections.[71] The Society was attracted to Kerala in the early 1920s following the Malabar Rebellion. Its activities in Malabar form a remarkable chapter in the history of Modern Kerala as well as of the Servants of India Society.

Under Gokhale's guidance the Society sought to enlighten public opinion thorough the columns of the *Dnyan Prakash* (A Maratha daily of Poona), *The Hindusthani* (An Urdu weekly of Luknow), *The Hitvada* (An English weekly of Nagpur), *Abhyudaya* (A Hindi weekly of Allahabad). Besides, the members of the Society delivered public lectures and issued pamphlets on political issues.[72]

The Poona House of the Society resembled a political academy with a course of instruction in history, economics, public finance, law and journalism and was in contrast to Gandhiji's *ashrams* which were training

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[69] *Ibid,* p. 22; Also see Bodh Raj Sharma, "Village Uplift in India", *Gokhale Institute of Public Affairs, Jubilee Souvenir*, Bangalore, 1965.

[70] P. Sankunni Nambiar, "Thakkar Bappa Oru Samarpitha Jeevitham" (Mal.), *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, Nov. 26, 1939, Kozhikode, p.4.

[71] "Suryanarayana Rao", *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 30 July 1933, Kozhikode, p.7.

[72] D.B. Mathur, *Op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.

centres for Satyagrahis and not parliametarians. Gandhiji feared that the academic and highborn orientation of Gokhale's Society would get out of touch with the realities of Indian life.[73] However on his return to India in 1915, Gandhiji readily recognized Gokhale as his political 'guru'.[74] About Gokhale's impact on him Gandhiji wrote:

> He seemed to me all I wanted as a political worker – pure as crystal, gentle as a lamb, brave as a lion and chivalrous to a fault. It does not matter to me that he may not have been any of these things. It was enough for me that I could discover no fault in him to cavil at. He was and remains for me the most perfect man on the political field.[75]

Gokhale was the first Indian political leader who introduced the principles of religion into public life and tried to spiritualize it. Gandhiji was very much influenced by this political giant:

> Gokhale taught me that the dream of every Indian who claims to love his country should be not to glorify in language but to spiritualize the political life of the country and the political institutions of the country. He inspired my life and is still inspiring; I have dedicated myself to that ideal. I may fail, and

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[73] Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *Mahatma Gandhi As I Saw Him,* Delhi, 1970, pp. 69-70.

[74] M.K. Gandhi, *Gokhale: My Political Guru* Ahamedabad, 1955.

[75] D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,* Vol II. 1920-1929, Delhi, 1951, Quoted on pp. 48-49.

to what extend I may fail, I call myself as worthy disciple of my master.[76]

As R.P. Paranj Pye remarked,[77] "Gokhale's patriotism was pure gold with no element of dross in it". Gokhale moved himself to voluntary poverty for life, first as a member of the Deccan Education Society, and then as the First Member of the Servants of India Society. He viewed politics not as the pursuit of power or influence on behalf of individual or groups, but as a lever for the regeneration of his country. This idealistic conception of politics seemed to fit in with the needs of a subject race struggling to be free; it did not sound hypocritical when it was responded to by a man whose words never went beyond his deeds. Gokhale knew that the well-trained and organized British bureaucracy in India could be adequately combated by enlisting an equivalent measure of talent, training and discipline in the nationalistic ranks. This accounts for his task to build a cadre of "political missionaries" through the Society.[78]

As H.N. Kunzru who became the President of the Servants of India Society observed that the exceptional qualities of Gokhale were self-sacrifice and passionate devotion to the service of the country. By his unusual

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[76] M.K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme* Vol.II, Ahamadabad, 1961, pp. 312-13.

[77] R.P. Pavanj Pye, *Op.cit.*, pp. 64-70.

[78] B.R Nanda, *Op. cit.*, pp. 472-73.

industry, careful study of public questions and devotion to the public good he became a source of inspiration and guidance for the future generations.[79]

The Servants of India Society was conceived by Gokhale as a corrective to the Indian politics of the early 20th century, which was not catering to the needs of the people at large. The branches of the Society established in far-flung areas of India had served the people in their hours of need. The Society's services during the time of epidemics, floods and famines were highly commendable. In addition to that, the Society's work in empowering the poor and the destitutes by providing them with means of livelihood, education and by instilling in them civic consciousness had no parallel then or since then. The activities of the Society were distinct by virtue of the occasion and the durability of the work rendered. Unlike in other places, the Society had to work in Kerala in a trouble torn and hostile situation, which followed the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. It was an interface of diverse experiences and eventualities including abject poverty, diseases, communal violence, police brutality, natural calamities and rampant ignorance and illiteracy. The people of Malabar had been immensely benefited by the painstaking though timely work undertaken by the Society through the DMRT. A detailed examination of the Society's work in Malabar forms the subject of the next chapter.

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[79] H.N. Kunzru, "Gokhale", *Gokhale Institute of Public Affairs Jubilee Souvenir*, Bangalore, 1965, pp. 45-47.

# THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY IN KERALA: A STUDY OF THE DMRT MOVEMENT

*Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut*
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# CHAPTER IV
# THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY IN KERALA

There was a spate of social reform movements in Kerala in the early decades of the 20th century. These were initiated mainly by religious and spiritual leaders. A few communal organisations also came up during this period and they sought to cure the ill from which the particular community was suffering.[1] Besides religious zeal, they were motivated by progressive views.[2] They fought against superstitious practices as well as caste based social discrimination.[3] Many of the reformers possessed extra ordinary revolutionary spirit because they had to fight both against the conventions and traditions of their own society as well as against authorities.[4] Eventually their movements had to be aligned with political developments. Vagbhatananda for example strongly supported the peasant's movements of north Malabar, because he believed that caste system and related social evils were in part

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[1] P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, (Mal.) Thiruvananthapuram, 1974, p.p. 513-24; P. Chandra Mohan, "Growth of Social Reform Movments in Kerala", In P.J. Cherian (ed.) *Perspectives on Kerala History* Vol II, Part II, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p.p. 456-85.

[2] K.K.N. Kurup, *Adhunika Keralam Charithragaveshana Prabandhangal*, Mal.) Thiruvananthapuram, 1983.

[3] M.S. Nair, *Vaghbatananda Guruvum Samuhyanavothanavum*, (Mal.) Chapter 1, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p.1-19.

[4] V. Thankayya, *Vaikunda Swamikal: Navothanasilpi*, (Mal.) Chapter II and V, Thiruvananthapuram, 2001.

responsible for the slavery of the peasants.[5] But it is quite surprising that the Ernad taluk of Malabar was rather untouched by these progressive developments. Though the largest of the taluks in Malabar, Ernad was quite backward educationally. Extremely fertile and beautiful in landscape Ernad was typical for its ignorance, superstitions, social evils, poverty and fanaticism. It had been the locale for about fifty riots by peasants.[6]

Inhabitants of Ernad were mostly Mappilas (Muhammadans) who were mainly agricultural workers and hired labourers, belonging to the lower strata of the Muslim population. Since the land was mostly owned by the *janmis* (landlords), they had to labour under them. Many of them worked on the British plantations. They took land on lease and worked hard, but the benefit and profit went to the *janmis*. Majority of them were poor and without substantial property in land or goods. This terrible exploitation was causing widespread unrest among the peasants.[7] Earlier the landlord-tenant relationship was a feudal one. Gradually, following British regulations, the landlords were empowered with the right to evict tenants. The landlords thus became pure parasites in relation to the people and were extremely loyal to

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[5] M.S. Nair *Op.cit.*, p.93.

[6] K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, Kozhikode, (Mal.) 2002, pp.8,9.

[7] Sukbir Choudhary, *Moplah Uprising* (1921-23), Delhi, 1977, pp.12, 13.

the British. The result of this exploitative socio-economic order was a steady and continuous pauperization of the people.[8]

In the meantime, the nationalist movement was gaining momentum in Kerala. Following the resolutions in the 1920 Nagpur Congress, there began Non-cooperation movement in Malabar also. During this period when the Congress decided to take up the Khilafat movement along with the Non-co-operation, it had great impact in Malabar as was evident from the large-scale participation of people in both movements.[9]

Even in the early years of the 20th century tenant protests were in vogue in Malabar. In the Malabar District Conferences, which were organized from 1916 onwards, the tenants were demanding to get a resolution passed on landlord - tenant relationship. But that did not happen as late as 1920 when in the Manjeri District Conference, for the first time, a resolution was passed demanding a legislation to regulate landlord-tenant relationship.[10] The resolution was moved by K.P. Raman Menon who represented the extremist faction of the Congress. The Manjeri political conference was mainly intended to discuss the Montegue-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, which were formulated following the protests of the Home-Rule League.

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[8] A.K. Gopalan, *Kerala Past and Present*, London, 1959, p.62.

[9] Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, (Mal.) Kochi, 1985, p.32-38.

[10] K. Madhavan Nair, *Op.cit.*, p.82.

These Reforms affected a cleavage within the Congress party of Kerala as "moderates" (those who supported the Reforms) and, the "extremists" (those who were against the Reforms). The main resolution moved by K.P. Raman Menon rejected the reforms and demanded self-rule. Again, in the Manjeri Conference, the peasants and workers of Ernad joined the extremist faction and, the landlords and those representing vested interests joined the moderate faction.[11] The last of this Malabar District Conference precipitated a polarization in Kerala politics especially in Malabar.[12]

The next important political event was the first Kerala State Conference of the Congress held at Ottapalam in April 1921, presided over by T. Prakasam. Representatives from various parts of Kerala attended the conference. It was therefore said that since the period of the Perumals, Kerala was trying to become one single unit under the Congress leadership. Naturally this sense of unity and resurgence was quite antagonistic to the Empire. From the very beginning of this movement, the British Government in India arrested its foremost leaders like Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menon, Ponmadath Moideen Koya along with Mr. Yakoob Hassan who was touring in Malabar in connection with the Khilafat campaign and imprisoned them at

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[11] Perunna K.N. Nair, *Op.cit.*, pp.28-29.

[12] EMS, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, (Mal.) Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.309.

Kannur jail for 6 months[13] conviction. Even as the peoples' excitement could not be let down by such measures, at the venue of the Ottapalam conference its leader P. Ramunni Menon and a few workers were brutally manhandled for no obvious reasons. The government's plan was a dual policy by which they wanted to suppress a section of the people by a reign of terror on the one hand and, on the other to provoke another section to outrages so that they could be suppressed on that ground. The Government was thus able to divide the people who were for a time unified in the Khilafat - Swaraj campaigns. And this divisive strategy of the government eventually paved the way for the Malabar riot, which was also called Mappila, or Khilafat riot.[14]

Ernad was the biggest of the nine taluks of the British Malabar. It had an area of 966 square miles and lies between Chaliyar on the north and Kadalundi River in the South and, from Nilgiri in the East to the Arabian sea on the West. It was a vast stretch of land interspersed with hills, forests, valleys and paddy fields. Area wise it comprises one fifth of Malabar and contained the 1/7 of its population.[15] In addition to their economic backwardness the people of this area suffered from acute educational backwardness. The major parts of the population were Mappilas who were

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[13] Perunna K.N. Nair, *Op.cit.*, pp.36-37.

[14] EMS *Op.cit.*, pp.309-10. also see Perunna K.N. Nair, *Op.cit.*, p.39-10.

[15] K.E.K. Namboodiri, "Gathivigathikalum Vidhiviparyayavum," *Malabar Kalapam: Charithravum Prathyaya Sasthravum*, (Mal.) Thiruvananthapuram, 1991, p.83.

largely tenants.[16] The revolt was therefore simplistically called Moplah Rebellion. But a great leader like Abdu Rehman described it as Malabar Rebellion because basically it was a rebellion of the oppressed peasants against the landlords and the British.[17] Moyarath Sankaran, a prominent freedom fighter of the period observed that the revolt was not one between the Hindus and Muslims but such a colouring, was given to it by the contemporary press. As a result even the national movement disfavoured the peasant revolt. Even Gandhiji failed to understand the machinations of the press and the British officers in this respect. According to Moyarath, it was quite ironic that in the contemporary history of Kerala the Malabar peasant revolt of 1921 was wrongly described as Mappila riot or Hindu - Muslim riot.[18] In fact the riot was begun by only a very small section of the Mappilas. But later when the British military and police began to attack the Mappila community in an indiscrete manner, majority of the Muslims, with the exception of the rich and the educated got involved in the riot. The rebellion was strictly against the British.[19]

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[16] K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprising in Malabar* - 1836-1921, Delhi, 1992, pp. 51-54.

[17] Communist Party Pamphlet, "Ayirathithollayirathi Irupathiyonninte Aahwanavum Thakkeethum", In *Malabar Kalapam Charithravum Prathyaya Sasthravum,* Thiruvananthapuram 1991, p. 103.

[18] Moyarath Sankaran. *Ente Jeevitha Katha,* (Mal.), Kozhikode, 1965, p.182, 183.

[19] M. Gangadharan, *Mappila Padanangal,* (Mal.), Kozhikode, 2004, pp.37, 44.

The rebellion was a bitter experience for both the Mappilas and the Hindu communities. Great atrocities were meted out on to the people like burning of houses, molesting of women and widespread arrests.[20] It is estimated that nearly 2337 were killed and 1652 wounded while 45404 surrendered or were captured.[21] According to Conrad Wood, there were certain related problems, which culminated the rebellion of 1921, such as the role of religion, the unrest of the rural population, the impact of imperialism on rural society and, the inspiration of the nationalist movement.[22] According to Prof. Stephen F. Dale the violence of the peasant outbreak under British rule represents "a response to a new economic and political context created by the British."[23] M. Gangadhara Menon argues that the outbreak of the rebellion was, in the main, caused by the spirit of defiance against the British authority within a section of Khilafatist's. In his view, this defiance was shaped by the traditional Mappila militancy and their political aspirations raised by the spirit of pan-Islamism and Khilafat agitation. Thus a combination of features of a revolt against alien rule, a violent rising against oppressive land relations and

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[20] *Bombay, Chronicle*, 30 Sept. 1921, NMML Microfilm, New Delhi.

[21] Home Pol 1923, F. No.1929/R, NAI, New Delhi.

[22] Conrad Wood, *Moplah Rebellion and its Genesis*, New Delhi, 1987,p.5.

[23] Stephen F. Dale, "The Mappila Outbreaks: Ideology and Social Conflict in Nineteenth Century Kerala," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 1975, Vol.XXXV, No.1, p.97.

a struggle for the establishment of political power based on religious (Islamic) tenets made it a complex upheaval.[24]

Whatever be the cause and character of the rebellion it had very serious consequences in Kerala both in social relations as well as in politics.[25] The rebellion attracted not only British antagonism[26] but also seriously affected the national movement.[27] It was felt difficult to conduct the smooth and peaceful functioning of the Indian National Congress in South Malabar.[28] The government imposed ban on freedom of speech and travel, which adversely affected the functioning of Congress committees and other political associations.[29] Moreover the rebellion brought about a communal divide and, in the subsequent months, the Congress could not come to the forefront of the social and political activities.[30] It was also alleged that the Congress did not take any step to check the cruelties of the British government in the final phase of the rebellion. It was argued that if the Congress had supported the

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[24] M. Gangadhra Menon, *Malabar Rebellion 1921-1922* Allahabad, 1989, pp.459-479.

[25] K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, 2002; M. Brahmadathan Namboodiripad, *Khilafat Smaranakal*, 1965; Moyarath Sankaran, *Ente Jeevithakadha*, 1965.

[26] K.K.N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p.49.

[27] Perunna K.N. Nair, *Op.cit.*, p.65.

[28] A.K. Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, Kottayam, 1986, p.300.

[29] K.P. Kesava Menon, *Kazhinja Kalam* (Mal.), Kozhikode, 1986, p.128.

[30] Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala and Freedom Struggle*, Kottayam, 1987, p.128.

rebellion and adopted an anti-British stand, the government could not have ventured to let loose a reign of terror in Malabar.[31]

Reports about police atrocities and the forced conversions by the rebels appeared in the newspapers. Kesava Menon himself had written in *The Hindu* about these matters. In a atmosphere of fear and distrust the Hindu-Muslim relationship weakened in Malabar.[32] The divisive effects of the rebellion were so deep that with very few exceptions the "Mappilas and Hindus were living together without being together."[33] One of the negative consequences of this complex situation was that, it provided a fertile ground for an unprecedented development of communal politics in Malabar in the subsequent decades. The emergence of Muslim League as a potential factor in Kerala politics was attributed to the bitter experiences of the Mappilas in 1921.[34]

However, eminent leaders of the Khilafat-Non Co-operation movement like Muhammed Abdurahiman, E. Moidu Moulavi, K.P. Kesava Menon, M.P. Narayana Menon, K. Madhavan Nair, K. Kelappan, U. Gopala Menon etc. made persistent attempts to pacify the rebels and persuaded them to desist

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[31] Mozhikunnath Brhamadattan Namboodiripad, *Op.cit.*, p.184. Also see Moyarath Sankaran, *Op.cit.*, pp.182-184.

[32] P.P. Ummar Koya, "Desiya Prasthanam, Vazhithirivil" *Navathi Pranamam* (Mal.) Kozhikode, 1977, p.38.

[33] Ronald E. Miller, *Mappilas of Malabar: A Study in Islam Trends*, Bombay, 1976, pp.152-153.

[34] P.A. Syed Mohammed, *Kerala Muslim Charithram* (Mal.) Thrissur, 1969, p.246.

from violent activities.[35] It has also been pointed out that the growth of a separatist Muslim politics in northern India was also to an extent one of the impacts of the Malabar Rebellion.[36] The sufferings of the Mappilas in Malabar roused the sentiments of their counterparts elsewhere in India. The Muslims of the Northern Provinces of India generously responded to the appeals for help. Muhammed Abdu Rehman took special interest in bringing the issue to the attention of government as well as the public. When his letter to the District Collector calling for government help was turned down, he sent the letter to the newspapers. The letter published in the *Bombay Chronicle* and *The Hindu* aroused great public sympathy in the matter.[37] Following the reports Abdu Rehman was arrested. But his letter was well received by the public. In Bombay a huge meeting was convened at Chaupatti to discuss the issue and to raise funds for Mappila relief.[38] Kesava Menon also had written to *The Hindu* about the police atrocities on the rebels and other consequences, as a result of which he attracted hatred both from the government as well as from a section of the natives.[39] Conflicting narratives about the rebellion paved the way for partisan attitude towards the rebellion. It flared up communal campaigns in the Northern Provinces. The press run by Hindus

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[35] K.N. Panikkar, *Op.cit.*, pp.136-139.

[36] Abdul Hamid, *Muslim Seperatism in India,* Lahore, 1967, p.160.

[37] V.S. Keraleeyan, *Keralathinte Veera Puthran* (Mal.) Aluva, 1998, p.113.

[38] *Ibid.*, p.113; M. Rasheed, *Muhammed Abdurahiman* (Mal.), Kozhikode, 1998, p.25.

[39] P.P. Ummar Koya, *Op.cit.*, p.38.

and their leadership campaigned against the Mappilas.[40] At the same time propaganda through pamphlets also came up giving horrible descriptions of the sufferings of Hindus consequent on the Mappila Rebellion in Malabar.[41] The confrontation between the two communities occurred in various parts of north India and caused deep fissures in the erstwhile Hindu-Muslim unity, which was strenuously forged as an essential condition for the struggle for freedom. As Tara Chand noted, "A vicious circle of accusation and counter accusation was set up which created the heat in which the tender plant of Hindu-Muslim unity began to wither"[42] K.M. Panikkar commenting on the specific situation in Malabar, observed that the Hindu - Muslim riots had caused a psychic divide among the two communities.[43]

The rebellion created untold miseries to the people of Malabar belonging to both the communities. The scenario presented two pictures of acute suffering. On the one side, there was the huge mass of refugees estimated about 25,000, ranging from high caste Namboodiris to lower caste groups. They were infact uprooted from their home villages and came to relief camps set up in distant places like Kozhikode. It was a mixed assortment of men and women whose houses were burnt, their wealth and

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[40] Abdul Hamid. *Op.cit.*, p.160.

[41] see M. Gangadhara Menon, *Op.cit.*, p.482.

[42] Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, New Delhi, 1972, p.497.

[43] K.M. Panikkar, 'The Psychology of Hindu-Muslim Riots,' *Contemporary Review*, February 1927, p.230.

earnings looted and women molested. They comprised also destitute women and children whose protectors were killed by the rebels. Rebels had even injured their minds as their religious faith was dishonoured by the rebels through distruction and desecration of temples and forced conversions.[44]

Equally pathetic was the condition of Mappilas. Though a considerable number of them including the rich and the educated did not support the rebellion, they were punished by the rebels for the very same reason. The British army and the police were quite ruthless and indiscriminate in quelling the rebellion.[45] Appeals were made to the government as well as to the public for generous help. As the situation was variously understood, help came from various corners in the shape of relief measures and reconstruction programmes. These range from local munificence of individuals and royal families. In several places outside Malabar the people constituted relief committees. Royal houses like Samudiri Kovilakam, Kottakkal Kovilakam, the Mankata Krishnavarma Raja, Kavalappara Nair, Kulathur Sulapani Varrier and Kottakkal P.S. Varrier were all reported to have spent huge sums of money and provided food and shelter to the victims of the rebellion.[46]

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[44] *K. Madhavan Nair Janmasadabdi Smaranika* (Mal.) Kozhikode, 1982, p.37.

[45] K. Madhavan Nair. *Op.cit.*, pp.251-261, M. Gangadhara Menon, *Op.cit.*, pp 482-3.

[46] C. Gopalan Nair, *The Moplah Rebellion - 1921*, Kozhikode, 1923, pp.100-106; *Malayala Manorama*, September 20, 1922, p.1.

The Congress was severely criticised both by the people and the government, for having initiated the Mappilas into the rebellion through the Khilafat-Non-Co-operation movement. But it was a fact that many *janmies* were Congress supporters, though they had kept away from the Congress after the Manjeri conference. At the same time, with the Manjeri conference, tenants joined the Congress in large scale. The conference passed a resolution demanding legislation to define tenant-landlord relationship much against the protests of the landlords. It was thus a very important event in the development of the nationalist movement in Malabar.[47] The Congress had therefore taken it up as its responsibility to begin relief operations for the refugees and victims of the rebellion. Thus a relief committee was organized at Calicut, mainly at the initiative of the veteran Congress-Khilafat leader, K. Madhavan Nair.[48] Other members of the Congress Relief Committee at Calicut were Ambalakkad Karunakara Menon, K.P. Kesava Menon, P. Achuthan, K.V. Gopala Menon etc. They opened relief camps at Azhchavattom and Francis Road in Calicut. However the Congress was not successful in extending their support to the riot ridden areas, because as marital low was imposed on those areas the Congress leaders could not go to those places. Nor could the Mappilas move out of their areas.[49]

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[47] K.N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal*, (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, p.197.

[48] K. Madhavan Nair, *Op.cit.*, p.182.

[49] M. Brahmadathan Namboodiripad, *Op.cit.*.

On his release from Jail on August 11, 1923 Muhammad Abdurahiman went round the riot torn areas. He was very much depressed at the miserable plight of the people, who were put down by the rebellion. He was especially moved by the wretched condition of the children who were to become future citizens. With these anxieties he attended the Khilafat conference at Kakinada. After the conference he met several philanthropists in North India. He approached the Qasuri family of Punjab.[50] Moulana Abdul Khadar Qasuri was the founder of *Jamiat-e-Dwat-e-Tablig-e-Islam*, the headquarters of which was in Poona. Qasuri, with his two sons and colleagues visited the riot-ridden areas of Malabar. They formed six relief camps in various places and an orphanage at Calicut. This was the genesis of JDT. Islam institutions in Calicut.[51]

In addition to these works, there were several other relief operations like Mappila Amelioration Committee which was formed by pro-British non Khilafatist Muslim notables of Madras Presidency with the support of. Pompey of YMCA. The president of the committee was Jamal Muhammed Sahib, a notable merchant. Sir Mohamed Usman Sahib, the Madras Governor and home member, B. Poker Sahib, T.M. Moidu Sahib were its other office

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[50] S.K. Pottekkad, *et al.*, *Muhammad Abdurahiman*, Calicut, 1978 pp.132, 133.

[51] Parappil Muhammed Koya, *Kozhikkode Muslimkalute Charithram* (Mal.), Calicut, 1994, pp.189-190.

bearers.[52] An important role in the relief operations was played by voluntary organizations like YMCA, Aryasamaj (Lahore), Seva Sadan Society (Poona) and the Servants of India Society. In the first phase of the relief work these agencies worked separately with different agenda. But later, with a view to bring about uniformity of work and activities and, to achieve greater efficiency, their relief work merged into Malabar Central Relief Committee (hereafter MCRC). This committee worked in consultation with the government officers including the District Magistrate. With the formation of the MCRC relief work became much more systematic.

Of the various agencies who conducted relief work in Malabar, special mention must be made of the work done by the Servants of India Society. A delegation of the Society from its headquarters at Poona visited Malabar immediately after the rebellion. The delegation led by G.K. Devadhar[53] met important personalities of the area and tried to get first hand information about the rebellion. In the beginning they must have been influenced by the Hindu propaganda in the North about the rebellion. This is evident from the following statement on the "Malabar Relief" reported in *The Servant of India*, a weekly newspaper published by the Servants of India Society, Poona:

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[52] *Ibid.* p.167.

[53] Interview with T. Assanarkutty, Tanur, March 20, 2002, also see C. Gopalan Nair, *Op. cit.*

> The rebellion of the Mappila was one of the direct calamities that ever befell Malabar, affecting an area of nearly 2000 sq. miles and a population of nearly 2 million souls. The fanatical Mappilas committed on their more numerous neighbours every kind of conceivable atrocity. Relief on an extensive scale was needed for a comparatively long period and the manner in which the people of the West coast in particular and of the country in general rose to the occasion is highly creditable to the self governing capacity of India, the more so because the relief was organized and administered adequately and efficiently. Solely by non-officials, all the energies of the Government and its local officials being required for putting down the rebellion.[54]

The statement, on close reading, implies a mixed response born out by prejudice, misunderstanding and a zeal for consolation and amelioration. It was also reported that G.K. Devadhar in a conversation with P.S. Varrier of Kottakkal was rather reluctant about giving assistance to the Mappilas, for he thought that would only be helping the rebels. But Varrier, the great physician and humanist convinced Devadhar of the true situation. "Rebellion is not the creation of women and children, but of their men. By this time they are living the pittiest of life. It is a moral duty of every one to protect them in the name of humanity".[55] Through such meetings and through enquiries

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[54] *The Servant of India*, A Weekly Published by the Servants of India Society, Poona, 10 May 1923, p.172.

[55] Keezhedath Vasudevan Nair, *Jeevitha Katha - Vydya Ratnam P.S. Varrier* (Mal.), Kottakkal, 1989, p.132.

conducted on their own Devadhar and his men were convinced of the need for urgent relief work in the rebellion-hit area. Through his own humanitarian work in this connection by providing food and shelter in the premises of his Aryavydyasala at Kottakkal and by repeatedly appealing to the authorities to protect the Mappilas from the perils of the rebellion, Varrier was proving himself a model of service at a time of great distress.[56]

Moved by the gruesom situation of Malabar and the agonizing condition of the victims of the rebellion, both Mappilas and Hindus, Devadhar issued statements seeking help from the public especially from the Northern Provinces.[57] He was able to procure a huge amount of money from such far off places as Madras, Bangalore, Bombay, Allahabad, Delhi, Lahore as well as from benevolent people of Malabar. In Bombay a Malabar Relief Fund was set up and they sent money and materials to Malabar.[58] In Madras a Sheriff's meeting was convened and a committee was appointed to collect funds from the whole of the Presidency. In due course a centre of the Servants of India Society was established at Calicut.[59] The workers of the Society who were highly inspired by the ideals and teaching of its master Gokhale lost no time in organizing relief work. Initially they associated

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[56] Keezhedath Vasudevan Nair, *Ibid.*, p.135.

[57] G.K. Devadhar, "A Statement on Resume of Relief and Need for Help" File No.12, BSM Papers, NMML.

[58] *The Servant of India, Op. cit.*, p.172.

[59] *Ibid.*.

themselves with the *Mappila Aid* Committee formed at Calicut, which was converted into a Central Relief Committee for looking after the administration of relief in Calicut and other centres.[60]

The Servants of India Society rendered commendable services in the activities of the Malabar Central Relief Committee. Bringing alms to the riot victims scattered at various places was a hazardous task owing to the lack of transport facilities. The rebels had blocked the roads to the troubled areas by destroying bridges, and felling trees across the roads and made them quite impassable by lying in ambush at strategical points. The number of refugees was increasing day by day. The Servants of India Society along with the YMCA and other bodies offered workers for the organization and administration of relief and for the collection of funds.[61] A brief life sketch of the important personalities associated with the Servants of India Society (Kerala) is given below.

**G.K. Devadhar**

Gopal Krishna Devadhar was born on 21st August 1871 in a poor family in Poona. Even as a student he had to work hard to earn money for his studies. He passed his B.A. in 1897 and became a teacher in Bombay; in due course he got in touch with the Seva Sadan, Poona. It was an institution

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[60] D.B. Mathur, *Gokhale: A Political Biography*, Bombay, 1966, p.365.

[61] The Servant of India, 1923, p.172.

founded by late B.M. Malabari and Dayaram Gudumal, which gave training to orphaned woman for employment. He associated himself with Gandhiji's Harijan Movement, and the works related to the welfare of women. He was chiefly instrumental in developing the co-operative movement in India.[62] Devadhar was a student of New English School and Fergusson College Poona for nearly eight years, with which Gokhale's name was so richly connected.[63] In the 1900s Devadhar was also engaged in the work of *India*, a weekly journal of the British committee of the Congress. As part of "India work" he visited various parts of the country reporting the condition of India and seeking subscription for the journal. Devadhar was very much concerned about the educational backwardness of India. Already he had been a working member of the Aryan Education Society, Bombay. He sought Gokhale's permission for an interview to know more about the cause of education. He expressed his desire to get the benefit of the "large experience and great wisdom" of Gokhale "in the matter of education, the sacred sphere of which I am on the eve of entering."[64]

Devadhar had found Gokhale to be a model in public life. Congradulating Gokhale on being elected to the Vice Regal Council,

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[62] T.P.R.N. *Viswavijnanakosam* (Mal.) Vol.VII, S. Gupthan Nair (ed.), Kottayam, 1972, p.352.

[63] *Devadhar Papers* Correspondence with Gokhale, p.3. NMML (N.60) New Delhi.

[64] *Devadhar Papers*, Letter dated 1st May 1900 (from Mahabaleswar), p.2. NMML, New Delhi.

Devadhar remarked: "they have done due justice to the noble qualities of head and heart which you so remarkably combine in you along with the virtues of a private and public life."[65] Devadhar had in due course developed a passion for public service, especially in the field of education. With a view to devote himself fully to the cause of education and public service he applied for a year's leave from the Aryan Education Society high school Bombay. His intension was to join Gokhale by the middle of September, "I am preparing myself for the life intended to enter upon."[66]

By the closing years of the 1890s the Congress organisation in India was afflicted by doubts and demoralisation. The new generation of enthusiastic young men refused to take the British good faith for granted. Aurobindo Ghose, for example, charged the leaders of the Indian National Congress with lack of vision, courage and earnestness. He pronounced that Congress was an utter failure. Similarly Lajpath Rai was highly critical of the Congress and its programmes and policies.[67] The British committee of the Congress was also on the brink of collapse. Its financial position was so week that it thought of closing down its London office and discontinuing the publication of *India*. Dadabai Navoroji sought Gokhale's help because Gokhale had been arranging contributions to the British committee from the

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[65] *Devadhar papers*, Letter dated 26th April 1901, p.6. NMML, New Delhi.

[66] *Devadhar papers*, August 1st 1904, p.6, NMML, New Delhi.

[67] B.R. Nanda, *Gokhale: The Indian Moderate and the British Raj*, Delhi, 1979, p.157.

Daccan for several years.[68] In November 1904 Devadhar wrote to Gokhale that he was free for *India's* work.[69] Ever since he had been so occupied with "India work" that he went from door to door from morning to evening. Once begging excuse for not being able to write to Gokhale earlier, Devadhar explained that it was not any religious ceremonies, which was holding him back but the "India work". "All along I have been looking upon useful and unselfish work as worship and day by day that conviction is fast growing upon me."[70]

The sacred ideals of Indian nationalism were a great excitement for Devadhar. Whenever he got an opportunity to speak to small gatherings, he used to address them "about Congress work, patriotism and service and make them aware of the condition of India."[71] As he wrote to Gokhale, such occasions appealed to him more as calls of duty than temptation for self-advertisement. In his view such contacts with the people went a long way in preparing the ground for genuine work. He also explained to the people about the Ranade Economic Institute and Gokahle's work in that line.[72]

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[68] *Ibid.*, p.158.

[69] Devadhar Papers, Letter dated November 15, 1904, p.30, NMML, New Delhi.

[70] Devadhar Papers, Letter dated 25th January 1905, (from Banaras City) p.63. NMML, New Delhi.

[71] Devadhar Papers, Letter dated 13th January 1905 (from Jubbalpore Railway Camp) p.63. NMML, New Delhi.

[72] *Ibid,* p.55-56.

From his India work experience Devadhar was convinced of the urgent need for imparting education to the masses. He was annoyed at the plight of the people with crushing taxes imposed upon them. The city of Jubbalpore illustrated his point, where "there has not even the hundredth part of the public spirit that we find elsewhere.[73] The reason, he observed, was that education was at a very low point. According to him, the problem could be tackled with the patience and the zeal of the missionaries by "filtering the blessings of education to the lowest strata of the society". [74] He argued "we must have, if we want to work up or rather awaken up India, an equally efficient and devoted agency".[75] He emphasized that an enormous amount of work had to be undertaken in the field of general education. An earnest beginning ought to be made in that direction as early as possible:

> I have my own views in the matter... I urgently feel the need of a class that can move from place to place like traveling teachers or evangelists in Christian countries and immediately undertake the task of freeing the people from the bonds of slavery and superstition, fetters of which have been forged upon them by their own ignorance and dullness.[76]

Devadhar found Gokhale as a great source of wisdom and inspiration. He therefore shared all his concerns with him with great hope for guidance.

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[73] *Ibid,* p.58.

[74] *Ibid,* p.58.

[75] *Ibid,* p.59.

[76] *Ibid,* p.60.

Gokhale had become by this time a great nationalist leader with a genuine concern for the cause of India and her people. Even abroad Gokhale was found to be the right person to rescue the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, conduct its publicity campaign in England in the wake of the next election. Accordingly he was advised by Wedderburn to reach England by the end of May 1904.[77] He was also elected president of the annual Congress session to be held at Banares in December 1905. An important event, which took place during this period, was the partition of Bengal, which was caused to change the course of Indian politics. Surendra Nath Banarjee called upon Gokhale to help in this hour of sorest trial. He was asked to meet British leaders and to impress upon them the outrage that had been done to public sentiment by the partition of Bangal.[78] As a friend wrote to Gokhale, "the whole Indian world is at your feet at present". Devadhar was full of admiration for such a towering personality. He wrote, "wherever I go I find that your name is a charm and a center of attraction, you have in my opinion set a whole example of sacrifice and national service before the young generation".[79]

As had already been pointed out in Chapter II, Gokhale was unhappy during this period about some of the Congress leaders' attitude to politics. He

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[77] B.R. Nanda, *Op.cit.*.p.188.

[78] *Ibid.*, p.194.

[79] Devadhar Papers, letter dated 22nd September, 1905, (from Aligarh). p.84, NMML, New Delhi.

was dissatisfied with the idea of mere agitational politics. Instead, he visualized a constructive politics, with programmes, which would contribute to the betterment of public life. His moto was that the public life must be spiritualised. During 1904-1905 Gokhale was very much preoccupied with the idea of an organization for training young men for public life, which for him implies political work of the highest character.[80] Accordingly when the Servants of India Society was established on 12th June 1905 G.K. Devadhar, was one of the three persons to join Gokhale as one of its founder members.[81]

During the period of his extensive tour to various parts of India in connection with "India work" Devadhar had acquired a first hand knowledge about the social backwardness of India. He learnt that the main reason for this backwardness was widespread lack of education of the people of India. As a result he found that "public spirit was at a very low ebb" even in the urban areas,[82] This awareness was a potential motivation for Devadhar to choose educational work as a life-time career.

Devadhar knew that spread of education among Indian women would go a long way in their liberation. His deep concerns and ideas in this respect were presented by him in a *Note on Female Education in India* submitted to

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[80] Karve and Ambekar, *Speeches and Writings of Gopala Krishna Gokhale.* Vol.I, Political, Bombay 1996, pp.173, 175, 177.

[81] *Ibid,* p.181.

[82] Devadhar Papers, letter dated January 13, (Jubbalpore Railway Camp) NMML, New Delhi, 1905, pp.58-59.

the government of Bombay in response to their letter dated 25th June, 1916, calling for views and suggestions on the subject.[83] He was quite unhappy that the spread of mass education was very hopelessly slow. He demanded more governmental funds and the participation of the local governments in solving the question of backwardness of female education in India. Eventually, with a deep passion for voluntary social work, he got himself associated with several voluntary organizations. He was one of the founders of the Poona Seva Sadan started in 1909 which had branches in different parts of the country to serve the poor, the sick and distressed[84]. He worked as Honorary General Secretary of Seva Sadan Poona, the Seva Sadan Home Classes, Bombay which was working for the Marathi speaking women and several Home Classes' and normal classes committees in Bombay, Poona and Surat. These institutions were meant to cater to the educational needs of married women, grown up unmarried women, girls and widows. They gave literary, industrial, and professional education and training to women.[85] These were run on the pattern of "continuation classes" so common in Western countries, especially in Germany for the education of the labouring class boys as well as the "Mother's schools" in England which aim at training women in the discharge of their domestic duties by equipping them with the necessary amount of

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[83] G.K. Devadhar, *A Note on Female Education in India*, Poona 1916, p. 15.

[84] R.C. Majundar, *et al., An Advanced History of India*, Madras, 1982, p. 941.

[85] *Ibid.*, pp.1,2.

literary and other knowledge.[86] They sent woman candidates to appear for the various examinations of the training college for woman in Poona and many of them became teachers in the schools run by the Christian missions, Municipalities and the Seva Sadans. Arrangements were also made for the professional training of women in the medical field such as midwifery and general, surgical and obstetric nursing.[87] As the number of women who opted to take such training was limited, the Seva Sadans introduced women to new professional avenues like sewing, embroidery hosiery, painting, first aid, home nursing, domestic economy and gave certificates of proficiency so as to enable the women candidates to earn a decent livelihood on the strength of the knowledge required. Devadhar's work in the field of female education was appreciated even by the Bombay Government.[88]

Devadhar had clear ideas about the role of women and the role of education in social transformation. He placed great stress on the education of grown up women for several reasons. First, he argued that, "the educated mothers will be missionaries of female education and the elevation and emancipation of their own sex".[89] Secondly educated mothers would be better able to manage their household economically and thus be a source of

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[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Op.cit,* pp.3, 4.

[88] Letter dated 13th June 1916 from Col. A. Hooton, Civil Surgeon Poona to Devadhar, cited *Ibid,* pp.4, 5.

[89] *Ibid,* p.5.

economic strength to their families especially in the midst of straitened circumstances; thirdly they will be better able to take care of their children and thus materially and intelligently assist in reducing infant mortality; fourthly they will be true companions of their husbands and other male relations by being able to take an intelligent interest in social and national questions and by helping in the gradual realization of the social and political aspirations which were dominating the thoughts of the present generations; and lastly they will be truly efficient and patriotic citizens of the British Empire.[90]

Devadhar had genuine ideas on primary education. In his *Note* to the government he suggested that separate girls school should be started in villages with or without a female teacher. The control of village schools should be handed over to local bodies, which should form special educational committees. Local bodies should also try to get people with advanced views on education associated with the local schools. He recommended that in each districts there should be one or two Indian inspectresses knowing the vernacular of the districts to oversee the working of the school.[91] It was the duty of those inspectresses to visit the locality of the school and try to create an interest among the people in and enlist their sympathy with the question of

[90] *Ibid*, p.5. When Devadhar speaks of the citizenship of the British Empire, it has to be remembered that the idea of an independent India had not been precipitated as a common ideal in those days.

[91] *Ibid*, p.9.

the education of their sisters and daughters. They should also pursue poor women and widows to avail themselves of the facilities for education afforded by the school. In order to make instruction attractive, he recommended to include subjects like *Bhagavat Geetha* and Sanskrit especially in Gujrat; some knowledge of cooking; a little of tailoring, laundry and dairying. The committee should be free to determine such matters as the location of the school, curriculum, timetable, social gatherings and price distributions. He further suggested that there was no need for separate schools for caste girls; but in places where the untouchables experience difficulties, separate schools for their education should be provided.[92] Another recommendation was to award scholarship for girls as in the case of boys who pass out of the vernacular IV$^{th}$ standard, at which stage the girls' study of English begins. Yet another recommendation was to start at least one primary school teaching up to the vernacular V$^{th}$ standard with an English class attached to it, in important towns with a population of 5000 and above. In order to meet the shortage of teachers a class for preparing grown up girls and women who

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[92] *Ibid*, p.10. This suggestion was an instance which reveals the sagacity of Devadhar, for his idea was to use education as an instrument for social change, rather than making it an issue of conflict and antagonism in the existing complex situation characterised by caste rigidity.

intend to join the training college, should be attached to the full primary school.[93]

These ideas of Devadhar were very much in tune with the educational proposals of his master Gokhale, who was the champion of Elementary Education in India. In 1910, Gokhale moved a resolution on this subject in the Imperial Legislative Council urging the government to introduce compulsory elementary Education.[94] Piloting the Elementary Education bill in the Council on 16th March 1911 Gokhale emphasized that "the Education of girls is with us even a greater necessity than that of boys and look forward to the time when compulsion will be extended to all children alike of either sex".[95] The significance of the views of Gokhale and Devadhar was born out of the governmental approach to Education as it was brought to the notice of the Council by Gokhale: "There was then no separate portfolio of Education, and educational interests rubbed shoulders with jails and the police, in the all-comprehensive charge of the Home Department".[96]

The other recommendations of Devadhar to the government include establishment of an Anglo-Vernacular Girls' School either in a district town or

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[93] *Ibid,* p.10.

[94] *Speeches of G.K. Gokhale,* "The Elementary Education Bill", G.K. Natesan & Co., Third Edition, Madras, 1920, p. 617.

[95] *Ibid,* p.616.

[96] *Ibid,* p.606.

in a big taluk town where there is a High School for boys, "continuation classes" for married girls; provision for reading room and library attached to such classes; a local committee with District Hospitals for the training of young women as nurses and midwives.[97] In the field of secondary education Devadhar pleaded for the establishment of girls' high schools at provincial head quarters or provincial towns or in cities with arts colleges. English should be taught as a second language.[98] In the field of higher education he suggested that instead of spending money for the establishment of separate Arts Colleges for women, the money should be spent wisely, for popularizing education among women by granting scholarship and establishing hostels etc. However he was farsighted enough to suggest that when number of women taking higher education grows, it would be necessary to begin separate colleges for women which could ultimately lead to the establishment of a separate women's university on the lines of those in America and Japan.[99] He made a special emphasis on the training of women teachers at all levels. And he pleaded with the government to adopt a policy of full and liberal grants to realize the above objectives, including grants to allow increase of pay of life teachers, grants for the provision of provident funds or pensionary funds for the teachers in private schools and building grants. He also made an

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[97] G.K. Devadhar, *A Note on Female Education, Op.cit,* pp. 10,11.

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

[99] *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

additional recommendation for a scheme of scholarship for the best woman candidate to go to foreign countries to complete their education.[100]

Devadhar's concern for the education of women was not an isolated instance of reform in respect of the female community. A broader view of the general welfare of the society was a guiding thread in the programmes of the Servants of India Society. The kind of attention they paid to the working class, with particular interest in the condition of women workers deserves special mention. It is to be noticed that complementary to the educational reforms of the Servants of India Society as formulated by Gokhale and as reinforced by Devadhar, there was also a growing sense of reforms in respect of the conditions of women workers in large towns and cities. Accordingly recommendation for special legislation to ensure improvement was urged in respect of hours of work, night work, employment of women on dangerous, unhealthy and heavy work, problems regarding maternity and child welfare, law and unequal wages, need for women inspectors and education.[101]

Devadhar considered it his sacred duty to serve the neglected sections in society. Gandhiji was highly impressed by Devadhar's work at Seva Sadan. He praised it as a monument to his industry, nationalism and his love of service. The phenomenal progress of the Seva Sadan work was considered

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[100] *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.

[101] Godavari Gokhale, *A Note on Women Workers in India,* Servants of India Society Bombay (For Private Circulation only), undated, pp.1-5.

unique in all India.[102] A deep concern for the well being of the people induced him to work in the field of co-operative movement. Even Gandhiji was highly impressed by his work in the field and desired to discuss with him the national value of the co-operative movement.[103] Gandhiji had maintained very cordial relationship with the Servants of India Society. When V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri resigned as the President of the Society, Devadhar felt called upon to consult Gandhiji, as one of the truest and most devoted friends and supporters of the Servants of India Society.[104] In his reply to Devadhar Gandhiji reciprocated the spiritual bond between the two and encouraged Devadhar in being elected as President of the Society, following the resignation of Sastri.[105] Already, when the Aryabhushan Press of the Society was reduced to ashes, Gandhiji offered to print the Society's organ the *Servant of India* from Sabarmathi.[106] In his "Notes" published in *Young India,* Gandhiji reviewed the great services of Poona Sevan Sadan Society, of which Devadhar was the Honorary Organisor and General Secretary. Gandhiji admired Devadhar's "indefatigable energy" in running the affairs of the

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[102] Mahatma Gandhi Letter to G.K. Devadhar 2nd July,1918. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* Vol.17, New Delhi, 2000, p.111.

[103] Gandhi's letter to G.K. Devadhar dated 30.4.1926. *Sabarmathi Series,* set No.7. File No.23, part I. Vol.55, National Gandhi Museum, Rajghat, New Delhi, p.222.

[104] Gandhiji's letter to Devadhar, dated 17.6.1927 in *Sabarmathi Series* set No.7. File No.23, p.I, Vol.55, p.395.

[105] Gandhiji's letter to G.K. Devadhar, 22nd June 1927. *Sabarmathi Series,* Set No.7, File No.17, part I, Vol.37, pp.240-247, NGM.

[106] Gandhi's letter dated May 30, 1926. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* Vol.35, New Delhi, 2000, p.291.

Society which was catering to the needs of poor women. However he was critical of the Society's neglect of hand spinning and the use of *Khaddar.* He reminded them, "To look at it, it is a flimsy cotton thread, but it is stout enough to bind all the millions of India together in its gentle and loving coil".[107]

Devadhar worked as the Honorary General Secretary of the Indian National Social Conference till 1924. He was the President of the Social Conference organized at Lucknow, in the same year. It was an unrelenting zeal for social reform, which drew him to the Social Conference. He was of the view that the educated classes of India showed a woeful neglect of the problems of social reform.[108] In his speech Devadhar referred to the ideals for which the social reform movements stood. In this matter he was very much influenced by Mahadev Govind Ranade whom he considered the Guru of social reformers.[109] Ranade was a great patriot who preached reform because, he firmly believed that without reform there was no hope for India as a nation.[110] In fact the father and founder of the Indian National Social Conference was Ranade. It was begun in the year 1887 at Madras. Ranade

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[107] "Mission to the Women of India," *Young India,* 4.3.1926. NGM.

[108] G.K. Devadhar, *Presidential Address,* Indian National Social Conference, Madras 1933, pp.1-2, NMML.

[109] *Ibid.*, p.21.

[110] Gokhale, "Mahadev Govind Ranade". Ranade memorial speech delivered at the Hindu Union Club, Bombay 1903, R.P. Patwardhan, ed. *The Select Gokhale* New Delhi, 1968, p.127.

chalked out a scheme in which he divided the whole country into 16 or 20 circles from which regular reports were sent to him of the steady progress of social reform all over India.[111] Ranade was a great influence on Gokhale when he joined the Deccan Education Society in 1886 and became his disciple.[112]

According to Devadhar three things were necessary for the deliberation of man: 1. Realisation of a new order of society in closest touch with Nature and in which the diseases of class domination and parasitism will have finally ceased; 2. The realization of a science which will no longer be a mere thing of the brain, but a part of actual life; 3. The realization of a morality, which will signalize and express the vital and organic unity of men with his fellows. Social reform is a process comprising these ideals, from which would evolve a higher consciousness as against individual consciousness – heralds of a new era of humanity much higher than what was passed for as civilization.[113] This was in tune with Gokhale's idea of Swadeshism and his ideals of the great work for national liberation – a condition in which people could live "without distinction of caste or creed – unhampered by cramping and unnatural

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[111] G.K. Devadhar, *Op.cit.*, p.4.

[112] H.N. Kunzru. *Gopala Krishna Gokhale. The Man and Mission.* New Delhi, 1966, p.2.

[113] G.K. Devadhar, *Op.cit.*, p.6.

restrictions".[114] Gokhale wanted India to take her proper place among the great nations of the world politically, industrially, in religion, in literature, in science and in arts.

Devadhar, however, was not advocating a political view of social reform. His argument was that politics and social reform were to be brought in a line. Though there was an emphasis on spiritualism the pressure of formulation of a vision of social reform informed by politics is quite remarkable. He was quite quick to realize the problems of women in the social, political process and the hurdles posed by caste groups, which were the disintegrating elements in society. As he put it,, "a social reformer does not mince matters as he has to be true to himself. If we, therefore have properly attuned with the rest of the universe, we would learn to trust each other...."[115] Besides a serious consideration of the depressed classes to create a congenial social environment and a concerted attention to rural reconstruction were among the salient points of Devadhar's idea of social reform. He concluded his presidential address by quoting the words of Ranade, the Guru of social reformers:

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[114] Gokhale, The Work Before Us", speech delivered at Allahabad, on 4th February 1905, *Speeches of G.K. Gokhale,* Third Edition G.A. Natesan and Company, Madras, 1990, pp.948-949. Also see "The Swadeshi Movement" speech at Luknow, 9th February 1907, *Ibid.*, pp.958, 960, 971-72.

[115] G.K. Devadhar, *Op.cit.*, pp.9.11-12.

> The way to heaven is a narrow path, and one has to tread upon sharp edged instruments, carefully balancing the weak limbs and spirit. The way to hell is, as you all know, a road well paved with good intentions and we have only to close our eyes and shut our ears, to be listless and indifferent, lead a butterfly existence, and die intellectually and spiritually. We have persued that way too long, and it is time now that we should take due care to set our house in order, as no mere white washing and no plastering would remove these hidden sources of our weaknesses. The whole existence must be renovated. The baptism of fire and not have water must be gone through by those who seek a renovation of heart such as this.[116]

As has already been pointed out, it was the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, which served an occasion for the arrival of G.K. Devadhar in Kerala. The President of the Servants of India Society at that time was V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri. Devadhar was deputed to investigate the distressful condition of Malabar.[117] Already as a member of the Servants of India Society and as part of "India work" Devadhar was well experienced in moving from place to place and seeing things for himself. He was admired as a model in such investigative work.[118] Devadhar and his team were convinced of the miseries of the people affected by the riot and of the need for immediate relief work. Following appeals made through the press and other organizations they were

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[116] *Ibid.*, pp.21-22.

[117] *Indian Review*, Vol.XXIII, Feb, 1922, p.247.

[118] R. Suryanarayana Rao, letter dated 6 February, 1921 to Sreenivasa Sastri, *Sastri Papers*, File No. R. 29, p.4, NMML.

able to mobilize funds from various quarters of India. Relief camps were set up first at Calicut and subsequently to other places in Malabar, where the people thronged in hundreds for help. The Malabar taluks of Ernad, Valluvanad, Ponnani and part of Kozhikode were affected by the rebellion. Refugees had flowed to Kozhikode in hundreds. These refuges were of two types: those who escaped from the rebel areas in fear of the Mappilas; and those who were caught up in the rebel areas, mainly the Mappilas. Those who could escape from the rebel areas daily flowed to Kozhikode in hundreds, and their population was estimated about 25000.[119] People of all sorts ranging from Brahmin (Namboodiris) to the untouchables were included in them. A large number of women and children and a few Mappilas who were rendered destitutes formed the wretched lot. These people lost not only their pride and honour, but their wealth and homes in the looting and arson that were rampant.

Devadhar was able to raise an amount of Rs.10 lakhs from magnanimous quarters for relief operations in Malabar. With this, the Servants of India Society opened 21 relief camps in various parts of Malabar, where about 26,000 victims and refuges were given shelter.[120] These camps include the ones at Puthiyara, Mooriyad, Manjeri, Thirurangadi, Tanur and

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[119] *Madhavan Nair Janma Satabdi Smaranika* (Mal) *Op.cit.*, p.37.

[120] Indian Review, *Op.cit.*, February, 1992, p.247.

the like places.[121] The inmates of the relief camps were provided with essential amenities and a sense of security. The camps continued for several months. Much more than places for food and shelter they turned out to be centers of community life. Systematic arrangements were made in the camps for the education, entertainment, health and even employment of the inmates. Camp schools were also set up for boys and girls. The affairs of the camp were looked after by volunteers who rendered selfless service[122].

Devadhar had rendered an enormous amount of work in Kerala, particularly in Malabar. He was a pioneer in the field of co-operative movement in Kerala. During the Temple Entry Sathyagraha he played an important role in raising public opinion in favour of the untouchables, as well as, as a mediator. Under his guidance the DMRT developed into a very potential agency for the cause of education, rural reconstruction, social reform and the general welfare and progress of Malabar. The extensive work of the DMRT with the guidance and inspiration of Devadhar will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

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[121] Interview with Tanur Parameswaran, 10th January, 2000 and with T. Assanarkutty Tanur, 20th March, 2002.

[122]K. Janaki Amma, "V.R. Nayanar, Balika Sadanam", In *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, pp. 32-33.

Madras decided to release the prisoners of Mappila Rebellion in 1925.[127] Archival sources reveal that he was taking every opportunity to mediate the question of the rehabilitation of the Mappila prisoners with the government.[128] Since some action was urgently necessary in the matter he was persistently persuading the government to intervene.[129]

Rao knew well that education and rural reconstruction were interrelated. He gave particular emphasis in eradicating the illiteracy of rural population. In his report on the DMRT work (1930) he underscored the point that spread of educational was essential in order to free the villagers from poverty, superstition and unhygienic living.[130] In this matter he always sought the help of government departments such as agriculture, health, co-operation and education. He always urged the people to get involved in the work of the Trust and reminded them that only by embarking on a joint action would it be possible to alleviate the sorrows and sufferings of the rural people.

Suryanarayana Rao was one of the Honorary Joint Secretaries of the Mappila Aid Committee formed in Calicut to rehabilitate the Mappila prisoners of the rebellion. He was making every attempt to raise funds from

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[127] G.O.No.729, 3rd August, 1925, File No. D.Dis 12153/31 dated 25.1.35, p.391. RAK

[128] Suryanarayana Rao's letter to E.C. Wood, I.C.S., Malabar Collector File No.D.Dis 12153/31, dt. 25.3.35 RAK, p.1.

[129] Rao's letter to Wood dt. Nov. 24, 1931. *Ibid.*

[130] Report on DMRT work on village extension, *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 24th August 1930, p.7.

various quarters. He suggested that appeals should be made in this regard to the Viceroy, the Governor and even to Prince Nizam. His sense of commitment in such a sympathetic cause was so great that he could bear no excuse for passivity. In his letter to Wood he wrote "our Mappila friends are very slow to move even in matters where the interests of their community was concerned. Still we must get on with them and do what we can".[131] He wrote to the Sub Collectors of Palghat, Malappuram and Tellicherry, in this connection and persuaded Wood to ask them to arrange for subcommittees.[132]

The noble ideals and the humble but unassuming work of the Servants of India Society were always a source of inspiration for Suryanarayana Rao. He was able to attract a wide variety of people ranging from laymen to royal personalities to the DMRT programmes. In 1933, participating in the anniversary celebrations of Gokhale School at the *Adidravida*[133]Colony, Gopalapuram at Moodadi, the Valluvanad Raja, M.C. Vallabha Raja expressed his desire to begin a similar colony in the Valluvanad taluk. And there itself he declared his decision to donate about 13 acrs of land for the purpose. The Thrithala *Adidravida* colony came into existence thus. In admiration of the work of the DMRT, Vallabha Raja further promised all

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[131] Suryanarayana Rao's letter dated 21st Dec. 1931, to Mr. Wood, *Op. cit.*, p.31.

[132] *Ibid.*, p.31. Also see Mr. Woods Letter to dated 23.12.1931, Suryanarayana Rao (from Camp Manantoddy), File, *Ibid.*, p.37.

[133] The depressed classes who were untouchables were also known as *Adidravidas*, as they were considered to be the descendents of the primeval tribal inhabitants of Kerala.

supports for the upliftment of the depressed classes. Such instances of attracting humanitarian and benevolent souls to the DMRT activities, amply illustrate the persuasive, amicable and altruistic nature of Suryanarayana Rao.[134]

During his secretaryship Rao was able to enlist great amount of public sympathy for the DMRT Work. He was able to extent the programmes of DMRT in the field of education, rural reconstruction, eradication of social evils like untouchability, unhygienic living and also in making the rural population self-reliant. At this point it is suffice to say that Rao was a man of great concern for the welfare of the people and an embodiment of service. The reformist zeal in him went to the extent of casting aspersions on nationalist programmes like non-co-operation. Nor was he concerned with academic discussion whether reforms are adequate or inadequate. When he describes political workers as 'mischief markers', it is not the voice of an anti-nationalist that we hear, but statements of a genuine social worker.[135] Several senior citizens of Malabar[136] acknowledged in glowing words that the people of Malabar were the beneficiaries of the services rendered by him. His achievements were remarkable, for had to perform his tasks amidst

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[134] Report on DMRT work on village extension, *Mathrubhumi Daily, Op. cit.*, p.7.

[135] Suryanarayana Rao's letter dated 6th Feb. 1921 to Sreenivasa Sastri, Sreenivasa Sastri Papers, *Op. cit.*, p.5, NMML.

[136] Several senior citizens, both related and unrelated with DMRT, were interviewed. See Tanur Parameswaran, Sri. T. Assanarkutti, Sri. T. Narayanan Master (Tanur), Sri. Karthat Balachandran (Palakkad), Sri. Theruvath Raman (Calicut).

uncongenial circumstances. He was a stranger to this place, being a man from outside Kerala. The problem of language was another hurdle for him.

As a true 'Servant of India' Rao inherited Gokhale's secular spirit. In a caste-ridden society he embodied true egalitarianism. He remained too humble to be conspicuous. The poor people of DMRT centres could recognise his simplicity and sincerity. He had shown an exemplary model in the running of public institutions. For him service was its own reward.[137] He was very strict and punctual in the conduct of affairs. In addition to DMRT work he was also in charge of the Depressed Class Mission of Mangalore. Rao, who spent his youthful years for the service of Malabar in his capacity as Honorary Secretary of DMRT till November 1934 had to resign from the post on grounds of ill health. Ever since he changed his long years of stay at Calicut and moved to Coimbatore as advised by his doctor.[138] On 27th November, 1934 he resigned his post and in his place V.R. Nayanar was elected as the Honorary Secretary of DMRT.[139]

**A.V. Thakkar**

Another very important personality who energized the social reform work of Kerala was Amirtlal Vithaldas Thakkar (A.V. Thakkar Bappa). In 1914 he joined the SIS after resigning from his job as an overseer in Bombay

[137] C.H. Kunhappa, *Smaranakal Mathram* (Mal.), Thrissur, 2000, p.p. 144-45.

[138] *Mathrubhumi daily* "R. Suryanarayana Rao", article dated 30th July 1933, p.7.

[139] *Mathrubhumi daily* "G.K. Devadhar – Malabar Circuit", 6th Dec. 1934, p.3.

Municipality.[140] He was born on 26 November 1869 at Bhavnagar in Sourashtra in an ordinary family as the son of Vithaldas Thakkar and Mulibai.[141] He soon engaged himself in the famine relief work in the Western Province, and other activities like co-operative work, education of the Bhangis, prohibition and welfare of Khadi workers. His work among the Bhils was much admired. He founded the Bhil Seva Mandal in 1922 to elevate the condition of the Bhils and other aboriginals of India.[142]

As the SIS was opposed to political works like Satyagraha, Bappa chose to work in the area of Harijan service, which was quite in tune with the ideals of the Society. When Gandhiji established the Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932, Sri Bappa was choosen as its general secretary.[143] He travelled with Gandhiji in 1933-34 through out India to convey the messages of the Sangh and to organise its units in various parts of the country. Its Malabar Branch was formed in 1932 itself.[144]

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[140] Ambalakkattu Karunakara Menon, "Mahanaya Thakkar Bappa", *Harijan Sevak Sangham Gandhi Janma Sadabdhi Souvenir*, Palakkad, 1969, p.9.

[141] Viyogi Hari, *Deenbandu Thakkar Bappa* (Hindi) nd, Delhi, p.3.

[142] Viyogi Hari, *Ibid.*, pp.11,12; Also see Mathrubhumi Weekly, "Thakkar Bappa: Oru Samarpitha Jeevitham", Kozhikode, Nov. 26, 1939, p.29; R.C. Majundar, *Op. cit.*, p. 942.

[143] Viyogi Hari, *op. cit.*, p.20.

[144] Ambalappattu Karunakara Menon, *Op. cit.* p.p.10,11.

In 1935 Bappa visited Kerala to gain a first hand knowledge of the condition of the life of Harijans and other depressed classes there.[145] In 1941 he visited Calicut. In his speech given as a reply to a commendation given to him, he exhorted that a good amount of work remains to the done among the "thottis" and the tribals.[146] He further gave suggestions to reconstitute the Malabar Branch of the Sangh at a meeting held at Payyannur presided over by V.R. Nayanar and attended by members like K.A. Damodara Menon, P. Sankunni Nambiar, M. Chadayan and Swami Anandathirtha.[147]

Bappa's next visit was in 1943, when the condition of Malabar was quite distressful due to cholera. He inaugurated at Gopalapuram a building meant to accommodate the children of cholera victims. He asked the teachers of the Gopalapuram School to take special care of the orphaned children. He then proceeded to Muttom near Pazhayangadi and inaugurated an orphanage for the Muslim children. The Muslims of Muttom accorded him a grand welcome. He reminded the people that more than thirty thousand people lost their lives in Malabar due to cholera. Again, with Nayanar he proceeded to Mathamangalam near Payyanur. He attended the annual day celebrations of the Ayurvedic dispensary, which was working there.[148] In one year nearly

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[145] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, Kozhikode, 6 March, 1935, p.3, col.4.

[146] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, Kozhikode, 24 Sept. 1941, p.6; Night Soil Workers were called "thottis" in Kerala.

[147] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, Kozhikode, 27 Nov., 1941, p.2.

[148] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 10th October, 1943, p. 2.

10,000 people were given treatment from this dispensary. He made arrangements for the education of Paniya boys of Thalolkadu area. He also distributed dhothies to the Harijans and Paniyas who gathered there. Another meeting was held at Mathamangalam elementary school in which M. Chadayan, Swami Anandathirtha and K.G. Nambiar spoke. Thakkar Bappa and party then stayed as the guests of Vengayil Nayanar of Kanayi. In 1948 he came to Malabar to visit the Nayanar Memorial Paniya Colony built at Chelod near Nilambur. He was accompanied by his Secretary, Ram Saran, DMRT Honorary Secretary, L.N. Rao and Shyamji Sundardas. He was satisfied with the work done there.[149]

Thakkar Bappa was a man who devoted his entire life for the cause of the downtrodden.[150] He was inspired by the ideals and principles of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Mahatma Gandhi. When he decided to associate himself with the SIS Gandhiji rightly described him as a loan of Harijan Sevak Sangh to the SIS. Besides undertaking extensive work for the service of Harijans and depressed classes throughout India, Bappa was actively involved in redressing the grievances of the people during the nation wide famine of 1943. Famine was extremely acute in Karnataka, Malabar, Kochi-

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[149] *Mathrubhumi daily*, Kozhikode, 10 Oct., 1943, p.2; also see 18th May, 1948, p. 4.

[150] P. Sankunni Nambiar, "Thakkar Bappa – Oru Samarppitha Jeevitham", *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, Kozhikode, 1939, Nov. 26, pp.4, 5. See for more details, Viyogi Hari, *Deena Bandhu Thakkar Bappa*; Mukuth Behari Verma, *History of the Harijan Sevak Sangh* 1932-1968.

Travancore, Orissa and Bengal.[151] He toured to these places and helped in setting up relief operations. Bappa was the secretary of the Kasthurba Memorial Fund organised in 1944 for the welfare of woman and children.[152] He worked closely with Mahatma Gandhi during the Navakhali riots to mitigate violence.[153] In Kerala he was particularly interested in the work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the SIS and the DMRT. He was a great inspiration to the people when he visited Malabar several times in these connections. Bappa's long and dedicated life came to an end on 19th January 1951.

**V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri**

Sreenivasa Sastri was born on 24th September 1869 as the son of a schoolteacher at Kumbhakonam of Thanjavur district. After graduation he worked as a teacher at schools at Mayavaram, Selem and Madras. In 1902 he became Head Master of Triplicane High School, Madras.[154] He was very much attracted to the principles and objectives Gokhale's SIS.[155] On 15th January 1907 he joined the SIS. Recalling the moment of taking the vow of the Society, Sastri wrote, "Gokhale's deportment was solemn and inspired me with something like awe. As I pronounced the phrases of each vow after him

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[151] Viyogi Hari, *Op. cit.*, p.28.

[152] *Ibid.*, p.29.

[153] *Ibid.*, p.30.

[154] P.K. Rajasekharan (Editor), *Mahascharithamala*, Vol. 2, India, Kottayam, 2002, p.492.

[155] T.N. Jagadisan, *V.S. Srinivasa Sastri*, New Delhi, 1969, p.p. 14-25.

I was seized with terrible misgivings as to my being able to keep them in a tolerable degree".[156] In 1907 Sastri attended the Surat Congress and was an eye-witness to the 'split' between the "extremists" and the "moderates".[157] He also had very close contact with Gandhi. Both Gokhale and Gandhiji admired his organisational skill, oratorial brilliance and integrity. He worked as the member of the Madras Legislative Assembly from 1913. In 1916 he was elected to the Central Legislative Council. In 1916 when Gokhale died he was elected as President of SIS. Sastri formed an organisation called National Liberal Federation in 1918. He supported the recommendations of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (1918). His view of the nationalist movement and his attitude to the British were very moderate. He soon became a great spokesman of Congress moderate camp. He did not support the Civil Disobedience movement initiated by the Congress in 1920. He was a member of moderaet delegation to Britain to apprise the government of the conditions of India.[158]

In the mid 1920s Sastri visited Kerala. He was given a very cordial welcome everywhere. Through speeches and writings he exhorted that India should attain self-rule by continuing as a part of British Empire. Because of such a 'liberal' view he could not agree with the political programmes of the

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[156] V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri, *My Master Gokhale*, Madras, 1946, p.82.

[157] T.N. Jagadisan, *Op. cit.* p. 17.

[158] *Mahascharithamala, Op. cit.*, p.492.

Congress like Civil Disobedience.[159] He made appeals to the people of Malabar to make contributions to the SIS to be used to renovate its presses Aryabhushan and Dyanaprakash which were destroyed in fire.[160] At Ernakulam he was accorded a cordial welcome.[161]

Sastri's scholarship, political wisdom, patriotism were all appreciated by the people and the press. However, the press in particular was critical of some of his positions which were opposed to Congress programmes on the ground that what the country needed in those days were active political work rather than mild exhortations, advices and acrimony. The Mathrubhumi voiced this view in particular in an editorial.[162] In a modest criticism, the paper pointed out that, though very able. Sastri could not frame a programme of action suitable for the existing conditions. It said, "when the people of the country are directly involved in a struggle for the total freedom of their country, Sastri does not side with them, but chose to devote his life making futile speeches to them in his capacity as a feeble member of an Empire's council in which the people at large have no significant role and recognition".[163] The editorial found fault with Sastri for having supported the government in its anti-Congress measures through persecutions, and asked

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[159] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 18 Nov. 1924, p.4.

[160] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 24 June, 1924, p.3.

[161] *Mathrubhumi Daily*,5 Oct. 1926, p.5.

[162] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 7 Oct. 1926, p.4.

[163] *Ibid.*, p.4.

him to rise upto the occasion in a fitting manner. Following the report of Simon Commission in 1930, when British Government summoned in London a Round Table Conference to consider the question of the Indian Constitution, Sastri was one of the Indian delegates to attend the same.[164]

Sastris last visit to Malabar was in 1933. He came to Calicut to speak on the occasion of the 18th death anniversary of Gokhale. This time he stated that it was necessary to work for the realisation of a united Indian nation, irrespective of communal considerations. He reminded that Gokhale never exhorted for separate constituency and disproportionate representation. He pointed out that after Gokhale's death both the moderates and extremists were inspired by Gokhale. They were looking for Gokhale's statements in his speeches and other records to justify their own programmes and policies. Those who were suspicious of him in his lifetime, both within and outside the government now began to recognise him as a model for the respect to opposition and statesmanship.[165] His consideration for the Muslims was highly acclaimed. He argued that administrative reforms would never lead to responsible government, what is ultimately required is the right to government. However, reforms would contribute to the furthering of the

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[164] R.C. Majudnar *et al., Op.cit.*, p.p. 907-8. The other members of the Indian delegation were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. C.Y. Chintamoni, Dr. B.R. Ambdekar and Sir. Muhammed Shafi.

[165] *Mathruhumi Daily,* 21st Feb., 1933, Editorial, p. 2.

necessary condition for such a desire. Both he and Gokhale supported the Minto-Morley Reforms on these grounds.[166]

During 1921-32 periods Sastri visited several countries within the British Empire. He was also elected as a member of the Privi Council. In 1927 he took charge as the Agent of India Government in South Africa. He was interested in the education of Indians in South Africa. He started a college for them and prepared a housing project. In 1929 he returned to India. During 1935-40 he was Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University.[167] He passed away on 17th April, 1946 while addressing a gathering at Madras.[168]

**V.R. Nayanar**

The life of V.R. Nayanar was a unique episode in the history of the Servants of India Society in Kerala. Due to historical reasons the work of the Society in Kerala was mainly confined to erstwhile Malabar district. For more than two decades he was intimately associated with the Society. He rendered an astonishing amount of public service with great missionary zeal, in conditions of extreme hardships. But he was quite selfless and unassuming in performing the task, which he took up as the mission of his life. In the short

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[166] *Ibid.*.

[167] T.N. Jagadisan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 162-63.

[168] *Mahathcharithamala*, *Op. cit.*, p.492.

span of his life he embodied the high ideals of the Servants of India Society in such perfect terms in which his master Gokhale conceived them.[169]

V.R. Nayanar was born in 1900 in an affluent *janmi* (landlord) family – Varikkara - of Kunhimangalam village of former Chirakkal taluk of Kannur district. His parents were Ayilliath Rairu Nambiar and Varikkara Kallyani Amma. Being the eldest son, he was given the name of his father according to their tradition. Later Varikkara Rairu Nayanar was popularly known as V.R. Nayanar.[170] The Nayanars were a small aristocratic group of families comprised mainly to the North Kerala districts of Kannur and Kasargod.[171] Nayanar's father wanted his son to be a doctor. After his B.A. degree he joined the Medical College to become a doctor. But he found it difficult to continue Medical studies. Dissection of dead bodies and practical work in the laboratory were all-sickening for him. Eventually he discontinued his medical

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[169] All the persons interviewed as part of this study attested these facts.

[170] Sukumar Kootali, "Aa Jeevitham Oru Samagraveekshanam", *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika* (Mal.), Kannur, 1984, pp.19-20.

[171] Traditionally "Nayanar" is a title conferred on the scholars of Tamil Nadu. Legend has it that the Nayanar families of North Kerala were the descendants of a Tamil Nayanar whom the Pandya King assigned to accompany the Raja of Chirakkal as a token of goodwill, when the latter met the Pandya King while he was on a pilgrimage to Madurai Meenakshi Temple. The Raja was pleased to take the whole family of that warrior including two younger sisters and mother to his country and provided him with splendid accommodation with considerable landed property. The male members of the family were assigned the commander's position of the Chirakkal Rajas. The Nayanar warrior married away his sisters to esteemed Nambiar families of North Kerala. The Nayanars descended from this relationship.

studies.[172] For sometime Nayanar was interested in politics and worked as the Secretary of Thalassery branch of Swarajya Party.[173]

Nayanar's father thought of effecting a change in his son. He asked him to go for a tour to Madras, Bombay and other cities. In the course of this tour he came to the head quarters of Servants of India Society in Poona. He was greatly impressed by the aims and objectives of the Society. He learnt more about the Society's work and soon felt called upon to follow its ideals. He stayed a few months there working as a librarian. This was for him some kind of apprenticeship in the activities of the Society's work. He soon returned to Malabar as a representative of the Society and standard work at Calicut.

Nayanar's urge for public service got ample opportunities following the Malabar riot of 1921. He was the volunteer captain of a refugee camp set up in Calicut. He took great care of the victims of the Rebellion.[174] Refugee camps were also organised by the Congress in Calicut and Thrissur under the leadership of K.P. Kesava Menon and Kurur Neelakantan Namboodirippad respectively.[175] In Calicut there were other camp set up at Azchavattam,

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[172] M.P.P.A., "Varikkara Nayanar Kutumbam", *Ibid.*, p.12.

[173] C.H. Kunjappa, *Op. cit.*, p.88, also see Mathrubhumi, May 16, 1945, p.2.

[174] *Ibid.*, p.88.

[175] K. Janaki Amma, *Op. cit.*, p.32.

Mooriyad, Francis Road, Puthiyara, Chalappuram, etc.[176] Nayanar worked day and night collecting food and materials for the refugees in the camp.[177] He considered it his sacred duty to serve and protect the poor and destitute. He also served as a member of the Mappila Aid Committee formed to provide relief and help to the suffering Mappilas after the riot.[178]

When the DMRT was formed in Calicut, Nayanar was selected as one of its main workers at the instance of G.K. Devadhar.[179] As an associate of Suryanarayana Rao,[180] who was in charge of the SIS of Malabar, Nayanar had already become a seasoned social worker. When Suryanarayana Rao resigned from his position as the Honorary Joint Secretary of SIS, his place was taken by Nayanar during this period. Nayanar's zeal for social service was so immense that he left no area untouched. He was at the forefront of the programme for eradication of untouchability, against superstitions and social evils, for providing education to the downtrodden people and in fostering communal harmony.[181] These activities were mainly undertaken as the

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[176] V.R. Menon, *Mathrubhumiyute Charithram*, Vol. I (Mal.), Kozhikode, 1973, p.43.

[177] Interview with Theruvath Raman, on 20-03-2005.

[178] Letter dt. 7 Sept. 1933 from V.R. Nayanar to T.B. Russel, ICS Collector, President of the Committee. File No. D.Dis.12-15-03 dt. 25-1-35, p.423, RAK.

[179] K. Janaki Amma, *Op. cit.*, p.32.

[180] Karthat Balachandran, "DMRT Smaranakal", *Vettom*, 25 Jan. 1982, Vol. 2, Issue 9, Tanur, p.17.

[181] *Ibid.*, p.17.

programmes of DMRT. These were envisaged as means to set right the condition of Malabar which was distorted by the Rebellion.[182]

Along with social work, Nayanar also found time to engage himself with political activities. During 1924-1928 he was the Secretary of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee.[183] He was instrumental in setting up Congress Committees in North Malabar. At his instance Congress Committee was formed in Kanhangad in 1924; the Hozdurg Taluk Congress Committee was organised by him in 1925. [184]When Nehru visited Kerala to preside over the Fourth Kerala Political Conference held at Payyannur on 25, 26, 27 May 1928, V.R. Nayanar was an active participant. When a resolution was moved by K. Madhavan Nair recommending the ensuing Calcutta Congress, demanding India's total independence as the aim of the Congress, V.R. Nayanar along with K. Kelappan, C. Kuttan Nair and Kurur supported the resolution.[185] Again, The State Congress launched its struggle for responsible government on 26, Aug. 1938, against the idea of independent Travancore piloted by Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. The KPCC led by Muhammed Abdurahiman formed a support committee and its members were EMS, P.

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[182] Mathrubhumi daily, dt. 30th July, 1933, p.7; 22nd November, 1933, p.2; 14th January, 1934, p.5; 9th March, 1934, p.8.

[183] *Mathrubhumi*, 16 May, 1945, p.2; K.K.N. Kurup, *A.C. Kannan Nair:* Oru Padanam, Thiruvananthapuram, 1985, p. 11.

[184] K.K.N. Kurup, *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 133.

[185] S.K. Pottekkat, *et al.*, *Muhammad Abdurahman: A Political Biography*, (Mal.), Kozhikode, 1978, pp.422-423.

Krishna Pillai, P. Narayanan Nair and K.A. Damodara Menon. The Malabar Committee of the Congress decided to lead a procession to Travancore in support of its agitation. The Captain of the procession was A.K. Gopalan. On Sept. 9, 1938, a great public meeting was held at Calicut beach in support of the Malabar procession to Travancore. The meeting was addressed by Muhammed Abdurahiman, V.R. Nayanar, U. Gopala Menon, Kozhipurath Madhava Menon and K. Damodara Menon.[186]

The SIS and the DMRT did great relief operations in Malabar during the famine of 1923-24[187] and the flood of 1927-28. Similarly when the cholera epidemic broke out in Malabar in 1942-43 the SIS and the DMRT rendered, under the leadership of Nayanar, an immense amount of relief work for which there was no parallel in contemporary history.[188] Their other programmes for which Nayanar gave able leadership include adult education, co-operative ventures, cottage industries, agricultural training, etc.

An area in which Nayanar focused great attention was general education. It was one of his great convictions that education could serve as an agency for social change. Nayanar's role as a teacher and as an educationist in the period of nationalist struggle in Malabar was not adequately recognised.

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[186] *Ibid.*, p.585.

[187] Karthat Balachandran, *Vettom*, Tanur, 25th February, 1982, p.17.

[188] Karthat Balachandran, "DMRT Smaranakal", *Op. cit.*, p.15, Interview with T. Assanarkutti, Tanur, dt. March 20, 2002; K. Balakrishnan, "Kerala Paryatanam: V.R. Nayanar", In *Desabhimani Weekly*, Kozhikode, January, 2002, pp. 26-8.

Besides general education Nayanar was also greatly interested in 'workers education', on the pattern of Workers Education Association, which functioned in European countries like England. He was very keen to use education and knowledge to fight against religious and caste based superstitions.

Nayanar also had the profile of a trade unionist and journalist.[189] In the 1920s he worked among the tile workers of Feroke and organized them. His set up a centre to give them workers education.[190] For sometime he worked as the editor of the *West Coast Spectator;* at the same time he was also associated with another newspaper *Manorama*, both published from Calicut.

Nayanar was also associated with the activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Kongattil Raman Menon was the president of the Malabar Harijan Sevak Sangh right from its inception. After him. V.R. Nayanar took charge as President and continued till his death.[191] He was also associated with Kelappaji and his social and educational work for the Harijans.[192] In his busy life Nayanar wrote several articles on various topics and authored a few books

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[189] Karthat Balachandran, V.R. Nayanar Smaranika, 1984, Kannur, p.37.

[190] Interview with Theruvath Raman *Op. cit.*

[191] Prof. C.K. Moossathu, "Harijan Pravarthanam: Kelappajiyute Panku", *Harijan Sevak Sangham Kerala Sakha Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika*, Kozhikode, 1985, p.10.

[192] P.V.K. Nedungadi, "Sri. V.R. Nayanar", *Harijan Sevak Sangham, Kerala Sabha Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika*, Kozhikode, 1985, pp.26-27; also see Prof. C.K. Moosath, "Harijan Pravarthanam Kelappajiyute Panku", *Ibid.* p.p. 9,10.

including *Pouradharmam* (co-authored by P.M. Kuttikrishnan Nair) and a biography of Gopala Krishna Gokhale.

Wherever people were in distress due to illness, poverty and other calamities Nayanar and his teams of workers were always prepared to extend alms to them. He once undertook a hazardous journey to Lakadives and the Andaman islands to provide them help when they were severely tormented by illness and poverty.[193] Throughout Malabar he set up several dispensaries.[194] In order to protect and rehabilitate the people and children left orphaned and destitute by the Malabar riot as well as by cholera he set up orphanages from Chirakkal on the north to Ponnani on the south.[195]

Born and brought up in an aristocratic family Nayanar could have secured very high positions in life. By virtue of his intelligence and daringness he could have added upto the traditional fame and name of his family. But a noble soul infused with a high sense of commitment to the cause of the suffering lot of his country and induced by characteristic sympathy to the poor and downtrodden, Nayanar chose an unassuming path of selfless service, in the course of which he had to sacrifice his own life.[196] His personal life was quite tragic. Soon a daughter was born to him, his wife

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[193] T.P.R. Nambisan, *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.51.

[194] Thikkodiyan, *Arangukanatha Nadan*, Thrissur, 1991, p.172.

[195] Thikkotiyan, *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.68.

[196] Kerala Kaumudi, Jan. 26, 2000, Kozhikode, p.2.

passed away. On the advice of his friends and relatives, in 1940, he married Madhavikkutti Amma of Kayarat family of Ottapalam and settled near DMRT centre, Tanur. Madhavikutti Amma, popularly known as Mrs. Nayanar. She emulated the service mentality of her husband. When cholera broke out in Valappad and Nattika of Thrissur and in parts of Malabar she led relief operations.

Nayanar passed away on 14 May, 1945 quite early in life.[197] In the course of continuous and restless work he had contracted exima. On his way to preside over an anniversary of a school in North Malabar, he walked quite a long distance and his illness got aggravated. Following an acute fever he lost his life.[198] Nayanar was deeply mourned by the people of Malabar. He was fraised as a embodiment of honesty, innocence and integrity. As a protector of the distressed lot none was equal to him in Kerala. [199]In its editorial Mathrubhumi described Nayanar as a man who was prepared to take up unattractive, and hazardous, but extremely important tasks as a veteran servant of the country and above all as a most merciful human being, a *Yogi* in the right sense.[200]

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[197] Mathrubhumi daily, 16 July, Kozhikode, 1985, p.1, col. 6, Interview with Ammini Amma, Care taker, Balikasadanam, Kozhikode, dt. 12.2.2005.

[198] Karthat Balachandran, *op. cit.*, p.19.

[199] K.K.N. Kurup, *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-34.

[200] "Editorial", Mathrubhumi daily, 16 May, Kozhikode, 1946, p.2.

**Mrs. V.R. Nayanar**

The death of Nayanar created a gap in the public life of Malabar which, could note easily be filled in. [201] In the worlds of Thikkodiyan "the light has gone out unexpectedly. All along it was darkness. None came forward to lighten the way. It was not because of the lack of able persons and individuals. But none dared to shoulder the burden of great responsibilities. They were reluctant to do so".[202] After the death of Nayanar the institutions set up and looked after by him found it difficult to continue their work. The person who came to Calicut on behalf of the SIS to take charge of them was L.N. Rao, a man from outside Kerala. He was least bothered about running these institutions. On examining the records, he was in a haste to shut down many of them.[203]

At this juncture, however, Mrs. Nayanar thought of continuing public work, in her own humble way, she came to Calicut and took up the task of running the Balika Sadanam, an orphanage established by her husband. She was the Honorary Secretary of the Nayanar Balika Sadanam Trust till her death in 1985. [204] She took special interest in the education of the Harijan girls of the Sadanam. In her work she was also assisted by her brother Vasu

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[201] *Mathrubhumi Daily, Ibid.*

[202] Thikkodiyan, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

[203] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[204] Mrs. Nayanar, "Sri. V.R. Nayanar", *Harijan Sevak Sangham Gandhi – Janmasathabdhi Souvenir*, Palakkad, 1969, p.46.

Menon, himself a freedom fighter.[205] Mrs. Nayanar was a unique example in Malabar women in public life. Though her committed and unrelenting activities for the cause of destitute girls. She set a model for this spirit of service and kept the flame of SIS idealism alive for decades even after the SIS/DMRT ceased functioning in Malabar. That way she had contributed her share respect of women empowerment. The Sadanam is the only institution which continues functioning in the SIS/DMRT model even now.[206] Details of the activities of the Sadanam have been given in the section on "relief operations".

The above section presents only a brief life sketch of the eminent leaders of SIS, highlighting their connection with Kerala. But the SIS and the DMRT was able to become popular movements owing to the selfless involvement of a number of local workers and volunteers through its various programmes and activities. However special mention must be made about the services of men like Tanur Paremeswaran, P.M. Kuttikrishnan Nair, (Palakkad), T.V. Kuttikrishnmenon (Tanur), P.P. Menon, P.M. Kumaran Nair, R.C. Paul, T.Velayudhan (Kozhikode), T. Assanarkutty (Tanur), Karthat Balachandra Menon (Tanur), T. Narayananan Master (Tanur),Lakshmi Amma (Tanur), and Ammini Amma (Kozhikode). Besides there must be quite a number of other workers about whom, details are not known but were equally

[205] Thikkodiyan, *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

[206] *Ibid.*

important in the SIS/DMRT work. For want of adequate information they are not mentioned here though the role of such unidentified workers are respectfully acknowledged. The workers of the SIS/DMRT truly shared the characteristics of the social workers as enumerated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad:

> Humility and dedication should be the watchwords of the workers. It is after all no obligation that the social worker is going to confer on the sufferer. He is there to come for himself in the way of moral and spiritual uplift more than he is going to give to the sufferer in the way of physical comfort; and this thought ought to make him humble and keen.[207]

A detailed account of the work done by them will be examined in the next chapter.

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[207] Rajendra Prasad, "Forword" to J.C. Kumarappa, *Orgaisation and Account of Relief Work*, Wardha, 1947, p.III: (Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the Chairman of the Bihar Central Relief Committee, established in the wake of the disastrous earthquake of 15th January, 1934).

# THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY IN KERALA: A STUDY OF THE DMRT MOVEMENT

*Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut*
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# CHAPTER V
# DMRT AND ITS MISSION

The activities of the Servants of India Society in Kerala were executed mainly through the DMRT (the Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust), ever since its formation. The workers of the DMRT rendered selfless services in various respects and performed their tasks at grass root level. As they worked with missionary zeal in the most tiring situations, they could gain a first hand knowledge about the ills from which Malabar society was suffering. In a period of great socio-political strife and callousness on the part of government to the penury, poverty and perils of the people, the dedicated work of the DMRT came as a healing touch. They were to infuse into the suffering men the spirit of rejuvenation and the sense of confidence.

Though very humble in word and deed, DMRT workers could penetrate among the "wretched of the earth"[1] and eventually bring about great changes in their life. The reconstruction of Malabar from the perils of rebellion, natural calamities, social evils, educational, economic and cultural backwardness was the avowed objectives of the DMRT. Since its conception (1924) till the formation of the state of Kerala (1956), for about four decades the DMRT had been a creative presence in Malabar helping the people in

[1] The reference is to Franz Fanon's , *The Wretched of the Earth,* rpt, New York, 1986.

distress, imparting the light of knowledge, undertaking constructive programmes, and fighting against social evils. A detailed account of the work of the DMRT in the field of Relief Operations, Educational Activities, Rural Reconstruction and Social Reform will be presented in the following sections.

# 1. Relief Operations

The end of the Malabar Rebellion drew up a vast scenario of misery and destitution. The scene of suffering can be categorised in two ways – those who were caught up in rebel areas and those who had to flee from these places as refugees. A good portion of Mappila population had kept away from the Rebellion. Along with many rebels they were also caught up in the rebel areas. As Madhavan Nair, who was quite active in the scene describes the condition of these Mappilas was quite pitiable. They were at once subject to a three pronged attack: in the eyes of the rebel they were traitors and so incurred their wrath; being rebels the non-Muslims looked upon them as enemies; in the eyes of the British government. and army they were a threat to be stopped at any cost.[1] The second scene comprises of large numbers of refugees. They flocked in and around Calicut. This mass of destitutes was made up of people of all ranks ranging from high cast Namboodiris to lower caste groups and Mappilas. These men and women who ran away for their life formed a population of above 25,000 people.[2] Wide spread arson and looting and murder had been unleashed in the rebel areas. Besides there were also instances of women dishonoured and molested, the desecration of

[1] K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, Kozhikode, 2002.

[2] *K. Madhavan Nair Janmasadabdi Smaranika*, Kozhikode, 1982, pp.37, 38.

temples and forced conversions.[3] However according to historians it was difficult to characterise the uprising solely as freedom struggle or agrarian conflict or religious (communal) uprising. It was viewed as a complex upheavel, a combination of the features of a revolt against alien rule, a violent rising against oppressive land relations and a struggle for the establishment of political power based on religious tenets.[4] The Rebellion continued for about 6 months from the end of August 1921 to the end of February 1922. It had spread over "an area of over 2,000 square miles about 1/5 of the district of Malabar."[5] The Rebellion was characterised as "the most serious Rebellion that India had to face since the mutiny."[6]

Following the Rebellion, accommodation of the refugees was a great problem. Relief camps were opened at Azhchavattam, Vazhappally and Francis Road in Calicut. Organisation of these camps were spearheaded by

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[3] Kezhedath Vasudevan Nair, *Vydyarathnam P.S. Varreor Jeevitha Katha*, Kozhikode, 1989, pp.131-33; Also see K. Madhavan Nair, *Op.cit.*, 136-138.

[4] M. Gangadhara Menon, *Malabar Rebellion (1921-22)*, Allahabad, 1989, p.XI.

[5] R.H. Hitchcock, *A History of the Malabar Rebellion 1921*, Madras, 1925, p.1.

[6] Lieut. Colonel A.C.B. Mackinnon (commanding 2/9 Gurkha Rifles in Malabar during the Rebellion), "The Moplah Rebellion 1921-22," *Army Quarterly Review*, Vol.7, January, 1924, p.260, Quoted M. Gangadharan Menon, *Op.cit.*, p.424.

K. Madhavan Nair.[7] He was able to console the weeping woman and their children. The experience of the refugees were extremely shocking.[8]

The relief work organised by the Congress was a great help to the refugees. Madhavan Nairs house at Chalappuram was functioning both as the Congress office and relief centre. Several volunteers were organised to look after the refugees. Rice was distributed to the people every day from this centre. Each family was given a card with number of members and units of rice entered in it. This was to avoid complaint and to extend help to maximum people. But it was difficult for him to reach the rebel areas owing to hostile circumstances. Still there were complaints that the relief work was intended for the Hindus and that Muslims were ignored. Immediately he sought the help of Khilafath leaders like C.K. Komukkutty Moulavi and Abdullakkutti Maulavi and distributed nearly Rs.50,000 among the Muslims alone. He was thus able to provide relief to the people from different parts of Ernad.[9]

When Calicut town was flocked with refugees from Ernad and Valluvanad Madhavan Nair sought the help of Congress leaders to tackle the problem. Soon Rajagopalachari came to Calicut and formed a Congress

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[7] K. Madhavan Nair, *Op.cit.*, p.38.

[8] T.P.C. Kitavu, 'Adyakala Pravarthanam Chila Smaranakal,' *Mathrubhumi*, 30th April 1959,p.7; Interview with Parukkutti Amma.V., (Freedom fighter), Kozhikode, 20.03.2005.

[9] *K. Madhavan Nair Janmasadabdhi . . . . .Op.cit.*, pp.38, 39.

Relief Committee. The committee led by Madhavan Nair had as members Ambalakkat Karunakara Menon, K.P. Kesava Menon, P. Achuthan, K.V. Gopala Menon. Gandhiji himself made appeals to raise funds.[10]

Relief committees were organised in various centers of Malabar. These include district level committees and sub committees in rural areas, Moplah Aid Committee, Distress Relief Fund Committee, Malabar Central Aid Committee and Released Prisoners' Aid Committee. In addition to these several private agencies rendered relief work. These include royal houses such as the Samudiri Kovilakam, Kottakkal Kovilakam, and Mankada Kovilakam, the Kavalappara Nair family, the house of Kulathur Sulapani Varrier and P.S. Varrier's Aryavydyasala Kottakkal.[11] The work of these local magnates, though valuable in their own respects, could not extend to all sections of people and beyond their localities.

In Calicut, in addition to the Congress relief work, a few voluntary organisations were also involved in relief operations. In September 1921 the Servants of India Society's deputation led by G.K. Devadhar visited Malabar to investigate into the conditions of the riot ridden area. Their plan was to organise relief work with the co-operation of local organisations, the government and also by inviting other philanthropic bodies to join the work.

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[10] *Ibid.*, pp.37, 38.

[11] For details see C. Gopalan Nair, *The Moplah Rebellion 1921*, Calicut 1923, pp.100-106; Keezhedath Vasudevan Nair, *Op.cit.*, pp.132-135.

After visiting the affected area Devadhar and party placed their relief proposals before the provisional committee. On 9th October the Malabar Central Relief Committee was formed.[12] The SIS offered their services to collect funds from all over the country and to organise relief work in Malabar. Besides the SIS, the committee had representatives of the Y.M.C.A, The South Indian United Church of Malabar and the Seva Sadan of Poona.[13]

Consequent on the Rebellion, Malabar in those days was passing thorough a perilous phase of fear and panic born out by the savageries of the Rebellion and government's brutality on the people of the rebel areas. Local committees were formed to collect money and grains and to administer relief. But it was quite a hazardous task to extend alms to the needy and suffering. One of the greatest difficulties in the early days was lack of transport facilities. The rebels had blocked almost all roads by destroying bridges and felling trees, and by lying in ambush at strategical points. Therefore it was quite heroic to undertake relief work in distant places.[14]

Money flowed from all parts of India and from distant places like Baghdad, Basra, England and Australia.[15] Women and students went about collecting old clothes; while the mill owners of Bombay, Ahammadabad,

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[12] C. Gopalan Nair, *Op.cit.*, pp.95, 96.

[13] "Malabar Relief," *The Servant of India*, 10th May1923, p.172.

[14] *Ibid.*, p.172.

[15] *Ibid.*

Sholapur and Nagpur sent bales of new clothes. Medicines and condensed milk were supplied freely by importing firms. Lady Willington organised a fete in Madras which brought in considerable amount of money. Indian ladies from Bombay and Poona visited Malabar and worked with local ladies to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees. A team of doctors including Ayurvedic physicians and private practitioners were pooled in to look after the health of the refugees.[16]

The Congress committee, for political reasons, organised relief independently of the central relief committee. While both these bodies functioned on a non-sectarian basis, the Arya Samaj and the Jamayath Ul-Ulama worked for their respective communities. However the *Servant of India* characteristically evaluated the large amount of relief work as a reflection of the growth of public spirit in the country, "at a time of political distraction through the like of which the country has not passed within three quarters of a century."[17].

The Central Relief Committee was the best organised of all the agencies and commanded largest resources. It obtained nearly Rs.2,70000 of which the Bombay committee alone supplied more than Rs.1,40000 and the Madras committee nearly Rs.70,000.[18] It could work very efficiently because

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[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*

it enlisted workers from different castes and creeds all committed to the general cause. From the middle of October till the end of February, the committee ran a number of relief camps at Calicut and in the mofussil. There were six of them in Calicut and fourteen in the mofussil. General average strength of the camps ranged at 1,000 each but some larger camps had two to three thousand souls. In addition to supply of food the medical and sanitary needs became urgent. A number of maternity cases also had to be attended to. The food, crudely prepared for the whole camp, naturally disagreed with delicate children and caused dysentery, diarrhoea and other troubles. This and insufficient protection against wintry whether still enhanced the rate of mortality. Special hospitals were set up for women and children and for cases of contagious diseases. These hospitals were in charge of lady doctors and nurses supplied by Christian missions and the Seva Sadan of Poona.[19]

An attempt was also made to find employment for men and woman in the camp. Though, it was not an easy task to find employment for a large floating population. The carpenters and weavers were given tools and materials to work with. Some were given employment in the industrial concerns in and around Calicut. Some others were send to vegetable gardens.

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[19] *Ibid.*, pp.172-73.

The charkha too was tried in one or two camps. The women were employed in making coconut fibre and pounding rice.[20]

Schools were started in every camp to keep the children engaged. Local volunteers and some refugees themselves acted as teachers. Entertainment and instruction were provided by means of gramaphones, magic lanterns, lectures and kirtans, the local staff of the agricultural department used the opportunity very well. All these activities continued till the rebellion was quelled by the end of February 1922. As the villages became safe enough for occupation, the camps were closed and the inmates sent home with valedictory cash dole. But one camp continued, which was occupied by those who had been forcibly converted into Islam and who feared violence from the Moplahs for having gone back to Hinduism.[21]

By this time the government had begun giving loans to the Hindu victims of the Rebellion. It was reported that the Mappilas families in the interior areas were in great distress as many of their male members had either been killed or imprisoned, for being involved in the Rebellion. They were too ignorant or afraid of the police to seek help in the camps. Special arrangements had to be made for taking relief to them. Workers were sent into those areas and gave money doles of Rs.10 to 20 per deserving family to enable them to repair houses damaged in the military operations and to

[20] *Ibid.*, p.173.

[21] *Ibid.*

provide subsistence for a few weeks. The monsoon was approaching but the landlords were still away and so, much unemployment prevailed. With a view to meet the Contingency the Central Relief committee opened cheap grain shops at several centres. These grain shops were kept open during the whole of the rainy season. But as there was practically no demand for cheap grain, the stock was ultimately used for gratuitous relief. With the month of October the committee closed its operations.[22]

Relief work, however, continued the winding up of the Central Relief Committee. Malabar Muslim Reconstruction was formed in 1925. In association with other relief committees they took up work for the amelioration of the distress in interior areas. One such place was Karuvarakundu in Malappuram district, where the people were largely ignorant and poor. A centre of relief and training of handicrafts was started there.[23]

After closing the Central Relief Committee the SIS continued its work through the DMRT. In addition to refugee relief it was attending to the people in distress during flood, epidemics, and famine. The Society continued to be associated with Mappila Aid Committee. In 1924 Malabar was greatly affected by flood. The DMRT workers were active in the Malabar Flood Relief Committee. DMRT was entrusted with the administration of

[22] *Ibid.* p.173.

[23] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 24 February, 1925, p.2.

financial help to the affected people. The committee sanctioned to Pavoor school, an amount of Rs.7000 to be administered through the DMRT for the rehabilitation of Harijan families in the vicinity of the school. Kelappan who was running the school wanted to train Harijans in vocations like masonry, carpentry and smithy.[24]

In 1925 during heavy rain and cyclone 56 fisher men and 26 boats on the Tanur coast met with danger and the worst was feared. Only five men could escape from the mishap. The SIS workers lost no time to come to the scene and to provide alms for the families of the affected.[25] Soon the area was affected by flue and diarrhoea. The epidemic spread to nearby areas like Tirur, Thrikandiyur, and Thalakatt and cases of infant mortality were reported. The SIS workers were quite active in looking after the patients.[26] An SIS worker T.C. Venkita Rama Iyer was quite active in the area especially among the people of the coastal area.[27]

During 1925-1930 the SIS was actively involved in several programmes. Its workers had hectic days in organizing works pertaining to education and social reform, all attuned to nationalist programmes. They campaigned against untouchability, pollution, illiteracy, superstitions and

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[24] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 12 November, 1925, p.3.

[25] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 26 November 1925, p.9.

[26] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 31 December 1925, p.7.

[27] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 28 January, 1926, p.7.

against many unhealthy social practices. These activities were always promoted along with their educational work.[28] These were all organized at grass root level and so had great emancipatory potential. A remarkable feature of their educational work was its empowerment emphasis. The depressed classes, the marginalized sections and the unrecognized and the untoward lot were all identified and extended helping alms.

In 1925 the Government of Madras ordered that the unexpired portion of the sentences of imprisonment passed on the prisoners of Malabar Rebellion shall be remitted and that the prisoners shall be released.[29] The concession was subject to the condition that the released prisoners should remain of good behaviour during the period covered by the sentences of imprisonment passed on them. Rehabilitation of these released prisoners was an important problem. The Servants of India Society (Malabar) was very much concerned about the issue. R. Suryanarayana Rao, in a letter which he wrote from Madras to Wood, Malabar Collector, expressed his concern on "providing help to the released Mappila prisoners to restart them in life."[30] The involvement of the SIS in solving the problem was greatly recognized by the government authorities. In view of the urgency of the matter, the Malabar

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[28] For details on the educational work of the SIS see the section on education.

[29] Government of Madras, Public Department, G.O. No. 729, 3rd August 1925. R Dis 12153/31Dt. 25.1.35, RAK, p.391.

[30] R.Suryanarayana Rao letter dated 12 November 1931 (from SIS office Royapettah Madras) DD is 12153/31 dated 25.1.35 RAK p.1.

Collector used to inform Suryanarayana Rao of his programmes.[31] Archival sources show the way they mutually reciprocated concerns in the matter.[32] Instant replies were given to correspondences and meetings arranged and schemes chalked out. Rao was persistently pressing the government's involvement in this regard: "I feel some action is urgently necessary and your support and guidance are very essential for the successes of any scheme."[33] A finance committee was formed and Rao was quite earnest to see that the committee "immediately sets to work".[34]

A Mappila Aid Committee was set up in Calicut with branch and sub committees in different parts of the district. The Malabar district Magistrate wrote to the Divisional officers at Tellicherry, Cannanore, Palghat and Ponnani to arrange for the setting up of branches and subcommittees in their jurisdiction, enlisting the support of both Muhammedans and Hindus. These committees were to "collect funds and enlist public interest in the welfare of the released Mappila convicts."[35] Special instructions were given to the divisional officer Malappuram to set up sub committees in his division. They were to assist released Mappila prisoners and to educate the general public

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[31] Letter dated 13.11.31, *Ibid*, p.2.

[32] Correspondences of 24 November 1931 (Rao to Wood); 24.11.31 (Mr. Wood to Rao); 3.12.31(Mr. Wood to Rao); 4.12.31 (Rao to. Wood) *Ibid.*, pp.3-7.

[33] R. Suryanarayana Rao letter dt. 24 November 1931, to Wood, *Ibid.* p.3.

[34] R. Suryanarayana Rao, Letter dt. 11 December, 1931, to Wood . *Ibid.* p.13.

[35] Malabar District Magistrate's Letter dated 14.12.1931 (to Elwin and Mr. Thompson, Divisional Officers) *Ibid.*,pp.25-26.

into taking an interest in their welfare and watching and guiding them. It had both to collect funds and to see proper accounting. A sub committee was also to be set up in Manjeri and in a few other places.[36] The help of the Sub-Divisional Officer was also sought.[37]

The Mappila Aid Committee was led by E.C. Wood, Malabar Collector as its President. K.K. Pokker and R. Suryanarayana Rao were the Honarary Joint Secretaries; K.D. Mugaseth, Khan Bahadur Haji Ali Baramy, Khan Bahadur P.M.Attakoya Thangal were Vice Presidents; and Rao Saheb U.B. Srinivasa Rao was Honorary Treasurer of the committee. The President made a public request in both English and Malayalam to make a liberal contribution and help the committee in the task it had undertaken relying active sympathy and support of the public.[38] Suryanarayana Rao and Pokker proposed to visit the taluk centres and other important places in the district and address meetings and go round for collections.[39] Rao - Wood correspondences during this period show the great enthusiasm evinced by them in the cause.[40]

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[36] Malabar District Magistrate's the Letter dated14.12.31 (to W.T. Bryant Divisional Officer Malappuram), *Ibid.*, pp.27,28.

[37] Malabar District Magistrate's Letter dated 14.12.1931 (to R. Lescher, Nilambur) *Ibid*, p.29.

[38] *Ibid*, pp.33, 35.

[39] R. Suryanarayana Rao, Letter dt. 21 December 1931 to Mr. Wood, *Ibid*, pp.31-32.

[40] E.C. Wood, Letter dated 23.12.1931 to Suryanarayana Rao (from Malabar Collector's Office Camp, Manantoddy)

By this time the government had realised something basic about the prisoners of the Rebellion. In a government communication to Malabar Collector send in connection with the release of prisoners from Alipuram Jail, Bellary, the prisoners were classified as 'non-dangerous'. The following statement in the letter about the character of the prisoners was quite revealing;

> Government are informed that these convicts are neither criminals of the ordinary type nor fanatic of the type that took part in the pre-Rebellion outbreaks. *If there is a possibility of danger from their release, it will be on account of the economic distress now prevailing.* Government are therefore anxious that every possible step should be taken to settle them in Malabar peacefully in regular employment if possible.[41](italics added).

The government also hoped that organisations like the Discharged Prisoners Aid Society, SIS and YMCA would help in the venture. It was also suggested that the Mappila Aid Committee be affiliated to Madras Discharged Prisoners Aid Society which received grant from the government. Government officers also allowed to join the committee's work.[42]

The government directed the District Magistrate of Malabar to report on the composition of the committee. They wanted to ward off the Congress from the Mappila Aid Programmes.

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[41] Government of Madras Letter D.O. No.9334-2, dated 30th December 1931 to E.C. Wood, *Ibid*, pp.45, 46.

[42] *Ibid*; Mr. Woods letter dated 6.1.1932 to Surya Narayana Rao. *Op.cit.* p.53.

> The government instructed that, "It is obviously of the greatest importance that the work on behalf of the Mappilas should not be made a political matter and that the committee should not get into the hands of the Congress party or other agitators."[43]

But the SIS participation in the work was quite welcome. Suryanarayana Rao along with Khan Bahadur Thangal and Pokker arranged public meetings at Tirurangadi and at other parts of the district.[44] The task ahead of them was extremely massive as the bulk of prisoners expected to be released by that time was around 750.[45] Their condition was quite pitiable, as many of them had contracted serious diseases. There were among them lepers and tubercular cases.[46] However with the active involvement of the SIS, subcommittees were functioning at Cannanore, Tellicherry, Tirurangadi, Tirur, Ponani, Malappuram, Manjeri and Wandoor. The members of the committee had invariably met the prisoners on their arrival at Calicut, and appraised them of the function of the committee. In place of E.C Wood, Mr. T.B Russell, Collector, was nominated as President.[47] Help poured from various quarters, following the appeal made by the influential persons. An engineering, contractor volunteered to supply housing materials for about 25

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[43] Government of Madras GO.No.1305 MS dated 23 December 1931 to the District Magistrate of Malabar, *Ibid.*, p.3.

[44] R.Suryanarayana Rao Letter dated 6, January 1932 to Mr. Wood, *Ibid.*, p.47.

[45] Government of Madras Letter dated 30, December 1931, *Op.cit.*

[46] Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Moplah Aid Committee held on 27 February 1932, *Ibid.*, p.63.

[47] R. Suryanaraya Rao's report in *Ibid.* 61, 63.

Mappila released prisoners, in addition to personal contribution to the fund.[48] Meanwhile relief work was also underway during this period under the aegis of the Malabar District Relief Fund Committee of which Rao was the Hon. Secretary. The fishermen at Vadanapalli, and Thalikulam in Ponnani Taluk were in great distress and steps were initiated to provide them relief.[49]

The work of investigation of the problems of the prisoners was found extremely difficult. Therefore Suryanarayana Rao offered the service of a DMRT worker for a period of one month. The released prisoners had to be rehabilitated before the monsoon. Several Mappila families had to be settled in Wynad also. Sub committees were also formed at Manantoddy, Panamaram, Manjeri and Wondoor. Arrangements were made to sent prisoners (from Salem jail) who were lepers to Chevayur Asylum.[50] A grant-in-aid-committee was also formed. The committee met at regular intervals. In each meeting Suryanarayana Rao was very particular in brining to the notice of the members the urgency of the work to be done. T.B patients had to be supplied with blankets and cod liver oil especially in view of the coming monsoon. The prisoners who had no means of livelihood placed request for loans to purchase sewing machine and to start some trades. But with limited

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[48] M.P. Moideen Kutty Kurikkal, (Engineering, Contractor, Manjeri) Letter to R. Suryanarayana Rao, *Ibid.* p.79.

[49] Minutes of the meeting of the Malabar District Relief Fund Committee held on 9 March 1932. *Ibid.*, p.83.

[50] Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Mappila Aid Committee held on 9 March 1932. *Ibid,* p.p.85, 87, 89.

resources the committee was helpless in such cases.[51] The committee received petitions from 1513 released prisoners. But it was very difficult for the committee to help all of them. Distress continued and some more prisoners were expected to be released soon. Considering these facts, it was resolved to wind up the work of the committee.[52]

Suryanarayana Rao was in charge of preparing the grants. The problem of T.B patients was again felt to be acute. Arrangements were made to obtain and supply cod liver oil and blankets to them. Owing to constraints, they addressed the Imperial Bank of India Calicut to wave the collection of commission for cheques. As already suggested by Suryanarayana Rao, the committee resolved to address the Nizam and the Nawab of Bhopal and other princes for more funds.[53] Realizing that the committee was working with scant resources, benevolent men like K.V. Achuthan Nair, the proprietor of Norman Printing Bureau was prepared to do the printing work required for the committee's campaign free of cost.[54]

By August 1932, the committee had collected an amount of Rs. 4280/2/0, of which Rs. 4123/8/9 was spent. Of the 809 cases distress

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[51] Proceedings of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Mappila Aid Committee held on 21-4-1932. *Ibid,* p.137.

[52] *Ibid,* p.146.

[53] Proceedings of the Mappila Aid Committee Meeting held on 11-5-1932 and 30-5-1932, *Ibid,* p.p.149, 151, 167.

[54] Letter 26 July 1932 from Sri. K.V. Achuthan Nair to Sri. R. Suryanarayana Rao, Sri, Raos letter dated 27-7-32 to Mr. J.B. Russell, Collector *Ibid* p.p. 219-222.

investigated, 258 were provided with assistance. Owing to lack of funds 229 deserving cases could not be helped. Again 446 cases still remained to be investigated.[55] In recognition of the financial crunch of the committee, the Madras government sanctioned to it twice a grant of Rs. 1000/=[56] which the committee hoped would be supplemented by the public in general[57] and the Moplah community in particular.[58]

In September 1933, in place of Suryanarayana Rao, V.R. Nayanar became Hon. Secretary of the committee.[59] Rao, however, was present in the committee meetings as a special invitee.[60] Special mention was made of the services of V.R. Nayanar, who was till them the Joint Secretary of the sub-committee at Tirur.[61] The released prisoners included cases of very old, decrepit and sickly .[62] In the several tubercular cases the committee addressed

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[55] R. Suryanarayana Rao's Letter dated 2 August 1932 to the Collector of Malabar, *Ibid,* p. 223; MAC "Indian Report p.3 *Ibid* p. 251.

[56] Secretary to the Government G.O.No.2583 dated 3 August 1933, *Ibid,* p.387.

[57] R. Suryanarayana Rao's Letter dt 18 August, 1933 to T.B Russell, Collector *Ibid, p.409.*

[58] *Ibid,* p. 421.

[59] *Ibid,* p. 423, 427.

[60] Proceedings of the MAC meeting held on 30-8-33, *Ibid,* p. 425.

[61] The Mappila Aid Committee, Interim Report of Work, dated 1932, p. 2, *Ibid,* pp. 249, 253.

[62] *Ibid,* p. 251.

the District Magistrate to exempt them from reporting monthly at the police stations as they were hardly in a position even to walk a short distance.[63]

It was resolved to close the work of the committee by the end of January 1934, and to distribute the balance of funds among the deserving cases.[64] It was pointed out that till then the help rendered to the released prisoners were confined to those beyond Ferok. Prisoners belonging to the side of Calicut namely Koduvally, Thamarassery, Vazhakkad, Parambathkavu, Kunnamangalam etc were also in great distress.[65]

At the MAC Meeting held at the DMRT office at Chalappuram it was resolved to request the Discharged Prisoners Aid Society (DPAS) Kannur to take the after care of the rebellion exprisoners.[66] The request was accepted by the DPAS Kannur. It was resolved to close the MAC and to hand over the assets including the balance fund in the bank to the DPAS Kannur. It was also resolved to request them to co-opt V.R. Nayanar and Attakoya Thangal as members of the Society.[67]

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[63] *Ibid,* p. 252.

[64] Proceedings of the Meeting of the Mappila Aid Committee held on 4 December 1933.

[65] K.K. Pokker letter dated 13 December 1933 to the Collector of Malabar, *Ibid, p.435, 439.*

[66] Proceedings of the MAC Meeting held on 29-8-34, *Ibid,* p. 461.

[67] Proceedings of the Meeting of the MAC held on 8th January 1935, *Ibid,* p. 483.

During the period 1930-38 the SIS/DMRT was also actively engaged in several social service activities which were reformatory in character. In fact this kind of work was begun in the 1920s. The Vaikkom Satyagraha (1924) was an important event in that direction. As Kelappan pointed out, it was an eye opener to the caste ridden Hindu society.[68] Vaikkom Satyagraha paved the way for greater struggles in the direction of social justice in Kerala based upon fellow feeling, patience, sympathy and tolerance. It was a prelude to the Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931) for the temple entry of lower castes. Activities during this period included anti-untouchability/pollution campaigns, prohibition campaigns, programmes for rural upliftment, literacy campaigns etc.

The people of Malabar were caught in the grip of miserable experiences like poverty, diseases and in certain areas famine. With a view to alleviate the sufferings of the people and to make them self reliant the DMRT had launched several rural upliftment centers throughout Malabar. The DMRT had rendered yeoman services by way of famine relief.

A typical case in point was the Keezhariyoor famine. V.R. Nayanar has given a touching portrait of the life of Keezhariyoor in one of his reports.[69] Keezhariyoor was a village on the north of Koyilandy in Kurumbranad taluk.

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[68] K. Kelappan, "Nam Ini Cheyyendathu", *Mathrubhumi* daily, 28, November, 1925, p.7.

[69] V.R. Nayanar, "Keezhariyoorile Kashtathakal - Asthikkootangalaya Alukalute Sthithi", *Mathrubhumi* daily, 18 August 1939, p.8.

While on a train journey Nayanar chanced to hear about the pitiful conditions of the people of that place from Ramotty, president of Keezhariyoor village Congress committee.[70] Nayanar visited the place along with C.H. Kunhappa (Deputy Editor, Mathrubhumi) and Ramotty. He was shocked to see the people virtually reduced to skeletons. Due to lack of food and malnutrition, death was quite frequent. As Nayanar put it "in most houses there is not even a thought about food".[71] On enquiry he learnt that people were in utter penury due to unemployment and the decrease in the price of coconut, which was a major source of their income. Again a village system of credit known as *Undaruthi,* by which the poor people received money on credit base from the wealthy by mortgaging their land with good coconut yield. But in trying situations the villagers fail to repay the amount and the yield from the land continued to be enjoyed by the moneylender. Thus through this system village merchants and moneylenders exploited the people. Besides people could not cultivate anything, as most of their lands were subject to *Japti* (revenue recovery) proceedings on grounds of default in tax payment.[72] The people were subsisting upon what was locally known as *Thalu* and *Thakara* (tender arm of a root (colocasia) and the leaves of a spinach like plant). There was heavy taxation for the cultivation of tapioca and cashew. Nayanar

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[70] Interview with Thayyil Kannan (Rtd Tax officer S/o Ramotty), Keezhariyoor, dated 10-05-2005.

[71] V.R. Nayanar, *Op. cit.*

[72] *Ibid.*

requested the All India Khadi Sangh to begin one of the centers in Keezhariyoor. He urged the government to bring relief to the people of remote villages likes Keezhariyoor. He thought that a scheme for the eradication of rural poverty of Malabar should be evolved based upon upon the experience of Keezhariyoor. He suggested to introduce provision for coir work.[73]

The reports of Nayanar on the famine and distress of the people of Keezhariyoor attracted serious attention of the authorities. Nayanar had discussions with Kelappan, who in his capacity as President of Malabar District Board brought it to the notice of the Malabar Collector. Kelappan further got in touch with the All India Charkha Sangh and urged them to introduce spinning in such villages as a solution to the widespread unemployment.[74] Meanwhile Collector S.Y. Krishna Swami took special interest in the matter and called for a report from the Tahsildar. He further invited V.R. Nayanar for a discussion. He asked Nayanar to prepare a project for village upliftment.[75] The Collector sanctioned an amount of Rs.100 to immediately provide food for the ailing families.

The Deputy Tahsildar with the help of DMRT worker Govinda Varrier visited houses in Keezhariyoor and prepared a list of about 800 people to

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[73] *Ibid.*, Interview with E. Gopalan Master, Keezhariyoor, 10-05-2005.

[74] *Mathrubhumi* daily, 20 August, 1939, p.5.

[75] *Ibid.*

whom one sere rice per head was to be given. Thus 13 sacks of rice was distributed. The District Board President with Health Officer and Nayanar visited houses. The Health Officer Dr. Ananthan Pillai examined patients suffering from typhoid. Assistant district officer Dr. Sekharan gave vaccinations and chlorination of wells was done by the health inspector. The health officer consented to give the services of the assistant district health officer and health inspector for a few days to Keezhariyoor. The condition of the children was extremely pathetic. Nayanar suggested that a crèche with the service of a midwife be opened to look after the children.[76] As typhoid and diarrhoea continued to haunt the people, medical aid was strengthened. Officials of the health department continued to visit the place. Dr. Ananthan Pillai one day provided *Kanji* (rice gruel) to the people.[77]

The poverty of Malabar and the Keezhariyoor famine in particular became a subject of serious concern for the Malayalees outside Kerala. The Madras Kerala Samajam convened a meeting and discussed the reports which appeared in *the Mathrubhumi* on the subject and appealed to its members to make contributions to the people in distress. The meeting passed a resolution requesting the government of Madras to do everything possible to rescue the

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[76] *Mathrubhumi*, 25 August, 1939, p.3., Interview with M.M. Appukutti Nair, Keezhariyoor, 12.4.2005.

[77] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 26 August, 1939, p.8.

people from the perilous condition.[78] The District Health Officer frequently visited the place. He held discussions with Kelappan and C.K. Govindan Nair and with the Divisional Officer and made necessary arrangements to improve the health conditions of the people.[79] Rice distribution was also continuing. The revenue divisional officer K. Ramavarma Raja, Sub Magistrate K.S. Subha Rama Iyyer and the revenue inspector visited Keezhariyoor labour school. In their presence the village officer distributed rice. The RDO personally, investigated the sufferings of the people. The grant of five sacks of rice provided by the government was quite inadequate. The required quantity was procured with the money collected from the government servants and merchants of Koyilandy and Kollam town with the initiative of C.K. Govindan Nair and his colleagues.[80]

In addition to the personal involvement of V.R. Nayanar in the relief activities, an amount of Rs.200 was contributed towards Keezhariyoor famine relief work by the Malabar Distress Relief Committee under the aegis of DMRT.[81] Ananthan Pillai frequently made food (*Kanji*) supply to the students and the poor at the labour school, as a token of charity.[82] Distress caused by

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[78] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 30 August, 1939, p.8.

[79] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 31 August, 1939, p.2; C.K. Govindan Nair was prominent Congress Leader of Malabar.

[80] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 26 August, 1939, p.2.

[81] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 28 August, 1939. p.2.

[82] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 31 August, 1939, p.2; Interview with Raman Master, P. (Head Master), Mannamangalam, Koyilandy, 18.03.2005.

famine and diseases which shook Keezhariyoor for months together was in another sense an eye opener to the social workers, politicians and the authorities to consider seriously the question of the economic backwardness and the consequent poverty and suffering of the people of the remote villages of Malabar. Along with distress relief work, a few constructive programmes in the nature of rural upliftment was also mooted in Keezhariyoor and other villages. The SIS through the DMRT was actively involved in these programmes.

During the years 1940-44 Malabar experienced onslaughts of terrible epidemic like Malaria and cholera. In 1940 Malaria was widespread in Ernad Taluk. The DMRT workers distributed quaina tablets to patients in Arimbra, Amarambalam, Panakkad and Wandoor. The Trust workers frequently visited these areas and about 1935 patients received medicines from them.[83] The Junior Red Cross Society of Neduyirippu Higher Elementary school was actively involved in the work.[84] In Pakkanarpuram the Harijan Sevak Sangh was running an Ayurvedic clinic (*Vydyasala*). In 1941 nearly 3,500 people received medical aid from this centre. The DMRT granted an amount of

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[83] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, DMRT 1939-40 Annual Report", 24 April, 1940, p.4; Interview with T. Narayanan Master, (DMRT worker), Tanur, 19.03.2005.

[84] *Mathrubhumi* daily, "Nediyirippu DMRT Anniversary", 19 March, 1941, p.6.

Rs.50 to the *Vydyasala* in recognition of its services. (V.R. Nayanar was also the president of the Malabar Harijan Sevak Sangh).[85]

During 1942-43 Malabar was a victim of the ravages of cholera. As DMRT worker an eyewitness reports, the disease daily took away the lives of more people. By the end of July nearly 1365 people lost their lives in Tanur itself.[86] As the death toll was increasing, Nayanar with great determination organized a volunteer corps consisting of the teachers of the Tanur DMRT school P. Parameswaran,[87] Kuttikrishna Menon, Choyi Master and Nayanar himself.[88] Disease was extremely acute on Tanur beach area. The ignorant and illiterate people of the area believed that the disease was a divine punishment and so refused to take medicines. Knowing this Nayanar sought the help and support of a respected citizen of the area, Saithalikkutti Master, whose words the people would obey. Since no modern medicines were available, Nayanar procured *Villwadi* tablets (the common Ayurvedic medicine for stomach diseases) from the local medical shops and instructed the volunteers to administer them to the patients.[89] Nayanar enlisted more volunteers for the work as the task of service was extremely difficult. What

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[85] *Mathrubuhum Daily*, 27 November, 1941, p.21.

[86] P. Parameswaran "Ha. Nayanar" *Vettom* 5, 1, Tanur 1984 p.7

[87] Interview with Sreerajamani Teacher (D/o Tanur Paremeswaran), Tanur, 19.03.2005.

[88] Karthat Balachandran "DMRT Smaranakal" *Vettom* 2, 1982; January p.17.

[89] P. Parameswaran *Opcit* p. p.7.

the volunteers saw in each household was in fact the dance of death. As the epidemic spread great panic, people did not even come forward to cremate dead bodies. In many cases they had to bathe the dead bodies and make arrangements for cremation.[90]

Extreme poverty also reigned the days. The people on the beach area had nothing but boiled prawns to eat. Nayanar made arrangements to supply them rice. As starvation became less people could easily recover from illness. When there was shortage of medicine in the market great help was provided by the physician P.S. Varrier of Kottakkal. He supplied large quantities of *Villwadi* tablets and other medicines. V.R. Nayanar made appeal through the press seeking help.[91] Charity flowed from north India in the shape of money, medicine and dress. It was quite risky for the workers to serve among the patients. But the angelic presence of Nayanar was a great consolation for the suffering people.[92] However due to their selfless services the disease began to disappear within two months. For this they were given honorarium in the shape of a bar of Coaltar soap each.[93] For fear of infection the volunteers did not take even food during in day time. By the time government came forward with vaccination programmes, the death toll had gone up to thirty thousand. Even for vaccination DMRT volunteers had to persuade the people. The

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[90] Karthat Balachandran, *Opcit*; Parameswaran, *Ibid.*

[91] P. Parameswaran, *Ibid.*

[92] Thikkodian, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan,* Thrissur, 1998, p.70.

[93] Karthat Balachandran, *Op. cit.*

selfless services rendered by the DMRT volunteers and the able leadership and guidance of Sri. V.R. Nayanar was infact a great healing touch for the people of Malabar in those worse days of extreme suffering.[94] He was able to instill in the young men a sense of fearlessness, commitment and devotion to work.

As cholera began its ravages in North Malabar Nayanar organised volunteers at Gopalapuram. He urged more people to work in this direction. He told them that nursing the sick was a means of purifying human life.[95] The DMRT volunteers had to face very bizarre experiences while serving the patients. Once they had to cremate a body half eaten by dogs. Even the village officials were afraid of going to the patients houses. Another shocking experience was that once they had to remove a feeding baby from a dead mother's breast. Yet another embarrassing experience they had at a Namboodiri house. While the volunteers visited an affected house as directed by Nayanar they found only women there. On enquiry they learnt that the men had gone upstairs two days ago when they started vomiting and did not come down even for food. The women did not go up to look after them due to fear. The volunteers who went upstairs found all the three men lying dead

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[94] Sukumar Kootali, "Aa Jeevitham Oru Samagraveekshanam", *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.22; Karthat Balachandran, *op.cit;* Kadathanat K. Madhavi Amma, "Adersasaliyaya Manushyasnehi", *op.cit* p.28.

[95] Thikkodian, *op.cit.*, pp. 158-159.

and a young boy lying unconscious. Soon they took care of the boy and then cremated the dead.[96]

The disease rendered a number of children destitutes. Nayanar took pains to look after them by setting up orphanages. In Gopalapuram an orphanage was inaugurated by Thakkar Bappa.[97] Nayanar was very much alarmed by the difficulties experienced by the people of Malabar owing to lack of adequate medical aid. Therefore the SIS set up dispensaries known as "Serve India" dispensaries, which were of immense benefit to the people, during the days of cholera and afterwards. At the "Serve India" dispensary at Mathamangalam nearly 10,000 people received medical aid,[98] during this period. Dispensaries were set up in places like Tanur, Madayi, Mathamangalam, Muttam, Pakkanarpuram, Chapparapadavu and Pantheerankavu.[99] Many such dispensaries were set up in remote villages. Qualified Ayurvedic doctors were appointed and consultation and medicines were given freely. Before setting up these dispensaries Nayanar conducted a medical survey in Malabar with the help of a man from Calcutta who was a member of the Indian Medical Mission to China led by Dr. Kotnis. Sri.

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[96] P. Parameswaran, "Ha Nayanar", *Vettom* 5,2, Tanur, 1984, p.21; Interview with T. Narayanan Master, Tanur (DMRT worker), 19 March, 2005.

[97] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 10th October, 1943, p.2.

[98] *Mathrubhumi, Daily*, 7th October, 1943, p.2.

[99] P. Parameswaran, *Op. cit.*, p.21; Also interview with M. Velayudhan, (DMRT worker), 2-03-2004.

Thikkodian had accompanied this team as a guide.[100] As the people experienced great difficulties in respect of medical facilities, Nayanar even thought of starting a co-operative manufacturing unit to supply medicines at low cost to the people.[101]

Wherever people were suffering due to famine, epidemic or natural calamities Nayanar reached there and consoled the people. He once went to Lakadive islands when the people were let down by cyclone and famine.[102] He set sails to the islands in an ordinary boat with rice and other provisions.[103] Similarly when the tribals of Attappadi were afflicted by malaria and famine he went on foot through hostile routes to provide them help.[104]

The onslaught of cholera created an atmosphere of terror in Malabar. Tanur was one of the worst hit areas. People believed that it was a disease for which there was no medicine because it was caused by *Satan.* It was locally known as *thalethatti.* Even the health department of the government was confounded by its ravages because it was incapacitated to check the

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[100] Thikkodian, *Op. cit.*, p.172.

[101] P. Parameswaran, *Op. cit.*

[102] *Mathrubhumi*, Mr. C.K. Nair, "Sri Nayanar", 21 May, 1945, p.4; Thikkodian, *op. cit.*, p.161.

[103] T.P.R. Nambisan, "Sri. V.R. Nayanarute Koote", *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.51.

[104] Mr.C.K. Nair, *Op. cit.*

disease.[105] The inspiring leadership of Nayanar in looking after the patients by organising volunteers was infact a feat in those days. He collected rice, clothes and blankets and distributed them among the patients. When a volunteer caught fever and desired to have a blanket Nayanar purchased one and gave it to him. For he did not want to take one from the collection which was meant for the poor patients. He was thus setting an example in dealing with public property.[106] A.V Thakkar Bappa who visited Malabar during this period was shocked to see that more than 30,000 people died due to the epidemic.[107]

A very important task undertaken by the DMRT during this period was the establishment of several orphanages throughout Malabar. Hundreds of children had become orphans in Malabar as they lost their parents by cholera. Nayanar and his volunteers considered it as their sacred duty to protect these children who were in extreme distress, irrespective of caste and creed.[108] From Madayi in the north to Valappad in the south they set up orphanages. A committee was formed with Rao Bahadur Suryanarayana Iyer as Chairman to chalk out a 10 year scheme for the running of these orphanages and an amount of Rs.4 lakhs was estimated for this purpose. They made

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[105] P. Parameswaran, 'Ha Nayanar', *Vettom*, V. 1, Tanur, 1984, p.7; In North Malabar the disease was also called "Nadappu Deenam" (fast spreading disease).

[106] P. Parameswaran, 'Ha Nayanar', *Vettom*, V.2, 1984, p.21.

[107] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 10 October, 1943, p.2.

[108] Thikkodiyan, *Op. cit.*, p.160.

arrangements to admit 400 children in these centres. Contributions were made by All India Woman's Conference and the government.[109]

In looking after the orphans and destitutes Sri. Nayanar had no consideration of their caste or creed. There were hundreds of children belonging to both Hindu and Muslim community in his orphanages and they were all protected by him with utmost care and affection.[110] He even made arrangements for the circumcision of Muslim boys.[111] But the Muslim leadership in the 1940s who were under the spell of the "two nation theory" cast aspersions on the way Nayanar ran his orphanages. They could not contain the idea of Muslim children living and growing up with Hindu boys, for they feared that such a co-existence would somehow affect their religious observances. So the Muslim leadership insisted that they would take care of the children of their community living in Nayanar's orphanages. The Muslim orphanage at Tirurangadi was started for this purpose.[112] An apostle of communal harmony, and secular view of life, Nayanar was aggrieved by such a demand, for he could not entertain the idea of dividing children in terms of religion. However, he yielded to their demand as he did not want to make it an instance for the occurrence of tension between two communities. When

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[109] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 'Bharatha Sevaka Sanghathinte Report', 18 June 1944, p.3.

[110] Thikkodian, *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.72.

[111] Karthat Balachandran, *Ibid.*, p.40.

[112] Thayat Sankaran, *Ibid.*, p.48.

the J.D.T Islam of Calicut also made a similar demand, he readily agreed to transfer Muslim children to their care.[113]

Among the thirteen orphanages begun by Nayanar in various parts of Malabar the one at Eranjipalam in Calicut was meant for girls (Balaka Sadanamn. It was Nayanar's desire to bring the Harijan girls in various orphanages in one centre.[114] Following the death of Nayanar the centre was called "Nayanar Balika Sadanam" and was looked after by his wife Madhavikkutti Amma, popularly known as Mrs. Nayanar.[115] In the first few years they got meagre grants from the government. But the major expenses were met by donations. Mrs. Nayanar was the Honorary Secretary of the Trust which controlled and managed the Sadanam till her death on 16th July 1985.

The Trust, namely Nayanar Children Home Society was registered on 14th May 1957. The object of the Society was "to help the destitute or orphaned children to bring them up by starting and running children's homes and by providing among other things, protection, food, shelter, education, etc., and help them to grow up as healthy and useful citizens".[116] The

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[113] Karthat Balachandran, *Op. cit.*

[114] K. Janaki Amma, "V.R. Nayanar Balika Sadanam", *V.K. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, pp.32, 33.

[115] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 26 January 2000, p.3.

[116] Nayanar Children's Home's Society, Kozhikode, *Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations*, 1957, p.1.

following were the members of the governing body of the Society: E. Raman Menon, B.A., B.T., retired Educational Officer, Kozhikode (President), Mrs. V.R. Nayanar, Nayanar Balika Sadanam, Kozhikode (Hon. Secretary),. A. Damodaran Nambiar, Sanchalak, Gandhi Ashram, Kozhikode, M. Velayudhan, Secretary, Harijan Samaj, Kozhikode, T. Narayanan, Accountant, SIS Kozhikode, Smt. Leela Damodara Menon, MLA, Ottappalam, Mrs. P.N. Menon, Head Mistress, and Narayana Menon, H.E. School, Panniankara, Kozhikode.[117]

There were in the beginning 54 inmates in the Sadanam. In the initial stages it was very difficult to meet the expenses. They grew vegetables in the Sadanam compound. During harvest seasons Mrs. Nayanar along with Sri. K.M. Raman, a Harijan Sangh worker went out to places like Nanminda to collect paddy. Firewood was collected from the local houses.[118] The Sadanam depended upon public charity. V.M Nair, Editor, Mathrubhumi and V.S Keraleeyan, greatly appreciated the work of the Sadanam and extended support through the press. The Jain Trust at Kalpetta donated Rs.200 regularly.[119]

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[117] *Ibid.*, p.1.

[118] Interview with Ammini Amma (Matron of Sadanam), dated 15.2.2005.

[119] Janaki Amma, *Op. cit.*, p.33.

Inspite of difficulties Mrs. Nayanar gave the girls proper education. Her idea was to sent them in marriage[120] and thus make them self reliant.[121] Mrs. Nayanar made constant requests to benevolent persons and institutions for help. The R.C. Cathedral, Calicut extended their Catholic relief services to the Sadanam, in the shape of food, commodities and bales of used clothes.[122] This was part of the USAID scheme and continued for the next few years. Another source of help was the "Help the Needy Fund, Munnar". Benevolent persons connected with the Munnar plantations extended donations through the scheme.[123] A regular source of help was the Inner Wheel Club, Calicut. They made a monthly donation of Rs.100 regularly. But owing to constraints Mrs. Nayanar very often had to demand the donations in advance.[124] They also supplied uniform clothes to the students every year.[125] Free meals were provided to the inmates by munificent persons and institutions. The Aryavydyasala, Kottakkal used to do so on the death anniversary of its

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[120] See for example invitation for the marriage of following inmates: P. Thankamani on 11 April, 1968; K. Parvathy Bai, on 9 Marh 1972.

[121] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, January 26, 2000, p.3.

[122] Letter of Mrs. V.R. Nayanar dated 10.4.1971, 30.9.1972 to R.C. Cathedral, Calicut.

[123] Letter from Mrs. Viji Arun (14.5.1986) to Mrs. Nayanar; From Gopa Sen Gupta 24.4.1987 to Mrs. Nayanar; Mrs. Veena Appayya, 15.11.1989 to Mrs. Nayanar; Mrs. Devika Singh, 6.1.1992 to Hon. Secretary, Sadanam.

[124] Letter dated 24.3.1983 to the President, Inner Wheel Club, Calicut.

[125] Mrs. Nayanar, Letter to President, Inner Wheel Club, Calicut dated 1.7.1981, 9.7.1983.

founder P.S. Varrier and his mother.[126] Donations were also made by YMCA, Calicut and by individual persons.[127]

The Nayanar Balika Sadanam was a great protection to hundreds of girls belonging to Harijan and other backward classes of Malabar who were rendered helpless or orphaned either by epedemics or by extreme poverty and other misfortunes. V.R. Nayanar was infact a father figure to the inmates owing to his affection and kindness. After his death Mrs. Nayanar took up its work as Hon. Secretary. The inmates began to address her as mother.[128] Like her husband, she was also extremely devoted to the cause of the destitutes. But for this yeoman endeavour many would have been spoiled or drawn into wretched conditions. After Mrs. Nayanar's death the Sadanam was looked after by Ammini Amma who had been a constant colleague of Mrs. Nayanar in her ventures for more than two decades. She is also supported and helped by her son Suresh Babu. Both of them with the help of local people strive to keep the memory of the Nayanars alive.

The SIS activities in Kerala started with relief work rendered to the victims of the Malabar Rebellion. During the course of their work SIS

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[126] Managing Trustee of Aryavydyasala, letter dated 28.8.1979 to Nayanar Children's Home Society.

[127] Mrs. Nayanar's Letter to Lancelot, 23.12.1978; C.K. Ramdas, Calicut, Letter dated 4.2.1989; H.V. Shah, Letter dated 14.4.1986; M. Ahammed Koya, Letter dated 27.5.1987.

[128] Interview with Smt. Ammini Amma at Balika Sadanam dated 22.1.2004; Interview with T. Suresh Babu (Secretary of Balika Sadanam) dated 2.3.2004.

workers gained a thorough knowledge about the pitiable condition of the people of Malabar. They learned that the people of Malabar were not only victims of the rebellion but much more than that they had been victims of several social evils, illiteracy, superstitions, untouchability and pollution, economic backwardness, poverty and cultural alienation all made the life of the toiling masses quite miserable. It was these vital lessons which informed and inspired the DMRT to undertake larger schemes for relief linked up with programmes for education, rural reconstruction and social reform. In order to make the people aware of themselves and to make them conscious of their rights and duties the DMRT saw education as pivotal to their programmes.

## 2. Educational Activities

The role of education in social change has been widely recognised. Educational institutions play an important part in most societies as agents of social control, cultural change and social selection.[1] Accordingly educational, humanitarian interventions were increasingly perceived as regional responses that make sense, not only from the purely humanitarian and social point of view but also from the point of view of the future economic development of countries in crisis.[2] Education is therefore described as a process by which the inherent potential for excellence, creativity and receptivity which is present in all human being is developed to its maximum extent. It is only by participating in the productive forces that the child can emerge as a self confident, self-reliant and socially productive citizen. Nationalist leaders like Gokhale and his disciple Mahatma Gandhi had realised that education had a potential role in the struggle for freedom. Gokhale had taken pains to introduce an Elementary Education Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council. He was one of the earliest to spearhead the cause of universal education in India.[3] Mahatma Gandhi had evolved the idea of basic education as part of his

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[1] Vijayakumari Kaushik & S.R. Sharma (ed), *Education and Social Thought*, New Delhi, 1997,p.1.

[2] Gonzalo Retamal and Ruth Aedo Richmond, (ed) *Education as a Humanitarian Response,* Unesco, 1998, p.3.

[3] *Speeches of G.K. Gokhale*, Third edition, Madras, 1920, pp.606-632.

Wardha Scheme.[4] Basic education is the education of life, through life and for the sake of life. The aim of education is a good life, one in which a man develops his individual potentialities and becomes thereby a useful member of the community in which he lives. Such a comprehensive system of education encompasses the physical mental moral, cultural and spiritual aspects of human personality. This is viewed as the basis of healthy social relationship.[5]

Universalisation of Education has been recognised as essential in achieving the goals of progressive social transformation. The concept "education for all" still continues to be the dream of our academics and governments, for education lays the foundation, on which rests the future of a country. It has now been realised that beginning with the elementary stage, education has a crucial contribution to make towards promoting national integration, understanding and a sense of togetherness and harmony. Thus from a national perspective, programmes have been evolved in the national plans for the education of adult illiterates, and for continuing education.[6]

The national policy on education envisaged that the school and the community should be brought closer through suitable programmes of mutual

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[4] K.J. Abraham, *J.C. Kumarappa: Gandhian Arthasasthrathinte Acharyan*, Kottayam, 1999, p.25.

[5] Uttam Kumar Singh & A.K. Nayak, *Basic Education*, New Delhi, 1977, p.1.

[6] Dr. Digumarti Bhaskara Rao, *Education for All*, New Delhi, 2004, "Preface".

service and support. It was laid down that through work experience and national service programmes for community service, national reconstruction should become an integral part of education.[7] The emphasis in these programmes was of course on self-help, character formation and on developing a sense of social commitment. Besides, the acculturating role of education was also taken into account in the national policy. As an acculturating agency, education refines sensibilities, sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit. It would thus further the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our constitution. In this sense education is an unique investment in the present and the future.[8]

Indian academics were toying with the idea of making education functional. Even before independence it was thought advisable to present for the consideration of the student ideal situations, which correspond, to those, which he would later find. It was the "application" of knowledge that matters in the school or in the world. In place of information in cold storage it was "usable knowledge and knowledge in use," that was desired from a student as a professor of education put it as early as in 1930,

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[7] J.C. Aggarwal, S.P. Agrawal, *National Policy on Education: Ajenda for India 2001*, New Delhi, 1989, p.9.

[8] *Ibid.*, p.36.

> We shall then test not merely what a boy knows, but whether he knows how to use his knowledge, whether his skill or knowledge will function when necessary. As Ruskin puts it, "all knowledge is lost that ends in the knowing." The only adequate test of school education is action. The nearer we can reproduce in our tests the conditions, which will confront the child in adult life, the better.[9]

Nationalist leaders like Lala Lajpath Ray also cherished the ideal of a national education. He was opposed to the traditional forms of educational seclusion. "A system of education", he says,

> that stresses the authority of the parent or the teacher, which is based on a suspicion of human nature and human tendencies, which is distrustful of childhood and youth, which is openly out for control and discipline and subordination which favours empirical methods of pedagogy, which has no respect for the instinct of the boy and the girl, is not an ideal system for the production of self reliant, aggressive (in order to be progressive) men and women that new India wants.[10]

The above introductory note is intended to provide a perspective on the educational work of the DMRT. As an educational agency the DMRT had rendered commendable services in Malabar, in the years following the Malabar Rebellion. During their visit to the areas affected by the rebellion

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[9] Dr. G.S. Krishnayya (Prof. of Education Mysore University), "The idea of Function in Education," *The Indian Review*, Vol.XXXI, Bombay, 1930, p.164.

[10] Lajpath Rai, *The Problem of National Education in India*, New Delhi, 1920, Foreword.

G.K. Devadhar and his associates were convinced of the educational backwardness of Malabar. They were led to the conclusion that lack of education was one of the main reasons for the outbreak of the rebellion.[11] Accordingly when the DMRT was formed education was recognised as an area in which systematic work was to be undertaken. With this aim in view DMRT established several schools and associated service units in various parts of Malabar (see list below).[12]

| | Schools | Service Units |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Tanur HE School | Weaving section; Agricultural and Poultry Farm; Weavers' Co-operative Society and Depot. |
| 2. | Gopalapuram HE School (Panthalayani, P.O. Mudadi) | Gray Boarding; Home for Harijans; Agricultural Farm and Colony. |
| 3. | Feroke: Adult Education Centre | Labour Co-operative Stores |
| 4. | Nediyirip HE School | Farm |
| 5. | Melmuri: Night School | Reading Room |
| 6. | Panakkad: Moplah Elementary School | |
| 7. | Wandur: Day and Night Schools | Child Welfare Centre |
| 8. | Panamanna: Day School | Farm |
| 9. | Thrithala Moplah Day School and Night School. | |

These schools and service units were very systematically run by the DMRT.[13] The teachers of these schools were not merely academics. They

[11] Karthat Balachandran, "*DMRT Smaranakal*," Vettom, Tanur, 25 October 1981, Vol.II, p.11; Interview with Tanur Parameswaran, on 10 January 2000.

[12] File No. R. Dis 87/38, dated 17-12-1938, pp.19,23, RAK.

[13] Karthat Balachandran, "DMRT Smaranakal," *Vettom*, Tanur, December 25th 1981, Vol.2, p.17; Also see, R.Dis No.87/38, dt. 17.12.38, RAK, p.19.

worked as social service volunteers. Though musical programmes and dramatic performance they tried to spread the message of social reform. They extended organisational support to the agricultural development also. The teachers went round the villages and campaigned against social and religious evils, like animal and foul sacrifices in temples. Besides they were actively engaged in alleviating the distress of the people suffering from diseases, poverty, epidemics and instances of fire.[14]

The service units run along with the schools were intended to make the people self-reliant. This was necessary from various counts. In a caste-ridden society it was necessary for the untouchables and the backward classes to stand on their own. A sense of self-respect also was fostered through the vocational programmes. The DMRT was also guided by the educational views of Gokhale, the master of the Servants of India Society, for whom swadeshism meant all these ideals.[15]

During the above period the system of education was not uniform in Malabar. There were schools run by the Christian Missionaries, separate schools for the Adidravidas, the schools for the Pamchamas and Moplah schools. The schools run by missionaries like Basel Mission imparted education without any discrimination. The missionaries stressed the

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[14] Karthat Balachandran, *Ibid*, p.18; Interview with T. Assanarkutti, Tanur, dated March 20, 2002.

[15] *Speeches of G.K. Gokhale*, "The Swadeshi Movement," 9th Feb. 1907, Public Address at Lucknow, p.958-974.

brotherhood and equal rights of all mankind, and laid the foundation for universal education.[16]

The DMRT realised the importance of vocational education. It was perhaps the earliest agency to link education with life processes. Their schools followed a special syllabus. As part of curriculum, vocational subjects like spinning, weaving, bee farming, poultry and papermaking were introduced in the DMRT schools. The workers of the Trust also urged the people to pursue these vocations as means of achieving self-reliance.[17] In this connection it has to be noticed that after independence both academics and the government began serious consideration on vocationalisation of education only in the 1970s. This has been found to be necessary in the personal and social process of working life and occupational choice, and the matching of human capabilities in the labour Market.[18] The Ishwar Bhai Patel Committee (1977-78) recommended that work experience or Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) should be made an integral component of the curriculum at the stages of school education. The SUPW was described as "purposive meaningful manual work resulting in either goods or services which are useful to the community." The objective of the programme was "to provide the children opportunities for participating in social and economic activities

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[16] Luella Cole, *A History of Education: Socrates to Montessori*, New York, 1950, pp.109-110.

[17] P. Parameswaran master, "Ha Nayanar," *Vettom*, Tanur, 1984, Vol.V, p.7.

[18] V.K. Rao, *Vocation and Technical Education*, Delhi, 1999, p.V.

inside and outside the classroom and enable them to understand scientific principles and processes involved in different types of work."[19]

The DMRT's initiative at vocationalisation of education was received with great enthusiasm. In Travancore Legislature a resolution was moved by M.R. Madhava Varrier for the introduction of spinning as part of education and was approved by the government.[20] That way education began to be viewed as a constructive programme. When Gandhi began the Village Industries Movement, with such programmes, it was recognised as embodying, a great ideal of social good because it signified" an economics of decentralisation, of self-sufficiency and of lasting peace."[21] Education was not simply a process of imparting knowledge. It had deeper and wider implications than mere literacy. As Gandhi himself explained about his Basic Education (Nai Talim) scheme, it was endowed with an emancipatory potential:

> My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding, etc. is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far reaching consequences. It will provide a

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[19] Dr. K. Sivarajan, *Education in the Emerging Indian Society,* Calicut University, 1997, p.211.

[20] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, Kozhikode, 31 December, 1925, p.7.

[21] G. Ramachandran & D.K. Gupta, "The Village Industries Movement," In S.K. George and G. Ramachandra (eds) *The Economics of Peace: The Cause and the Man,* Wardha, 1952, p.236.

> healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages, and lay the foundation of a jester social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' 'and have-nots', and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom."[22]

The first task of the Servants of India Society in Kerala was to provide relief to the victims of the Malabar Rebellion. Along with relief work the Society also took up on itself the responsibility of extending educational opportunities to the people. It was also felt necessary to undertake large scale reconstruction work in Malabar especially in areas were people suffer most in social and educational backwardness. With a view to provide an organisational frame work to carry out work in these different areas the DMRT was formed in 1924. As part of its educational operations the Trust started literacy classes, night schools, day schools and social awareness programmes.

In 1925 the SIS made arrangements to start a night school at Tanur for the education of "Adidravidas". The Adidravidas were Harijans, locally known as "Cherumakkal". The plan was to give them instruction in one or

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[22] Cited in E.W. Aryanayakam, "The Nai Talim Movement" (Basic Education), *Ibid.*, p.238.

two hours during night.[23] This was developed into a Higher Elementary School by 1926,[24] and was evidently the first school established by the DMRT. Most of its teachers were active workers of Trust. The school soon developed into a model educational institution with an active interest and involvement in local problems. Students were also given instruction in public hygiene. In 1926 the school decided to organise an agricultural exhibition, which was agreed to by the Deputy Director Agriculture.[25] The students were given scout training with a view to make them service minded.[26]

The school curriculum had a vocational emphasis in tune with the educational ideals of SIS. Tanur School had a weaving section. The weaving instructor R.C. Paul, a man from Tamil Nadu was a committed teacher. He was also in charge of gardening. Through these vocational subjects a sense of social commitment was imparted to the students. Students belonging to upper and lower castes learned through these works the importance of joining a programme for social well-being. Karthat Balachandran, one of the students of the school later gratefully acknowledged the value of his training at the Tanur School in moulding him as a social worker among the untouchables.[27]

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[23] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, Kozhikode 12 November 1925, p.7.

[24] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 28 September 1926, p.91.

[25] *Ibid.*, p.9.

[26] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 15th June 1927, p.9.

[27] Karthat Balachandran, "DMRT Smarana," *Vettom*, Tanur, 1982, May, Vol.III, p.19.

In 1927 V.R. Nayanar became the Head Master of the Tanur School. The school catered to the educational needs of the people around Tanur within a radius of five miles. During Nayanar's term the school made steady progress. As was pointed out in its third annual report the school which began with twelve students and one teacher in a single room, in its third year grew to the size of 93 students, 4 classes and 5 teachers. A remarkable feature of this school was that in addition to teaching usual subjects, the school served as a centre of inspiration in adopting new methods of agriculture and industry as means to eradicate poverty. The school also served as a corrective to social evils and superstitions. Imparting motivation for harmonious co-existence and co-operation between different communities and love of mother tongue and motherland. The school aimed at inculcating in the people a sense of selfless and honest social service.[28]

The school encouraged the students to participate and to become proficient in artistic and cultural activities. The school had a reading room in which important news papers like *The Hindu, Mathrubhumi, Malayala Manorama, Young India* and *Malayala Rajyam* and a few magazines were made available for both the students and the public. Similarly through the meetings of literary association, contemporary issues were discussed. An anti

[28] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 26 Janury, 1930, p.8.

untouchability day was also observed. The students were also taken for excursions.[29]

During this period anti untouchability campaign was gaining momentum all over India. An anti-untouchability conference was held at Belgam presided over by C.R. Reddy.[30] Commending the work done by Gandhi in this direction Reddy suggested that the Hindu community had to take upon itself the task of reform. He suggested methods like establishment of model colonies, religious reforms and mixed dining should be adopted for this purpose. On the part of the government he demanded actions like new legislation and provision for compulsory education and arrangement for cultivation by the lower communities. In Kerala K. Kelappan, popularly known as Kelappaji or Kerala Gandhi, spearheaded anti-untouchability campaign. He was very much concerned about the plight of the untouchable communities of Malabar.[31] He entered into politics in a period in which men drove out men in the name of caste. A witness to their miseries, he was convinced of the need to educate and reform them. And when a Harijan

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[29] *Ibid.*, p.8; Interview with P. Parameswaran Master, Tanur, January 10, 2000.

[30] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 6 Janury, 1925, p.2.

[31] K. Kelappan, "Jeevithavum Nhanum," *Kelappan Smaraka Grandham*, Kozhikode, 1972, p.138.

upliftment wing was formed within Congress, Kelappan was in charge of its Kerala unit.[32]

In 1925 Kelappan started a school for the education of depressed classes. Set up at Pavoor Kunnu (Moodadi) near Koyilandy, the school was inaugurated by the great Malayalam poet Vallathol on 28th September 1925.[33] Born in a high caste Nair family it was indeed a hazardous task for Kelappan to work for the cause of the untouchables. He had to work defying mounting protest.[34] In his report Kelappan explained that his idea was to teach, feed and rehabilitate the Harijan students. He emphasised the need to develop a sense of equality among the people. He argued that the notion of untouchability was quite absurd. He asked, if on pollution a caste Hindu should bathe, how often should God their creator do so. He further sought public support for their cause.[35]

While starting the school Kelappan idea was to make it a centre which would give guidance to the Harijans of that area for their future life. In addition to traditional wage labour to which they were accustomed, he

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[32] K.M. Raman, "Pavangalute Athmabandhu," *Ibid.*, pp.144-45.

[33] *Mathrubhumi* Daily, 25 September, 1925, p.3; Also see P.T. Bhaskara Panikkar, "Kelappante Pravarthanangal," *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 11, September 1988, p.10.

[34] Prof. M.P. Manmadhan, *Kelappan*, Kottayam, 1991.

[35] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, *Op.cit.*, p.4.

thought of training them in masonory, carpentry and smithy.[36] Kelappan had received severe opposition from the Thiyyas and Nairs. The Thiyyas were extremely antagonistic to Kelappan. They frequently attacked and insulted the Harijan students of this school. They protested that since Nairs like Kelappan were not observing pollution they had to do so.[37] However he taught the Harijan boys good manners and hygienic practices. There they followed an interesting method of teaching in which there was no element of compulsion. He also constructed about 15 houses near the school to accommodate Pulaya families. For this purpose an amount of Rs.7,000 was sanctioned to him by Malabar Flood Relief Committee and the amount was entrusted with DMRT.[38]

As Kelappan had to turn to other parts of Kerala in connection with the campaign for the upliftment of depressed classes, he decided to entrust the school with the DMRT. Besides, it was very difficult for him to raise funds required necessary for the running of the school. He was confident that the DMRT was a bonafide organisation which could run the school properly Kelappan declared that following his own inclination as well as the advice of Mahatma Gandhi he would be devoting his life for the service of the

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[36] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, "Pavoor Dravida Vidyalayam" Kelappan's Public Appeal, 12 November, 1925, p.3.

[37] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 2nd January 1926, p.8.

[38] *Op.cit.*, p.3.

Harijans.[39] The school was handed over to DMRT in April 1926, but Kelappan continued to be associated with the school because attack on the Harijan boys by the local Thiyyas was quite frequent.[40] On taking charge of the school, the Honourary Secretary of the DMRT, R. Suryanarayana Rao issued a public appeal seeking financial assistance from the people, since the school being a boarding one its daily expense was high.[41]

Educational backwardness of Malabar was mainly due to the social stratification of the area. Casteism and consequent economic inequality resulted in a social imbalance. Slavery was practised in an acute form. Depressed classes like *Cherumars* and *Vannans* formed the bulk of the slaves. Both the upper castes and Thiyyas considered them as slaves.[42] The relevance of the SIS and DMRT as reforming agencies lies in this complex social situation.

The Adidravida School at Pavoor Kunnu, on being handed over to DMRT, was renamed as Gokhale School and the colony was called

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[39] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 11 May, 1926, p.3. Also see, Karthat Balachandran, "Kelappajiyekkurichorkkumbol", *Swadeshi* Evening Daily, Palakkad, Octo. 9, 2001, p.3.

[40] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, May 25, 1926, p.7.

[41] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, September 11, 1926, p.5.

[42] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, "Malabarile Adimakal," 9 October, 1926, p.9.

Gopalapuram after the name of the master of the SIS.[43] The school continued its Harijan reform work with greater enthusiasm. Vocational training in coir work, handicrafts and weaving were imparted to the students. There were also weekly Bhajans in which the Harijans of the colony participated actively. by attending these *bhajans* Harijan women began to appear in public wear 'rouka' and blouse,[44] which was a great event in those days of caste rigidity and practice of pollution. Mahatma Gandhi himself had noticed the social and educational backwardness of the people of Malabar during his Harijan tour and had stated that "Malabar was the blackest spot in the untouchability map of India, the worst forms of these practices were to be found in Malabar."[45]

The reputation of Gopalapuram School reached far and wide. Harijan students from distant places like Kannur were, on completion of their primary schooling, recommended to Gopalapuram School for further studies.[46] Eminent men of letters like P.C. Kuttikrishnan (Uroob), Thikkodiyan, Sanjayan (M.R. Nair) and C.H. Kunhappa associated themselves with the

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[43] Interview with P. Raman Master (H.M), Mannamangalam, Koyilandy on 18 March, 2005. Also see, C.H. Kunhappa, *Smaranakal Mathram*, Thrissur, 2000; p.142; Prof. M.P. Manmadhan, *Op.cit.*, p.45.

[44] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 29 June, 1933, p.3.

[45] *Harijan*, Vol.I, Feb. 1934, London, 1973, p.230.

[46] Taha Madayi, "Sayipkali" (Interview with Kanjiradi a Harijan woman of Ezhom, Kannur district who received her school education in the 1930s acknowledges this fact. Her mother however did not allow her to got to Koyilandy due to fear) *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 4, June 2006, p.18.

school. Thikkodiyan and C.H. Kunhappa were teachers of the school for sometime. When Thikkodiyan lost his job owing to participation in the teachers strike, he had a chance meeting with V.R. Nayanar who appointed him as a teacher at Gopalapuram.[47] Kunhappa worked as the superintendent of the colony, Head Master of the school and warden of the hostel. Though a low paid job, he took it up as it was an occasion for him to serve the Adidravida community. Students from various parts of Malabar like Thalassery, Ferok, Ottappalam and Kozhikode sought admission in the school. They belonged to various sub sections of Adidravidas like Pulayas, Pariahs and Kanakkans. Many important personalities, both nationalist leaders as well as government officials visited the school. Minister of Madras Muthuranga Muthaliyar, Labour Commissioner, Gray, SIS Vice President. Hridayanath Kunzru and President of All India Harijan Sevak Sangh. Thakkar Bappa visited the school. Kunhappa's service was greatly appreciated by Suryanarayana Rao. But he had to leave the school to take up position as the editor of *Mathrubhumi* in 1930 in place of Kelappan who relinquished editorship to join the Salt Sathyagraha.[48]

Before setting up the school and Harijan colony, Pavoor Kunu was a barren hill. As the school and colony came up it soon developed into a fertile land. The 12-acre land was developed into a good farm full of cashew trees,

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[47]Thikkodiyan, *Arangukanatha Nadan*, Thrissur, 1998, pp.142-3.

[48] C.H. Kunhappa, *Op.cit.*, pp.139-150.

mango trees, tamarind, sapota, orange and jackfruit trees. They also cultivated pineapple. There were thatched houses for Harijan families and a hostel for the students. The school was the central building and adjacent to it was the Head Master's quarters. There was a workshop for training in weaving, and spinning, papermaking and other handicrafts.[49] Gopalapuram campus was thus an ideal place for the education and training of Harijan boys.

The teachers of the school were in fact known as DMRT workers, for they were not confined to the limited sphere of preparing the students for an examination. Instead they combined in themselves teacher, social worker, artist and nationalist, all rolled into one.[50] The teachers also stayed along with the Harijans. That they were all *savarnas* was an index of the growing sense of nationalism among the elites of Malabar. The school gradually developed into a model centre of education, with good building, good teachers, and efficient instruction. The only condition to join the school was that one should be free from the sense of pollution and untouchability.[51] Since pollution and untouchability were acute, there were separate arrangements made for the education of the *avarna* children. Such schools were known as

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[49] Thikkodiyan, *Op.cit.*, p.143; Interview with Perachan Master Moodadi, Craft Instructor of the School, on 31 March, 2005; Interview with Ravunni, Gopalapuram Colony, Moodadi, 31.03.2005.

[50] Thikkodiyan, *Op.cit.*, p.144.

[51] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, June 29, 1933, p.3.; Also see Thikkodian *Op.cit.*, p.145.

Panchama schools.[52] But the Gopalapuram school was blazing a new trail from the prevailing mode of education for depressed classes by breaking away from the seperatist system and by attracting the *savarna* children also to study with *avarnas*.

With the approval of the industries department a rural industrial school was also started at Gopalapuram. It was intended to give training in cottage industries like manufacture of hand made paper, coir mating and soap manufacture. In 1940, 32 persons received training from this school.[53] P.P. Menon, who received training at Wardha, was in charge of the manufacture of handmade paper. Papermaking was very important because paper was an imported good in those days. As part of the boycott of foreign goods, hand made paper was encouraged. Many young men from various parts of Malabar came to Gopalapuram to receive industrial training. They include the Communist leader P.V. Kunhikkannan and the renowned writer P.C. Kuttikrishnan (Uroob).[54]

After handing the Pavoor Adidravida school to the DMRT, Kelappan continued to work for the cause of the untouchables. He was greatly inspired by the devoted work of Swami Sradhananda for the above cause in north India. Swami Sradhananda was assassinated on 27 December 1926 by a

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[52] Thikkodiyan, *Op.cit.*, p.145.

[53] *Mathrubhumi Daily,* 24 April, 1940, p.4.

[54] Thikkodiyan, *Op.cit.*, p.153.

fanatic at his residence, on the misunderstanding that the Swami's work for the reform of the Hindu community especially among the depressed classes was a threat to the Muslim community.[55] The incident invited countrywide protest because the Swami was a patriot who was concerned about the general welfare of the people of India, irrespective of communal considerations.[56] In memory of the Swami, Kelappan started a school at Nallambrakkunnu (Iringath) near Payyoli town.[57] Advocate Ambadi Nambiar inaugurated the school named Sradhanada Vidhyalayam, on 30 January 1927.[58] On this occasion Kelappan exhorted that the prosperity of India would be complete only when the depressed classes become educated and satisfied.[59]

The DMRT Honarary Secretary V.R. Nayanar and his co-workers were frequently associated with Kelappan's programmes. The school soon became a centre where eminent social and political activists assembled to discuss problems. In fact the political career of nationalist leaders like A.K. Gopalan, Moyarath Sankaran, Swami Ananda Theertha all began from this centre. Leaders like Gandhi, V.V. Giri, Thakkar Bappa, and Vinoba Bhave visited the

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[55] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 28 December, 1926, p.3.

[56] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, Editorial, 28 December, 1926, p.2.

[57] Prof. M.P. Manmadan, *Op.cit.*, p.46; also see T.K. Rayarappan Nair, "Gandhiji Thamasicha Pakkanarpuram", in *Chilla Malayala Masika*, Kozhikode, October 1998, pp.36- 37.

[58] K. Kunhikrishnan Nair, "Ente Ammavan," *Kelappan Smaraka Grandham*, Kozhikode,1972, p.160; Also see M.P. Manmadhan, "Kelappajiyum Sarvodaya Prasthanavum" *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, Septermber 11-17, 1988, p.7.

[59] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 25 January, 1927, p.5; 1 Feb. 1927, p.5.

school.[60] It was Gandhi who formally renamed Nallambrakkunnu as Pakkanarpuram after the legendary mystic Pakkanar. Nayanar and Kelappan were infact adored by the people of Malabar especially the depressed classes.[61]

At Nediyirippu near Kondotty, the DMRT established a Higher Elementary school. Great care was taken for the education of Muslim and Harijan children. There were units of Scout and Junior Red Cross in the school. They were at the forefront of relief activities during Malaria and other epidemics. The school also functioned as a centre for rural upliftment along with educational work.[62] Like other DMRT schools the students were encouraged in artistic and cultural activities. Muslim students were also given religious education.[63] As part of vocational education spinning was included in the curriculum. Harijan students were given mid-day meal, with the special assistance sanctioned by Kelappan, who was then President of Malabar District Board.[64] The DMRT took special interest in the education of Muslim girls of Ernad. According to the Trust's report for 1939-49, three Muslim girls who completed VIIIth Standard from the Nediyirippu school were

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[60] K. Kunhikrishnan Nair, *Op.cit.*, pp.160, 161.

[61] C.H. Radha, (An inmate of Gopalapuram colony) "Nayanarum Kelappajiyum," *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika,* Kannur, 1984, p.47.

[62] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 19 March, 1941, p.6.

[63] Interview with Theruvath Raman, dated, 20-5-2005.

[64] P.G. Pattambi, *Kerala Gandhi*, Calicut, 1971, pp.35-6.

Gopalapuram after the name of the master of the SIS.[43] The school continued its Harijan reform work with greater enthusiasm. Vocational training in coir work, handicrafts and weaving were imparted to the students. There were also weekly Bhajans in which the Harijans of the colony participated actively. by attending these *bhajans* Harijan women began to appear in public wear 'rouka' and blouse,[44] which was a great event in those days of caste rigidity and practice of pollution. Mahatma Gandhi himself had noticed the social and educational backwardness of the people of Malabar during his Harijan tour and had stated that "Malabar was the blackest spot in the untouchability map of India, the worst forms of these practices were to be found in Malabar."[45]

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[43] Interview with P. Raman Master (H.M), Mannamangalam, Koyilandy on 18 March, 2005. Also see, C.H. Kunhappa, *Smaranakal Mathram*, Thrissur, 2000; p.142; Prof. M.P. Manmadhan, *Op.cit.*, p.45.

[44] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 29 June, 1933, p.3.

[45] *Harijan*, Vol.I, Feb. 1934, London, 1973, p.230.

[46] Taha Madayi, "Sayipkali" (Interview with Kanjiradi a Harijan woman of Ezhom, Kannur district who received her school education in the 1930s acknowledges this fact. Her mother however did not allow her to got to Koyilandy due to fear) *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 4, June 2006, p.18.

admitted to Muslim High School at Malappuram. This was the first instance of Muslim girls pursuing high school education in Ernad Taluk.[65]

The DMRT realised that in the remote villages of Malabar the large mass of the people were handicaped by illiteracy. Consequently they were leading a miserable life in abject poverty and unhygienic conditions. Superstitions and lack of initiative hampered their growth. As they had to work hard during daytime they can be taught only during night. In the existing conditions it was not an easy task to extent to them the benefit of education. Therefore, the DMRT took pains to organise night schools and reading rooms throughout Malabar. In 1930 July, they began rural reconstruction centers, night schools and reading rooms at various places. The following table reveals the increase of learners in each center within one month.[66]

| Centre | Enrolment on the opening day | Enrolment within one month |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Ferok | 4 | 40 |
| 2. Tirur | 24 | 51 |
| 3. Kottakkal | 16 | 57 |
| 4. Thirurangadi | 15 | 39 |
| 5. Mangatteri | 15 | 51 |

[65] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, V.R. Nayanar, "DMRT Annual Report 1939-40" 24 April 1940, p.4.

[66] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 24 August, 1930, p.7.

Even before1930, night schools were conducted in Tanur and surrounding places and at Gopalapuram, Koyilandy. In Ferok an adult education centre was functioning for the tile factory workers. In all these centres the programmes included Harikatha renderings, magic lantern exhibitions, songs, prayer and newspaper reading. Through these activities, the learners were enthused to understand new things and gain knowledge. Those who attended these programmes gradually refrained from unhealthy habits like frequenting of liquor shops. Several newspapers and journals like *The Hindu, Manorama, Aikyam, Deepam, The Servant of India, Lakshmi Bhai* and *Malayalam* were made freely available to them. Moreover they had plans to start libraries, demonstration farms and co-operative societies. These were intended as means for social transformation and political awakening.[67] The DMRT was instrumental in sprearheading the library movement in Malabar. Following their model reading room were set up in all villages.

In May 1934 the Trust started night schools and libraries at Thrithala, Ponnani, Malappuram and Manjeri. In Malappuram, Kondotty and Manjeri they also started childcare centers. V.R. Nayanar visited these centers frequently and gave necessary advices and instructions. He was able to obtain the help and support of the Malabar Collector, A.R. Mac Evan and authorities

[67] *Ibid.*, p.7.

of the education and the co-operative departments in running these centers.[68] In 1937 a night school was started at Kappil desom of Wandoor with the help of Manavikraman Thirumulpad of Kappil Kovilakam. This area was educationally very backward and there were more than 200 children who were to be admitted in a school. The Raja appreciated the work of the Trust and donated a spacious building and 2 acres of land to the DMRT. The senior Raja of Nilambur inaugurated a village welfare centre there on 9 April 1937 at a function attended by V.R. Nayanar.[69] It had a primary school to which 33 students joined on the first day itself, of which 30 were Harijan students. The centre was intended to give training in agriculture and handicrafts.[70]

Apart from the above centers, there were schools and training centers at Panakkad (Mappila Elementary School), Wandoor (day school), Panamanna (day school) and Thrithala (Mappila day school).[71] Schools were also established at Nilambur, Amarambalam, Kannur and Wayanad.[72]

Education was a subject in which governmental initiative was quite inadequate. A comprehensive scheme for universal elementary education was necessary. But instead of taking steps to bring more children to classes the

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[68] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, May 5, September 19, November 25, 1934; 6 February, 1937, p.8.

[69] *Mathrubhumi Daily,* 10 April 1939, p.10.

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] R. Dis No.87/38, *Op.cit.*, p.19.

[72] Interview with P. Parameswaran Master, Tanur, 10, January, 2000.

government thought of withdrawing the approval and grant of several elementary schools, which were continuing as single teacher schools.[73] Harijans and Muslims of Malabar[74] were extremely backward in education. When the Malabar District Board resolved to remove the labels 'Hindu' and 'Mappila' from the names of schools under the Board and to standardise their names as Board schools, there was protest from the Muslim community. They feared that the action of the Board would hamper the progress of Muslim education.[75] It was under these circumstances that Nayanar urged the Government to introduce a scheme of compulsory education for the Harijans. He presented the following data in support of his arguments:

Literary rate of different communities – in one thousand.[76]

| Community | 1901 | 1911 | 1921 | 1931 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brahmins | 447 | 428 | 447 | 570 |
| Nairs | 244 | 244 | 280 | 377 |
| Harijans | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 |

The following was the condition of Malabar in respect of population.[77]

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[73] *Al Ameen*, 8 December, 1936, p. 2.

[74] V.R. Nayanar, "Harijanodharanathinulla Oru Padhathi". *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, Thulam 16, 1937. (Kshethrapravesana Viseshal Prathi).

[75] *Al Ameen, Op.cit.*, p.7.

[76] V.R. Nayanar, *Op. cit.*

[77] *Ibid.*

| Community | Percentage of population | Percentage of literacy |
|---|---|---|
| Brahmins | 2 | 47 |
| Christians | 2 | 40 |
| Other Hindus | 53 | 19 |
| Muslims | 33 | 7 |
| Harijans | 10 | 1 |

On the basis of above facts and figures. Nayanar called upon the government to bestow special attention in respect of the education of Harijans. Nayanars suggestions relieved due consideration as Kelappaji was elected president of Malabar District Board in 1938. At his instance several Elementary schools were approved and more teachers appointed. For he believed that the growth of Elementary education was essential for the future prosperity of the country keeping this in view. He personally saw that more children from the Harijan community joined the schools. With the help of local people he made arrangements to provide them mid day meal. He also started the practice of giving regular salary to the teachers.[78] An important recommendation of Nayanar was to appoint Harijans in Government departments. This should be done even by withholding the appointment from high caste men for a few years, so that adequate number of educated Harijans could be ensured in the government departments. [79]

[78] P.G. Pattambi, *Op. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

[79] *Ibid.*

The DMRT's work in the field of education was always community linked. Through active extension programmes they could impart a sense of self-respect and self-reliance to the people. They realised that education could be used as a means of social transformation. They envisaged an educational practices which rather than being a process of cramming knowledge was to be a productive practice. The DMRT's thrust in vocationalisation, social extension and cultural awakening are aspects which are seriously discussed and recommended even by present day academicians, not only as part of school instruction but also of higher education curriculum. The utmost importance given to social equality and communal harmony by the DMRT was quite exemplary. The DMRT workers were infact pioneers of literacy and adult education movement and library movement, which gained further momentum from the 1950's to 1980's in Kerala.

## 3. Rural Reconstruction

During the relief operations in Malabar villages the SIS workers realised that village life was at a low ebb. The condition of the vast majority of the people was quite pathetic, owing to unemployment, rural poverty, diseases and ignorance. Thus handicapped in several ways, these people were not able to tap the advantages of modern civilization. As Mahatma Gandhi himself put it, the condition of India was quite heart-rending in those days:

> It is a sad condition. In thinking of it my eyes water and my throat gets parched. I have grave doubts wheather I shall be able sufficiently to explain what is in my heart. It is my deleberate opinion that India being ground down, not under the English heal, but under that of modern civilization. It is groaning under the monster's terrible weight. There is yet time to escape it, but every day makes it more and more difficult.[1]

In the exploitative hands of both the state and the bourgeoisie, life was infact collapsing. As Marx and Engles put it;

> All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away; all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at

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[1] M.K.Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Ahamadabad, 1938, p.36.

last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.[2]

Though there was a slow and arrested growth of industry in India right from the 19th century, it made practically no difference to the problem of the poverty of the masses and the over burden on the land. A few hundred thousand workers were transferred to industry out of the scores of millions of the unemployed and partially employed. This change-over was so extremely small that it did not affect the increasing ruralization of the country.[3] While working in Champaran, Gandhi was shocked to see the condition of life in Indian villages. "In countless cottages in India people live without any furniture, and without a change of clothes, merely with a rag to cover their shame."[4]

The condition of Malabar villages was in no way different from other parts of India. People lived in extreme penury. This was sure ground for the SIS to undertake several constructive programmes in Malabar. The concept of rural reconstruction emerges from a knowledge of the sufferings of the village population and a sense of urgency to bring about improvement. Basic to their enfeebled condition are poverty, ignorance and superstitions. When a conscious effort is made to find a solution to these problems the way is open

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[2] Karl Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Moscow, 1952, p.46.

[3] Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, New Delhi, 1981, pp.334, 335.

[4] M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Ahamedabad, 1927, p.388.

for village upliftment or rural reconstruction.[5] An important area of the SIS work in Kerala was rural reconstruction. This was carried out through the various programmes of the DMRT.

Though the SIS was a purely voluntary service organisation, its strong organiser in Kerala V.R. Nayanar was informed by a political vision. As he wrote, capitalism was the root cause of the extreme poverty, which was a pervasive experience in the thirties. He explained, that the history of landlords and industrialists proved the intimidating power of capitalism. The administrative machinery created police and military for the support of the capitalists. Administrative justice was based on the capitalist idea of public welfare in almost all countries. Therefore he makes a case for a social system based on the principles of Socialism.[6] The economy had to be decentralised so as to enable the humble folk to play a role in it.

Mahatma Gandhi also favored a decentralised village economy. Self reliance achieved through such an economy was recognized as a means to independence. He conceived it as the economy of Swedeshi, and its condition was that, "only an article that is wholly manufactured in India by the hands of millions of villagers and out of raw materials grown in India deserves the

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[5] Kottayi Kumaran, "Ul Nadukalude Punarudharanam," *Mathrubhumi weekly*, 22nd May 1933, p.7.

[6] V.R. Nayanar, "Paraspara Sahayavum Samashtivadavum," *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 21 August, 1938,p.5.

name of Swadeshi."[7] In his view Khadi alone satisfies this test: "Khadi organisation work, unlike textile Mill Industry, does not require lakhs of capital and highly specialised technical skill, even a layman can take it up."[8] While supporting rural industry, Gandhi was opposed to the products made by both Indian and foreign monopolies. He had to face criticism even within the Congress. The problem was mediated by J.C. Kumarappa who asserted that any project which exploits the raw material of a country, and overlooks the more potential human resource is second-rate and incapable of creating equality among human beings.[9] And further, decentralization and Swedeshi was suggested as *via media* in the face of the ruthless profit motive of Capitalism on the one hand and on the other, the arrogant disregard of the worker's self expression under communism.[10] Under the colonial regime, apart from the immense drain of wealth, India's productive capacity was crushed by being made to remain a passive market for foreign goods. So the practice of decentralization and Swedeshi were thought of as the only antidote

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[7] Mahatma Gandhi, Message on the Opening of Khadi Exhibition, Peshwar, 3 November, 1938, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi LXVIII*, New Delhi, 1977, p.87.

[8] Mahatma Gandhi, *Ibid.*, p.88.

[9] J.J. Abraham, *J. C. Kumarappa: Gandhian Arthasasthrathinte Aacharyan*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 1994, p.20.

[10] Bharathan Kumarappa, *Village Industries and Reconstruction*, Allahad, 1935, pp. 9-10.

against the octopus which was sucking the life stream of the nation, and the only sure solution to lead the country to freedom, peace and well being.[11]

Rural reconstruction programme of the DMRT may be seen against the above background. Their programmes included bee keeping, khadi-cottage industries, agricultural training centers and co-operative units, rural health and sanitation.[12] In the post rebellion years immediate priority was given to relief operations. With the formation of the DMRT, emphasis was given to education and rural reconstruction. They initiated the people to enter into various cottage industries. The DMRT centers gave training in a variety of subjects like manufacture of handmade paper, soap making, gray farming, coir mating and spinning and new agricultural methods. These were intended to make backward classes like Harijans and the rural poor self-reliant.

Following the spread of cholera and malaria, there was wide spread unemployment in Malabar villages. Many people who turned destitutes could not make both ends meet. As a way out from their predicaments,. Nayanar thought of launching an industrial training centre. Thus an SIS village industrial institute was started in Tanur. Kuttikrishna Menon was placed in charge of the institute.[13] Training in spinning and weaving, net -making and

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[11] J.C. Kumarappa, *The Gandian Economy and Other Essays*, Wardha, 1949,p.p. 72-73.

[12] Karthat Balachandran, "DMRT Smaranakal," *Vetton,* Tanur, 25 January, 1982, 2, 9, p.17.

[13] P. Parameswaran, "Ha Nayanar," *Vettom*, Tanur, August, 1984, 5, 4, p.15.

papermaking were given there. Two persons were sent (A.T. Lakshmi and P. Parameswaran) to the government coir industrial centre for training. During training, the trainees were given half a measure of rice daily. After training, in addition to rice they were given wages also. When rice was scarce even in the market, Nayanar was able to do so with special permission from the Collector inspite of protests from merchants.[14]

The condition of food availability was extremely bad in Malabar in those days. At the instance of Nayanar, the DMRT workers conducted a survey in Tanur, Gopalapuram and Nediyirippu. The survey proved that wage labour relation and domestic expenses were quite disproportionate. The survey touched on aspects likes birth, death, food, clothing, health, medical aids, agriculture, industry and education. Based on the data of this comprehensive survey[15] Nayanar submitted on 25.11.1944 a petition in which he demanded government intervention in the following matters.

1. Agriculture in all cultivable lands based on "grow more food" principle. The department of agriculture should take it as a policy and encourage farmers with the supply of seed and manure.

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[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *op.cit.*

2. With a view to make the farmers beneficiaries of their efforts, co-operative units be set up in all villages to collect and market their products. Middlemen should not be involved in this.

3. In order to improve production, irrigation facilities be provided where ever required.

4. For the easy movement and marketing of agricultural and industrial products roads and canals should be constructed.

5. Dispensaries and childcare centers should be opened for the health requirements of the villagers.

6. During leisure time the farmers should be engaged in small scale industrial centers where they can work in spinning, weaving and coir making.

7 Libraries, literacy classes and discussion should be organised to make the adults and children aware of such constructive programmes. This seven point programme bears ample testimony to the farsightedness of. Nayanar as a true Servant of India. Already he had set up model centers in many of the above subjects and so his petition was not born out of a mere utopian dream.[16]

Without waiting for any governmental measures, the DMRT continued its voluntary programmes. Through campaigns they made the people aware

[16] *Ibid.*

of improved agriculture and co-operative societies. V.T. Sankunni Menon superintendent of the DMRT schools was an expert in organizing awareness campaigns with the aid of magic lanterns and he toured the schools for this purpose.[17] The DMRT took special care in promoting co-operative ventures, with a view to remedy rural indebtedness which was widespread in those days. It comprises of various kinds of loans (cash and kind) short, medium and long term ones for starting enterprises as well as for domestic purposes. Indebtedness was part of life particularly among the weaker sections of the population. The large majority of small and marginal farmers as well as landless labourers and artisans were always at the mercy of private money lenders. These classes of borrowers were put to serious hardships owing to the practice of charging usurious rates of interests, and other malpractices.[18] As on 30th June 1962 the Reserve Bank Survey shows that cash indebtedness in Kerala was Rs.62.4 crores as against the all India figure of 2789 crores. Of this maximum credit was provided by non-institutional agencies, 82% in Kerala as against the all India figure 85%.[19] The above supports the need for more co-operative credit facilities to save the rural poor from ruthless extracting agencies.

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[17] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 15 June, 1926, p.7.

[18] K.N. Ganesh (ed.), *Kerala State Gazetteer Vol.III*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989, p.488.

[19] *Ibid.*, p.489.

The condition of the weaver community (*saliays*) of Tanur was very pitiable. Suryanarayana Rao persuaded them to weave good quality bathing towels. But they were constrained to use foreign thread. So they were urged to use indigenous cotton thread.[20] The nearby areas of Tanur, like Kattilangadi, Puthentheru and Chaliyam were inhabited mainly by the weaver community. The DMRT took initiative to organise co-operative societies in these places with a view to cater to the requirements of the weavers in production and marketing. Co-operative stores were also opened in these places. Alcohol addiction was wide spread among the weavers. It was therefore decided to give them provisions from the co-operative stores instead of money for their work. The SIS persuaded them to desist from drinking habits.[21]

An important contribution of the SIS in Kerala was its initiative in the co-operative movement. G.K. Devadhar who was personally convinced of the economic backwardness of the people of Malabar was a pioneer in the co-operative movement. He was instrumental in the beginning of co-operative societies in the Malabar area in the 1920s known in those days as *Aikyananaya Sanghams*. These were intended to provide financial support to small scale farmers and artisan groups and thereby rescue them from the grip

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[20] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 4 June, 1929, p.7.

[21] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 25 June, 1929, p.7; Interview with T. Asanarkutty, Tanur dated 20 March, 2002.

of unscrupulous money lenders.[22] Assanar Kutty of Tanur one of the very few living DMRT workers was the manager of the Weavers Co-operative Society, Tanur. This Society set up by V.R. Nayanar was of immense help to the poor members of the weaver community of the Kattilangadi area of Tanur. The Tanur Weavers Co-operative Society was the first of its kind in Kerala.[23] Thread had to be procured from Calicut and distributed to the weavers. During the Second World War, when the Society could not make cash purchases, Nayanar stood personal security for the merchants to procure thread. Assanar Kutti is still brimful of the reminiscences of his days spent with Sri. V.R. Nayanar.[24]

Nayanar had very clear cut views about co-operation. According to him the meaning of the word "co-operative" merely as mutual help does not bring out its full implications. Co-operation stands for mutual love, trust and brotherhood among people. Therefore, he said that a word with all those implications was yet to be coined in Malayalam language.[25] He viewed co-operative ventures as means to achieve progress. The DMRT workers were

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[22] P. Parameswaran, "Ha Nayanar," *Vettom,* 5, 4, 1984, p.15; Interview with Karthat Balachandran (DMRT Worker) Palakkad, dated 20.8.2004.

[23] Karthat Balachandran, "Sri. V.R. Nayanareppatti", *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.38.

[24] Assanar Kutti Tanur, "Austin Sayppine Kandittundo," *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.34.

[25] V.R. Nayanar, *Parasparasahayi Masika*, 1938, Quoted in *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika, op. cit.*, p.36.

actively involved in organising agricultural and industrial exhibitions, which later became very popular in Calicut.[26]

In 1937. Nayanar formed "Seva Samithi Scout Sangh". A scout camp was organised with Ananda Rao of Allahabad as its director. Sri. Nayanar was the Secretary of the Malabar scout organisationa at that time. Five DMRT teachers including K.P. Bharatha Pisharodi (Pattambi) were given training and they were made organisers in five taluks. The Valluvanad scout camp was organised at Pattambi Sanskrit Vidyalaya in 1938 and soon the scout set out to work. During the summer season when it was difficult for the people to cross the Bharathapuzha at Chamravattom the Scout Sangh constructed a foot path across the river. Nayanar gave them all encouragements. The work of the scout was greatly appreciated by the All India Scout Organising Commissioner Ram Bajpaye.

G.K. Devadhar was the President of 5th All Cochin Co-operative Conference held on 10th January 1934.[27] The Cochin Legislative Council had commissioned Devadhar to enquire into the co-operative movement of Cochin state and to submit recommendations for its progress. He had undertaken a similar task earlier in Travancore. In his presidential address he dealt with the merits of co-operative movement as an instrument in social

[26] Karthat Balachandran, "DMRT Smaranakal", *Vettom*, 25 October, 1981, 6, 2, Tanur, p.11.

[27] *Mathrubhumi daily* "G.K. Devadhar "Presidential Address" 10 January, 1934, p.8.

upliftment. He pointed out that since 1904 when co-operative movement was started in India, it had made important strides in alleviating the miseries of Indian people. He emphasised that in a country like India where majority of the people were under illiteracy, illhealth and poverty, co-operation should be further extended. The programmes for the eradication of these curses he argued that governmental initiative was largely required in this respect. He urged the educated youths to get themselves involved in co-operative programmes. Devadhar clarified that co-operatives were not profit making ventures. They are especially meant for community services.[28]

The reconstructive programmes of DMRT and the activities of Harijan Sevak Sangh went hand in hand in Malabar.[29] As the President of Malabar Branch of Harijan Sevak Sangh, V.R. Nayanar persuaded influential persons to get involved in the rehabilitation of Harijan families. In Valluvanad taluk, Mankata Vallabha Raja promised to give 13 acres of land for this purpose and to set up a centre for training in agriculture and industry. He also agreed to give paddy fields on lease for the Harijans to cultivate on their own. This was intended to make them self reliant by converting them from wage labourers to independent cultivators.[30]

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[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 9 March, 1934, p.8. col.4.

[30] Sri. V.R. Nayanar, "Harijanodharanam Valluvanattil Oru Colony," *Mathrubhumi daily*, 19 March, 1934, p.8.

A chain of village reconstruction centers was established thoughtout Malabar. These were at once educational centers also. In Thrithala such a centre with a reading room and night school was opened on 5th May 1934. Explaining the programmes of the DMRT, Nayanar pointed out that in Ponnani taluk Muslims constituted 44% of the population but they were educationally very backward. Among men only 12 out of 100, and among women only one out of 100 could read and write. He stressed the point that educational progress is an essential pre-requisite for development in other fields. He also made a magic lantern show on rural reconstruction.[31]

Another Harijan Sangh activist Kelappan also inculcated similar ideas among the depressed classes. He had plans to begin a co-operative society at Pakkanarpuram, where he had set up a school and hostel for Harijans. But the local people who exploited these Harijans, misinterpreted the idea, and the Harijans misunderstood Kelappan's intentions. But after some time when they realised that his programme was to save them from exploitation and to make them self reliant, they began to persuade him to start such a society.[32]

While these activities were going on, there were hectic political campaigns in Malabar. Congress had decided to boycott the Simon commission. The north Malabar Congress conference was convened at

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[31] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 5 May, 1934, p.10.

[32] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 25 November, 1927, p.5.

Calicut to protest against the appointment of the Simon Commission. V.R. Nayanar moved the first resolution protesting against and to boycott the Simon Commission.[33] Kurur Neelakandan Namboodiripad supported the resolution and exhorted the people to follow the example of the students and women of Egypt who showed great sense of sacrifice during the visit of a similar commission to that country, namely, the Milner Commission. Two other resolutions adopted by the conference – one for the propagation of khadi and the boycott of foreign clothes, and the other protesting against the action of the Kannur Municipality in rejecting a resolution at its council to introduce weaving in the primary schools – were in the spirit of rural reconstruction, which was integral to the nationalist movement.[34]

The anniversary of the SIS at Poona took up proposals to extend its activities still further in Malabar area, and decided to chalk out new programmes for the rural reconstruction.[35] The Rural reconstruction centre at Gopalapuram was always active in driving home to the people the messages of constructive programmes and of self reliance. A common hazard which stood in the way of achieving the ideals was alcoholism. Therefore the workers of the centre used every opportunity to conduct antiliquor campaigns. The occasion of the temple festivals were used to make the people aware of

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[33] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 15 December, 1927, p.5.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 26 June, 1928, p.3.

the evils of drinking with the aid of magic lanterns. Moreover music and art forms like *Harikatha* (story rendition) were used in these campaigns. From their experience with the people, Nayanar and his colleagues knew that without a stable basis in matters like healthy habits, general knowledge and a positive attitude to change, no constructive programme would thrive.[36] During his visit to the different centres, Nayanar repeatedly exhorted the people of the need to eradicate evils like pollution, alchoholism, ignorance, poverty and diseases.[37]

People were increasingly attracted to the rural upliftment programmes of the DMRT. More and more reconstruction centers were opened in various places. In 1930 July itself centers were opened at Feroke, Kottakkal, Thirurangadi, Tirur and Mangatteri. These centers worked simultaneously as centers of education and rural reconstruction.[38] Meanwhile V.R. Nayanar was elected as the secretary of Tirur co-operative union. Government departments of agriculture, health, co-operation and education promised to help the co-operative societies. As Suryanarayana Rao made it out, both the government and public should work together to achieve improvements in villages.[39]

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[36] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, "Gramapunarudharana Pravarthanangal," 1 March, 1930, p.11..

[37] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 31 February 1931, p.7..

[38] R. Suryanarayana Rao, "DMRT Gramasevanam," *Mathrubhumi daily*, 24 August 1930, p.7.

[39] *Ibid.*

In April 1932 another village reconstruction centre was opened at Kondotty.[40] A large gathering of nearly 500 people attended the function. The dignitaries who were present include Moulavi Abdul Hameed Sahib (District Educational Officer) who inaugurated the centre, Kondotty Thangal, the reverent pontiff of Kondotty Darga, Dr. Govinda Menon, Adv. K.K. Pokker Sahib and Sri. Surya Narayana Rao. This centre was a long cherished project of Nayanar, for he was very much moved by the educational and economic backwardness of the people of that area. It was pointed out that though the people of this place, mostly Muslims were largely illiterate, their qualities like unity, faithfulness, sense of hard work and commitment, combined with education would go a long way in improving the life of the people.[41]

In Nediyirippu a village reconstruction centre was functioning with the Higher Elementary School. The centre gave training in agriculture and spinning.[42] The interest shown by this centre in the education of Muslim children, especially girls, was highly praised.[43] Attached to the Nediyirippu centre there was a farm where the Harijans engaged in cultivation. As many people suffered from malnutrition, Nayanar saw that vegetables were

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[40] *Mathrubhumi Daily,* 12 April, 1932, p. 8.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, V.R. Nayanar "DMRT 1939-40 Annual Report, 24 April 1940, p.4.

[43] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, "Nediyirippu DMRT Anniversary" 19 March 1941, p.6.

cultivated in such farms and distributed them to the people. Seeds were also distributed and agricultural demonstrations were conducted in almost all DMRT centers.[44] Several Harijan families were in distress in Nediyirippu. Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh constantly turned their attention to this place. In 1953 the area occupied by the Harijans was declared a colony by the government.[45] In 1958 an agricultural co-operative society was registered there.[46] Following this some elementary facilities were provided. Agriculture was their main occupation. The colony came into being owing to the services of Harijan Sevak Sangh workers like T.P.R. Nambisan, K.M. Raman and Syamji Sundardas. They were also associated with the DMRT programmes.

In Gopalapuram there was an industrial training centre, which was approved by the government. The centre gave training in several cottage industries like manufacture of handmade paper, coir making, spinning and book binding. Occasional extension lectures were also given to the trainees by experts.[47] Once while inaugurating a training programme in paper making K. Kelappan urged that the cottage industries had an important role in social

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[44] Karthat Balachandran, *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.38, 39.

[45] P. Padmanabhan, "Nediyirippu Harijan Colony", *Harijan Sevaka Sangham Gandhi Janmasadabdhi Souvenir*, Palakkad, 1969, pp.57, 58.

[46] K. Kunjamabu,"Nediyirippu, Kottasseri Colonikal Oru Padanam," *Harijan Sevak Sangham Kerala Sakha Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika*, Kozhikode, 1985, pp.58, 59.

[47] *Mathrubhumi daily*, "DMRT Gopalapuram Kendram" 27 September, 1941; Interview with Perachan Master (Craft teacher of Gopalapuram School, Moodady, 31.03.2005.

transformation according to the basic tenets of Socialism.[48] Gopalapuram soon developed into a full fledged rural reconstruction centre with a Higher Elementary School, agricultural farm, industrial training centre, library, orphanage and hostel for the inmates. The centre was visited by eminent men like Mahathma Gandhi, Takkar Bappa, Hridaynath Kunzru and V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri. Suryanarayana Rao and V.R. Nayanar were intimately associated with this centre. After Nayanar's death, a *Bhajan Samaj* was organized at Gopalapuram in his fond memory.[49]

In Keezhariyur the DMRT initiated several reconstruction programmes as a follow up of its famine relief work which they undertook in that village. In his discussion with the Collector V.R. Nayanar, recommended that if construction of a road was sanctioned, it would give work to the poor people.[50] Kelappan suggested that spinning should be introduced in the village, and for this purpose he wrote to the All India Spinners Association (AISA).[51] A charkha trainer was deputed from Tirurangadi centre to Keezhariyoor.[52]

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[48] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, K. Kelappan "Kutil Vyvasayathinte Pradhanyam" 15 October 1941.

[49] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 5 August 1947, p.4; interview with Padmini Amma, Gopalapuram (Daughter in law of Kelappaji), 31.03.2005.

[50] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 20 August, 1939, p.5.

[51] *Ibid.*, *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 25 August, 1939, p.3.

[52] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 26 August, 1939, p.8.

A meeting was held at Koyilandy Sub Magistrate court, attended by K. Rama Varma Raja R.D.O., C.K. Govindan Nair MLA, Malappurath Kandi Kunhikrishnan Kidavu, Kannambrath Kunhikkannan, M. Ramunni Nambiar, Imbichi Mammu, M. Chathukutti Nair, Ingicham Veettil Gopalan Nair and Village Officers of Kozhukkallur and Viyyur. The meeting decided to construct a road from Kollam town to Venkapparapoyil via Nelliadikadavu. The work would be supervised by the committee with C.K. Govindan Nair as convenor. It was also decided to take majority of the labourers from Keezhariyoor.[53] A road connecting Koyilandi town was very essential in Keezhariyoor to speed up other constructive programmes in the village. Being a place isolated by the river Akalappuzha it was very difficult for social workers and government officials to visit the place. The educational backwardness of the village was also due to its isolation.[54]

The AISA consented to start a centre there and they sent Charka and other instruments to the place.[55] Meanwhile District Board President Kelappan along with Mathrubhumi Manager N. Krishnan Nair visited Keezhariyoor and identified a suitable place to start a charkha centre.[56] Efforts were also made to revive the co-operative society of the village. As

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[53] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 28 August, 1939, p.2.

[54] Interview with Thenpoyil Kunhiramakurup, Keezhariyoor (cousin of Kelappan) dated 25.8.2004; Sanakaran Master, M., Keezhiyoor, 10.05.2005.

[55] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 29 August, 1939, p.2.

[56] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 27 August, 1939, p.2; interview with Lakshmi Amma. A.M., (Headmistress), Keezhariyoor, 20.08.2006.

instructed by the Collector, the Deputy Registrar of the Co-operative Societies held a discussion with V.R. Nayanar in this respect; proposals were also made to revive agricultural activities and to start centres for coir mating, oil extraction and other cottage industries.[57]

It may also be noticed that several other programmes which were either in the nature of the SIS work or sharing some of their concerns also were initiated in Kerala in the 1920s and 1930s. In Travancore A.K. Pillai formed an organisation called "Bharathodharana Sangham" in 1927. The objective of the organisation was to attract the people to the constructive programmes of Congress by giving talks on social, economic and political subjects. It was also proposed to start a school for the training of social service volunteers and to encourage cottage industries.[58]

Kelappan started a school called Sradhananda Vidyalaya at Iringath near Payyoli for the education of Harijans where training in handicrafts was given to the inmates.[59] In Olavakkot near Palakkad T.R. Krishna Swami Iyer started Sabari Ashram for the education of the children of depressed classes and Muslim boys. Arrangements were also made for training in spinning and weaving.[60]

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[57] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 1 September, 1939, p.8.

[58] *Mathrubumi Daily*, 5 February 1927, p.3.

[59] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 8 September, 1928, p.9.

[60] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 8 October, 1925, p.5.

It had been recognised during this period that economic development could not be achieved without rural reconstruction. It had been reported that the government of India was considering formation of an economic advisory council, on the British model with a view to secure a more rapid and co-ordinated development of the country's economic resources.[61] However records show that such schemes and their benefits had not penetrated to the Malabar villages. This accounts for the large scale support and participation of the people in the DMRT programmes for rural reconstruction. Right from G.K. Devadhar through Suryanarayana Rao to V.R. Nayanar the leaders of the DMRT emphasize peoples' participation in the constructive activities through co-operative ventures. V.R. Nayanar, for example, firmly believed that co-operative work was the only solution for poverty and unemployment. He exhorted "Real socialism is co-operation. A social structure in which different communities quarrel among themselves will not survive long".[62] Co-operation as he envisaged it was a means for material progress as well as an instrument for social stability.

As J.C. Kumarappa stated, equality and justice were closely linked with economy which in turn was pivotal to democracy:

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[61] "Economic Tendencies in India", *The Indian Review*, Vol. XXX, May 1930, pp.318,319.

[62] V.R. Nayanar, *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 21 August, 1938, p.5.

> Each should have the opportunity to contribute to production to the best of his ability, and each should receive enough to satisfy his need and that of his family. The villages should treat everyone in the locality as members of the family and see that they all get sufficient nutrition in their food. The components of diet may vary to some extent according to differing tasts, but in the ultimate result there should be no difference between one individual and another. This will have the result of producing a stalwart rural population on which, alone a real democracy can rest.[63]

In order to achieve economic progress, it is necessary to tap all indigenous resources. In an agricultural country like India livestock form an important resource. But with statistical support Nayanar pointed out that India's livestock was quite disproportionate to the rate of her population. Therefore milk products had to be imported on a large scale. He pointed out that if we had developed adequate facility to preserve milk and to produce milk products we would have been able to make a huge profit.[64] The example of Milk Marketing Federation in Kerala and Anand Milk Co-operative Union, Gujarat, both justify the farsightedness of Nayanar in respect of livestock management.

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[63] J.C. Kumarappa, *The Unitary Basis of Non-violent Democracy*, Wardha, 1951, pp. 1-2.

[64] V.R. Nayanar, "Nammute Nalkalikal", *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 27 August, 1939, p.10.

The DMRT made an earnest attempt to popularise spinning and weaving. The training centres set up by them throughout Malabar equipped the poor people who were hit by famine, disease and unemployment to face life. This was in tune with the Swadeshi principle of the SIS. Nayanar pointed out that Mahatma Gandhi's Khadi programme had significantly reduced the import of foreign cloths from Lancashire Mills by 56 crore yard in 1939 as against 120 crore yard in 1920.[65] It follows that if the people of India were prepared to take up indigenous production of cloths no import of cloths would be necessary. It would thus be a solution for rural unemployment and poverty. In view of the rampant distress of the Indian people, khadi and hand weaving would be far more practical and advantages than mill production.[66] In his speeches and writings Nayanar repeatedly urged the people to consider this proposal.

Economically Malabar was extremely backward. Though the economy was predominantly agrarian, there was no planning in this sector. Nor was there adequate facilities like transports for the easy mobility of produces for better marketing. The condition of industries also was quite dismal. Another drawback of Malabar was the shortage of women participation in the production sector. Co-operative movement also gained momentum in

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[65] V.R. Nayanar, "Kaithari Neithu", *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 4 May, 1941, p.10.

[66] *Ibid.*

Malabar.[67] In a comparative analysis Nayanar pointed out that the South Karnataka district was far advanced in the above respects, and so could claim a stronger economy. He therefore argued that the agricultural and marketing sector of Malabar should be strengthened. In business and marketing joint ventures between Malabar and South Karnataka district would be beneficial to both. But a hurdle on the way was the lack of proper transport facility between the two. Road transport facility in Malabar was available only upto Payyannur. If that was extended upto Hosdurg that would pave the way for business connections between Malabar and Karnataka. Nayanar urged both the District Boards to consider this proposal.[68] It is worth remembering at this point that in the subsequent decades when infrastructural facilities and transport were strengthened and individual and collative enterprises between the two regions improved the north Malabar - Karnataka connection resulted in hectic business activities and consequent progress, to both areas.

An important reason for the feeble economy and widespread poverty of Malabar was the inhospitable attitude of both the government and the landlords to the cultivators. Though the government had promised that land free of tax for cultivation would be made available, with a view to increase agricultural production, they did not keep word. Except in the malaria

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[67] V.R. Nayanar, "Malabarum Thekkan Karnatakavum", *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 11 May, 1941, p.10.

[68] *Ibid.*

affected Wyand no new land was made available in other taluks. Even for the cultivation in the usual land the agricultural department levied a tax of Rs.25 per head. The expenses involved in cultivation was in addition to this liability[69] Under these circumstances no agricultural work was possible in Malabar and the result of the cause was acute feminine and distress in places like Keezhariyoor. Nayanar therefore made an earnest appeal to both the landlords and the government to exempt the cultivators from constraining taxation and rent and to allow them an incentive of Rs.25 per head. Such a positive step would enable to curtail poverty and outlawry.[70]

The social life and economy of Malabar which had already been crippled and incapacitated by age old customs and practices which were of a reactionary nature received a heavy blow with the outbreak of the rebellion. Added to that, the distress caused by flood, famine and disease led the district almost on the verge of collapse. The exploitative attitude of the government and the landlords who were their agents only augmented the perilous condition. It was this phase of history which provided space for the SIS to undertake ameliorative programmes in Malabar. The DMRT workers felt that without pumping some energy into the impoverished body of Malabar society nothing could be done to revive the strength and vitality of a people. The

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[69] V.R. Nayanar, "Krishi Vardhippikkuka–Engine?" *Mathrubhumi weekly*, September 27, 1942, p.4.

[70] *Ibid.*

only viable alternative in the existing condition was to gradually initiate the people to life sustaining activity. As a panacea for the prevailing torpour, it was felt necessary to chalk out a plan for rural reconstruction. It was quite imperative that all the downtrodden and marginalised classes who constitute the bulk of the toiling masses be integrated. Thus a chain of rural reconstruction centers opened by the DMRT imparted a sense of unity and hope, and a desire for change among the people which in due course penetrated into all strata of society. The most outstanding aspect of the DMRT programme was that they were able to present before the society an action plan for sustenance and survival rather than pouring in mere pontification on change. They sincerely strove to amalgamate their programmes in various fields viz., distress relief, education, rural reconstruction, social reform and communal harmony and worked untiringly to integrate all sections of people into their activities. Thus rural reconstruction work as conceived and executed by the DMRT was at once a rejuvenating and empowering task. Conceived in the true humanitarian and non-sectarian principles, the DMRT was to inculcate in the people of the Malabar a thorough secular attitude as its lasting legacy.

# 4. Social Reform

Kerala Society generally and Malabar Society in particular was the target of bitter attack by personalities like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, on account of rigid caste practices. Swami Vivekananda called Kerala a "a mad house" and as a "paradise of fools where every one was happy in his ignorance, in his superstition and his age long social bondage.[1] Mahatma Gandhi was also utterly critical of Kerala Society and described Malabar as "the blackest spot in the untouchability map of India, worst forms of these practices are to be found in Malabar."[2] In spite of the pioneering work of a host of socio-religious[3] reformers like Sree Narayana Guru, Subhananda Gurudeva, Vagbhatananda, Swami Agamananda, Swami Brahmananda Sivayogi, Swami Anandathirtha, Vaikunda Swami, Ayyankali, Sahodaran Ayyappan and organisations like Aryasamaj, Brahmosamaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Christian Missionaries and Theosophical Society, Malabar continued to be vitiated by casteism and related customs and practices. The SIS which came to Malabar primarily as an agency for relief, education and reconstruction activities had also to assume the task of reform in a different sense. For theirs was not an endeavor guided by religious

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1 *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III,* Culcutta, 1964, pp. 294-295.

2 *Harijan, Vol. 1*, February 1934, London, 1973, p.230.

3 For more details, P. Chandra Mohan, "Growth of Social Reform Movements in Kerala" in P.J. Cheriyan (Ed), *Kerala State Gazetteer Vol. III,* Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p.p. 456-475.

doctrines but one informed and inspired by liberal egalitarian principles. It was inclined more towards social and political consciousness than towards sectarianism and religiosity. Therefore it was to be perceived as motivated by a conflict between the old and the new values.[4] The idea of reform here impinges on notions of equality and social justice, as envisaged by Gandhi in his concept of Sarvodaya.[5]

In Malabar, "the land of inequities"[6] that it was, any work which was in the character of social service had also to tackle problems arising out of social complexities. This was precisely the work done by the DMRT in the nature of social reform in Kerala especially in Malabar. Even a religious reformer like Swami Agamananda believed that social service, spread of education, eradication of caste, agricultural reform all had to be integrated to social reform.[7] Sree Narayana Guru's campaign against caste and caste related social practices were extremely formidable. He made such emphatic exhortations as "one caste, one religion and one God for man" and "It is sure that both the Brahmin and the Pariah are born of the same human stock and so what distinction is there between human beings"?[8] The teachings of the Guru

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[4] B. Kuppu Swami, *Social Change in India,* Delhi, 2000, p. 74.

[5] *Ibid,* p.p. 71,73.

[6] Mahatma Gandhi, Quoted in Mukuth Bihari Verma, *History of the Harijan Sevak Sangh 1932-1968,* Delhi, 1971, p. 100.

[7] P. Govinda Pillai, *Kerala Navothanam Vol. II,* Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, p.93.

[8] "Jathinirnayam", *Narayana Guru Sampoorna Krithikal,* New Delhi, 2005, p.p. 385-6.

had powerful impact in almost all parts of Kerala. But the caste rigidity of Malabar was so innocuous as to admit of any amendments or improvements in its age old orthodoxy.

The practice of untouchability was recognised as a social evil by the leaders of the nationalist movement. Mahatma Gandhi himself described it as "a crime against God and man". The Indian Social Conference which came into being in 1887 at the initiative of M.G. Ranade wanted to reform the society from within, and they did not want to break with the past completely. The aim of the conference was to reinterpret the *sastras* in the light of reason and humanity. The members of the conference had implicit faith in the redeeming force of education, whether for raising the status of women or for improving the condition of the depressed classes. For taking such a position they had to face threats of excommunication from their castes and fight it out.[9]

The Congress Conference held at Ernamkulam in 1923 resolved to adopt eradication of pollution and untouchability as an important programme of the Congress. The Untouchability Eradication Conference met at Belgaum in 1925 strongly protested against the practice of pollution, and demanded measures like setting up of colonies, religious reform and interdining.[10] The All India Women's Conference was convened in 1926 and woman started

[9] B. Kuppu swami, *Op cit*, p. 70.

[10] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 6 January, 1925, p. 1.

agitation for their rights. The Indian National Congress at its 1931 session adopted the Fundamental Rights and Duties resolution which incorporated provisions recognising the status rights and privileges of women and Harijans. Gandhiji's special concern for the depressed classes led to the formation of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1934.[11]

The pressures of the above development at the national and regional level had their bearing in the DMRT programmes for social upliftment in Kerala. Kelappan started an Adidravida school and a Harijan Colony for their education and rehabilitation. Kelappan, a Nair by birth was the president of the Kerala Branch of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and was also associated with the DMRT work. In his speech at the inaugural function of the school, Kelappan said that it was very necessary to develop a sense of equality among men. Lack of such a sense would lead to the nation's degeneration. He refuted the belief that the lower castes pollute the high castes. If on pollution by a pulaya one should bathe, then how often their creator God would have to bathe, he quipped.[12] On a similar occasion C.F. Andrews said that the so called depressed class was the human incarnation of God himself. Therefore they should not be treated with contempt, to do so was like denying God.[13]

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[11] Mukuth Behari Verma, *Op cit,* p.28.

[12] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 29 September, 1925, p. 3.

[13] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 6 October, 1925m p. 3.

The presence of Swami Sradhananda was a great inspiration for the upliftment of the depressed classes. During the Vaikkom Satygraha he had come to Kerala to extent his support for that movement and had addressed people in several places on the need to protect the untouchables. In 1925 he visited Kerala once again, this time to support the anti-pollution campaign of Malabar.[14] In his speech at Palakkad he stated that unlike in North India, practice of pollution was acute in Malabar. Unapproachables and invisibles are peculiar to this area. While a dog was allowed to lick a Brahmin's hand a human being of the depressed class had to keep 40 feet away from him. They were the people who work hard but the benefit was enjoyed by the high casts. He made it out that betterment of the depressed classes would definitely strengthen the Hindu religion.[15]

During this period, a wave of social reform was bellowing throughout India. Slogans like "equal rights for all" were being raised in meetings and conferences. Learned men began to address their communities and tried to create a sense of awareness about the ills and handicaps from which its members suffered. A very significant development was the great interest shown in the matter of the rights and privileges of women as members of society. The exploitation of women within the social system as well as in places of work were condemned. Sri. Paranj Pye, President of the Liberal

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[14] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 8 October, 1925, p. 4.

[15] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 12 November, 1925, p.2.

Federation at Lucknow pointed at that women were the most exploited class in every country: "woman was exploited in the Home, in the factory and in their social systems.... There was no greater crime than the crime of enforced motherhood".[16] In Kerala V.R. Nayanar very strongly voiced similar concerns in his speeches and writings and made the cause of women as an item in the agenda of the DMRT.

In Madras at a meeting convened to receive Swami Sradhananda, a Hindu Samaj was formed. The objectives of the organisation were eradication of untouchability, freedom of all castes and communities and the spread of Hindu spirituality.[17] Learned men of the Muslim Community was also alarmed at the stigma of their educational backwardness. Addressing the All Muslim Educational Conference held at Bombay Sir. Ibrahim Rahmatullah said, "our community however cannot hope to progress and to win back its rightful position if one half of it remains in the darkness of ignorance. A vast majority of our women are unable to read and write any language".[18] At the 36th Indian National Social Conference held at Belgaum Sir C. Sankaran Nair declared, "The Social Reform Movement is concerned

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[16] *Bombay Chronicle*, 27 December, 1924, p.10. Microfilm, NMML.

[17] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 12 November, 1925, p. 5.

[18] *Bombay Chronicle*, 29 December, 1924, p. 13.

with the condition of women, the caste question, and the conditions of depressed classes".[19]

Even after the historic success of Vaikkom Satyagraha which achieved for the untouchables freedom of access of public roads, the practice of pollution continued to be vigorous in Malabar. For a change for the better both society and government had to be prepared to make amendments in their attitude. For the total eradication of pollution and untouchability, stronger struggles had to be undertaken and that eventually turned out to be in the form of Temple Entry Satyagraha.[20] During his Malabar tour Swami Sradhananada strongly protested against the practice of pollution and untouchability in Malabar. He said that a people who oppressed one third of them on grounds of pollution had no right to demand "Swarajya".[21] A speech given by C.F. Andrews at Poona on the evil practices of Indian society had many points related to the Malabar life.[22]

A series of night schools were opened by DMRT throughout Malabar to impart information on social problems, the need to change them and on the

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[19] *Bombay chronicle*, 7 January, 1925, p.8.

[20] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, K. Kelappan, "Nam Cheyyendathu", , 28 November, 1925, p. 7.

[21] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, "Swami Sradhanandante Prasangam", 12 November, 1925, p.2; Also see Sradha Ka Karyakram" *Sraddha*(Hindi) ed. Swami Sraddhananad 23 April, 1920 p.1.

[22] *Malayala Manorama Daily*, 9, December, 1923 p. 2.

healthy practices to be followed for well being.[23] It was felt necessary to recognise and protect the self respect of certain communities kept out from the main stream of the society. Without any revivalist interest, men like Kelappan sought to reform Hindu religion by striving for the cause of the depressed classes.[24] But to work for their cause was extremely difficult owing to stiff opposition from the *Savarnas* and the *Thiyya* community. A Nair like Kelappan working for the Harijans was a provocation to the Thiyyas, who claimed themselves to be *abrahmanas.* They used to insult and attack Harijan children while they were on their way to the Pavoor school. In great fury they complained, "Kammanmar do not observe pollution now; at least we can't do without it".[25] In Kalliasseri both Thiyyas and Nayirs tried to prevent the Harijans from attending school. Therefore Kelappan had to make an emphatic statement that his was a religion which took all communities equally into its fold.[26].

The role of Kelappan in the social reform of Malabar was quite unique. As a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi (he was called Kerala Gandhi) he was the president of Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh. As with all constructive

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[23] SIS Night schools to Adidravidas were established at Tanur, Olavanna, Feroke, Thrithala, Gopalapuram and other places during 1925-26 (see Appendix); see *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 12 November, 1925, p.7; 5 January, 1926.

[24] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 28 November, 1925, p. 7.

[25] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 12 January, 1926, p.8. Thiyyas of South Malabar used to address Nairs as Kammal (Singular), Kammanmar (Plural)

[26] *Ibid*; Interview with P. Raman Master Mannamangalam, Koyilandi, on 18.03.2005.

programmes he supported and associated himself with SIS/DMRT work. A strong fighter for the Harijan cause he dared to confront all oppositions and even ventured to meet reckless persons. In places like Gopalapuram, Kollam, Moodadi and Thikkodi, the Thiyyas were very unkind to the Harijans. The *patilan* as they addressed the *Thiyyas* bat and kicked them on their way to school. In such instances Kelappan was to act as their protector.[27] After handing over Pavoor school to DMRT, Kelappan started another school at Nallambrakkunnu (Iringath near Payyoli) for the education of Harijans and named it after Sradhananda. The Sradhananda Vidyalaya was intended to function as a centre for reform among the depressed classes by enabling them to earn while learning. With a view to make them self reliant, they were given training in handicrafts. A co-operative society and store was also opened there. The hillock where the school was set up was named Pakkanarpuram.[28] The visit of V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri in 1926 and Mahatma Gandhi in 1927 to Malabar was a great inspiration to the reform activities. Gradually caste Hindus also began to appreciate the work done by the school.[29]

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[27] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 22 May, 1926, p.6; 25 May, 1926, p.7.

[28] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 25 January, 1927, p.5; Also in see Prof. M.P. Manmadhan, *Kelappan*, Kottayam, 1991, p. 46.

[29] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 12 October, 1926, p. 2, p.7; 5 February, 1927, p. 5; 14 April, 1927, p.3.

An important centre of social reform activities was the DMRT Higher Elementary School at Tanur. The teachers of the school were known as DMRT workers. Within the school as well as outside they worked against pollution and untouchability. The impact of the school in social reform can be gauged from the progress it made in three years. Established in 1926, with 12 students and one teacher, in its third year it had 93 students 4 classes and 5 teachers.[30] The DMRT workers conducted magic lantern demonstrations against social evils, in almost all schools. Apart from this, art forms like 'Harikatha' and drama were staged to spread the message of social reform. These were performed during night in which both the aged and children attended.[31] Along with the children of the school Nayanar also took part in these performances. These programmes were great inspiration to the *avarnas* while the *savarnas* were provoked as well as informed by them. *Bhajans* were also used to create an awareness among the people of the need for change. Songs ridiculing caste practices often invited provocations. Once near Gopalapuram a land owner was infuriated by such a *bhajan.* However according to the declared policy of the DMRT. Nayanar was not prepared for an open confrontation and he stopped the programme.[32]

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[30] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 26 January, 1930, p. 8.

[31] Interview with P. Velayudhan Master Gokhale School Moodadi, on 31.03.2005.

[32] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 1 March, 1930, p. 10;

In the campaign against pollution and untouchability the SIS and Harijan Sevak Sangh worked together. Nayanar was also the president of Malabar Branch of Harijan Sevak Sangh. The story of Pakkanar, a yogi born among the untouchables was repeatedly presented in meetings and at the venue of Satyagrahas. The *bhakti* and great wisdom of Pakkanar was infact an anti dote to the pride and superstitions of the self conceited caste hindus.[33] In Perinthalmanna and Nilambur schools named after Pakkanar were established with a view to bring about the upliftment of the depressed classes. In Perinthalmanna the schools started in 1923 ceased functioning after two years for want of resources. Later under the labour department Govt. Pakkanar Labour school was started in 1927. The school was intended to cater to the reform of depressed classes.[34] The DMRT schemes were adopted in these schools. Library and Bhajans were also started. Civics was taught as an important subject. The study of civics in those days were based on the book *Pauradharmam* written jointly by V.R. Nayanar and P. Kuttikrishna Menon.

The Pavoor Adidravida school and Harijan Colony both founded by Kelappan together formed an important centre for social reform in Malabar. These were later entrusted to the DMRT in 1926. As Kelappan had to embark on individual Sathyagraha to could not meet the financial difficulties involved

[33] *Mathrubhumi daily*, 2 October, 1929, p.3.

[34] *Mathrubhumi daily*, 2 October, 1928, p.3.

in the running of centre. He had also to extent the his Hairjan - work to other places. The school and the Harijan colony were begun as part of social reform.[35] There were twelve houses in the colony. Initially only 8 houses were occupied by the Harijans. More families had to be rehabilitated in the remaining houses.[36] Children of the colony were studying in the Gokhale School. They were given good education and vocational training, good manners and habits were inculcated in them.

Kelappan and Nayanar used to visit the school and the families in the colony. They inquired about the improvements that occured in their life and suggested modifications.[37] Harijans who received education from the Gopalapuram school reached good positions in life. Almost all of them got employment in various government departments. One of the students of the school, was Vella Eecharan who became a Congress leader and later Minister of Kerala. When interviewed, elder persons of the colony talk about the services of Kelappan and V.R. Nayanar in glowing terms. They acknowledge that the colony had in fact transformed their lives, from wretched condition to one of prosperity.[38]

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[35] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 11 May, 1926, p.3; Also see file No:R.Dis 3337/27 dated 11.6.28, p.p. 1, 7, 49, 59, RAK, C.H. Kunhappa, *Smaranakal Mathram*, Thrissur, 2000, p, 139; Thikkodian, *Arangu Kanatha Nadan*, Thrissur, 1998, p.p. 143-4.

[36] C.H. Kunjappa, *Ibid.*, p. 140.

[37] Interview with Velayudhan Master, Gopalapuram dated. 31.03.2005.

[38] Interview with Appunni (Rtd. Postal Employee Gopalapuram Harijan Colony) on 10-4-2005; Velayudhan Master, Moodady, 14-01-2005.

The colony was visited by the Minister of Madras State, Muthuranga Muthaliyar, Suryanarayana Rao, A.V. Thakkar Bappa, the Labour Commissioner Gray and SIS Vice President H.N. Kunzru.[39] The visit of these dignitaries had great impact on the local people. Thiyyas and savarnas who were opposed to the colony began to turn sober. Some of them even, began to show interest in the affairs of the colony.[40] The colony had a hostel for the students of the Gopalapuram school. C.H. Kunhappa served as the Warden of the hostel, Head Master of the school and Superintendent of the colony, for a few months. [41] Though it was difficult to perform all these responsibilities at once, he took it as an opportunity to serve the depressed classes. Some local caste Hindus used to prevent the Harijan boys who passed by their houses on their way to the school. Sometimes the Warden had to accompany them as protector, and to admonish the caste Hindus. When the students went to receive school mails, they were not allowed to approach the post office. Suryanarayana Rao took it up with the government and the post office was then transferred to a nearby location.[42]

In the beginning Kelappan had picked children from Harijan *huts* locally known as *chala.* Since they had no sense of hygiene Kelappan had to bathe them and initiated them into learning. Later students from distant

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[39] C.H. Kunhappa, *Op cit*, p.p. 141-45,

[40] *Ibid,* p. 141.

[41] CH. Kunhappa, *Ibid,* p. 139.

[42] *Ibid,* p. 141.

places like Thalasseri, Feroke, Ottappalam and Malappuram came to Gopalapuram. They belonged to polluted castes like *Pariah* and *Kanakka.* Some of them had artistic talents and they staged dramas on the anniversary of the school. People were surprised to see their performance. Kelappan and Nayanar who encouraged them in their artistic inclination, asked the people whether there is any point in considering these talented children as polluted.[43]

Usually Harijans were not allowed to learn in the schools where *savarna* children studied. So the government had established separate schools for them known as *panchama* schools. But Gopalapuram struck a new model in education.[44] Equipped with efficient teachers, good building and new instruments it was the best school in the area. So many *savarna* children also joined the school. The only condition enjoyed on them was that one should refrain from the practice of pollution. With this distinct emphasis the school served as a catalyst in social reform in that part of the country.

Nayanar wanted to bring Harijans into the mainstream of public life. With this in view, he changed the traditional names of Harijan children such as Palan, Chakki, Mundan to Gopalan, Sukumari and Mukundan. This was to enhance their sense of self respect in comparison with the children of other

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[43] C.H. *Kunhappa, Ibid,* p. 147.

[44] Thikkodian, *Op cit,* p. 145.

communities.[45] Similar reforms had also been made, in other communities like the *Thiyyas*.

The DMRT took special interest in spreading the messages of Mahatma Gandhi on the eradication of untouchability. The *Mathrubhumi* daily published a statement by Mahatma Gandhi on behalf of SIS. Gandhiji exhorted that eradication of pollution had to be made a part of daily practice. He emphasised the need to recognise the position of Harijans at par with others in the public sphere. Allowing them access to public places and institutions was a pre-condition to recognising their social, religious, economic and political identity. He also appealed to open night schools and normal schools for the Harijans and to provide them medical aid.[46]

In 1932 Davadhar visited Malabar when he came to Guruvayoor in connection with Temple Entry Satyagraha. He was accompanied by V.R. Nayanar and two volunteers of Seva Sadan, Poona. He was to have discussions with Zamorin Raja at Kottakkal on the question of temple entry. Gandhiji instructed Devadhar to make a referendum on the subject, as he was well informed of the conditions of Malabar. The Raja, who was the patron of the temple did not agree with the idea of allowing temple entry to Harijans. He also said that the Harijans did not demand temple entry and alleged that the agitations were all the creation of certain political parties. But Devadhar

[45] Karthat Balanchandran, *V.R. Nayanar Smaranika*, Kannur, 1984, p.38.

[46] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 17 November, 1932, p.5.

suggested that it was the duty of leaders and learned men to consider Harijans on an equal footing with others.[47]

Meanwhile social reform movement in Malabar was gaining momentum in connection with Guruvayoor Satyagraha. A Satyagraha procession from Malabar to Guruvayoor was led by A.K. Gopalan.[48] On his way to Guruvayoor he reached Sradhananda Vidyalayam and was given a warm welcome. Another Harijan worker from North India Lalu Bhai Samal Das also reached the school. In his speech Samal Das appreciated the work being done in Malabar for the cause of Harijans. He asked to follow the programmes of Gandhi in this direction and to assume an attitude that the Harijans were not a polluted class. He also asked them to give up drinking habit and to practise hygenic living.[49]

The visit of Kasturba Gandhi was another important event. She visited a Nayadi colony at Kunnamkulam where she was accorded a warm welcome at the initiative of the YMCA. She was greatly aggrieved by the plight of the Nayadis who live on the outskirts of the town. She condemned the negative attitude of the conservative caste Hindus and said that their mind was cloudy

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[47] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 23 November, 1932, p. 4; December 24; December, 29.

[48] Interview with P.K. Krishnan, (Freedom fighter) Villiappally. Vatakara, on 22.03.2004; Interview with Narayanan Nambiar, (Freedom fighter), Thiruvallur, Vatakara, on 22.02.2004.

[49] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 20 December, 1932, p. 2.

with ignorance.[50] In Malabar several awareness programmes like Harijan day celebrations and visits to Harijan houses were organised. These programmes were organized with great enthusiasm at Pakkanarpuram and Gopalapuram. Public meetings were held in which the need for social reform was emphasized.[51] As a result of these campaigns, a great interest in social reform was generated and people's participation in the Harijan activities gradually increased. At Gopalapuram regular Bhajans were organized and more and more Harijan women and children began to attend them. Women began to come out wearing rouka and blouse. The participation of some important citizens of the place in the bhajans added to the conviction of the Harijans. Gradually more *savarna* students also joined the Gokhale School.[52]

The anniversaries of DMRT schools and Gokhale Day celebrations were also occasions to spread the message of social reform. Speaking on the occasion of the Gokhale Day celebration at Calicut V.S. Srinivasa Sastri explained that the political vision of Gokhale was to create a strong and unified Indian nation. He admitted of no communal thoughts or communal constituencies other than what the proportion of population allowed. Gokhale stood for Hindu-Muslim unity and always argued for a democratic approach

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[50] *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 7 December, 1932, p.3.

[51] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 5 May, 1933. p. 4; 17 May 1933 p.3.

[52] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 29 June, 1933 p.3.

to problems.[53] The anniversary celebration of Gopalapuram Gokhale School was a grand programme attended by dignitaries like Appu (District Labour Officer), Suryanarayana Rao, Vallabha Raja of Valluvanad and V.R. Nayanar. Vallabha Raja in his speech recalled Sir Chandavarkar's visit to Malabar eighteen years back. Sir Chandavarkar, a strong supporter of the cause of the depressed classes, was shocked by the extremely pathetic condition of the Nayadis of Malabar. The Raja explained to the people of the great services rendered by Congress and the DMRT for the upliftment of the depressed classes.[54] V.R. Nayanar pointed out that in Malabar both the oppressed and the oppressor suffered from a psychic problem. The oppressed should realize their self respect and should determine that they would not submit to others' dictates. They were gradually realizing their right to life as human beings in the society. He said that both the wealthy and the high castes should sympathize with this growing awareness and help them come up in life. And he repeated that the DMRT institutions were committed to the cause of the upliftment of the depressed classes.[55] While addressing the Cochin Cooperative Conference G.K. Devadhar also spoke about the need of social

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[53] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 21 February 1993 p.2; 22 November 1933 p.2.

[54] *Mathrubhumi Daily,* 22 November 1933, p.2.

[55] *Ibid.*

reform. He said that next to religion, cooperative movement was the only organisation based on brotherhood among people.[56]

In 1934 during his Kerala visit Gandhi came to Pakkanarpuram, where Kelappan had set up a Harijan Ashram. Gandhi inaugurated there a *Vaidyasala* established in memory of K.V. Balakrishna Menon, colleague of Kelappan who died in imprisonment during the non-co-operation movement. Gandhi admired Kelappan's work for the upliftment of the Harijans.[57] During his journey Gandhi stopped near Gopalapuram school where he was welcomed by V.R. Nayanar, students and teachers of the school. Nayanar explained to Gandhi the work being done there for the Harijans.[58]

In Valluvanad taluk, the cause of the Harijans was spearheaded by. Vallabha Raja. At his initiative, the DMRT prepared a programme of action. And a centre like Gopalapuram was set up at Thrithala with land and building generously sanctioned by the Raja.[59] This was the nucleus of the present Gokhale Higher Secondary School, Thrithala.

The social reform movement of Kerala received a great fillip from A.V. Thakkar Bappa who visited Kerala in 1935.[60] Thakkar was the General

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[56] *Mathrubhumi Daily,* 10 January 1934 p. 8.

[57] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 14 January 1934 p. 5.

[58] *Mathrubhumi Daily Ibid.*

[59] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 6 March 1935 p. 3.

[60] *Mathrubhumi Daily, 6 March,* 1935, p.3.

secretary of the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh and he toured Kerala during the period 6 to 22 March 1935. This was his second, visit to Kerala to personally understand the life and situation of the Harijans here. He visited DMRT centers, schools and Harijan upliftment centers in Malabar during his journey.

The work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and SIS were mutually complementary in their aims and objectives. The necessity of the upliftment of the depressed classes was recognised by Kelappan much earlier. In 1915 when the Nair Service Society was established drawing inspiration from the principles of SIS, Kelappan was elected as the first president of the NSS. He was assigned the work of preparing a byelaw for the Society. On that occasion he included two points as the objectives of the Society, namely, communal harmony, and the upliftment of depressed classes through the improvement of their industries and jobs.[61] These ideas and activities had far reaching impact on the attitude of the upper classes. Several of them came forward with the motto of social reform. In Palakkad T.R. Krishna Swami Iyer established Shabari Ashram in 1924 for the education and the rehabilitation of the Harijans. R.V. Sharma and Mrs. Krishna Swami were his associates. Mrs. Krishna Swami was the first Brahmin woman to go to jail for participating in the freedom struggle.[62] By 1935 Harijan Sevak Sangh

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[61] *Ibid.*, p.9.

[62] *Ibid.*, p.10.

activities were extended throughout Kerala. It had eight distinct committees and four regional centres.[63]

In Palakkad the Sabari Ashram was an important centre for social reform. In 1934 the Ashram was taken over by Harijan Sevak Sangh,[64] as Iyer could not run it on his own owing to financial difficulties. In 1936. V.R. Nayanar was elected President of the Malabar branch of Harijan Sevak Sangh in place of Syamji Sundardas resigned.[65] Ever since Sri. Nayanar was greatly interested in the affairs of the Ashram and made plans for necessary improvements. In 1939 he made appeals through the press to the public to contribute generously for the running of the Ashram.[66] He wanted to enhance the number of inmates from the existing 14 to 20. In Palakkad area the Ashram had promoted the cause of the Harijans.

The founding of the Sabari Asharam was motivated by a resolution adopted at the Congress conference held at Ernakulam in 1923. It was resolved to adopt eradication of pollution and untouchability as an important programme of Congress. And a committee consisting of Kelappan and T.R.

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[63] C.K. Moossath, *op. cit.*, p.10.

[64] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 10 April 1937; 26 April 1939 p. 5.

[65] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 5 November 1936 p. 6.

[66] *Mathrubhumi Daily* 26 April 1939 p. 5; Interview with Karthat Balachandran, Dated, 5.04.2005.

Krishnaswami Iyer was formed to chalk out a plan of action.[67] A great devotee of Mahatma Gandhi, Iyer wanted to train men as satyagrahis who would work for India's freedom.[68] Iyer was a participant in Vaikkom Satyagraha. Begun as a Harijan upliftment centre it soon became a centre of nationalist workers.[69] Karthat Balachandran, a DMRT worker served as its Manager for some time.[70]

Akathethara, where the Sabari Ashram was situated was known as the Bardoli of Kerala. The Ashram inspired intense nationalist activities in the form of anti untouchability campaigns, prohibition campaigns and programmes for social upliftment, like temple entry and accessibility in public roads. Following their work, an Ayyappa temple under the control of a local landlord was thrown open to the Harijans inspite of the boycott of the Brahmin priest.[71] The Ashram was visited by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Thakkar Bappa, Sen Gupta, Narikkar, Rajendra Prasad, Kasthurba Gandhi, Rajaji, V.V. Giri etc. A prayer-hall at Sabari Ashram was inaugurated by

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[67] Tarur. P. Kesavan, "Sabari Ashram", *Harijan Sevak Sangham Gandhi Janmasadabdhi Souvenier,* Palakkad, 1969, p.52.

[68] Swami Ananda Thirtha, "Sabari Ashram: Smaranakal"; *Harijan Sevak Sangham Kerala Sakha Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika,* Kozhikode, 1985, p.p. 13,14; Karthat Balachandran, "Gandhijiyum Harijana Prasthanavum", *Vettom*, Tanur, 1983, November, 47, p. 18.

[69] Allath Rajagopal, "Sabaryasramathil Mukkal Manikkur", *Malayalam, Express daily,* 5-4-1967, Thrissur .

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] Karthat Balachandran, "Akathetharayil Iruttum Velichavaum" *Primary Teacher,* (A Magazine of the Kerala Primary Teachers' Association), Palakkad, Vol. 73, January, 1981, p.7.

K. Kamaraj Nadar, Chief Minister of Madras state.[72] Swami Anandathirtha was an associate of Sri. Krishna Swami Iyer at the Ashram in its early years. Once on a festival day the Swami took the Harijan boys of the Ashram to the nearby Kallekkulangara temple premises, and the infuriated temple authorities drove away the children and flogged the Swami. It was this incident which provoked the Swami to become a virulent activist for the Harijan cause.[73] DMRT workers like V. R. Nayanar, T.P.R. Nambisan, Karthat Balachandran were all associated with the activities of the Sabari Ashram.

Formation of the Harijan Sevak Sangh by Mahatma Gandhi was a great event which contributed to the cause of the depressed classes of India. The functioning of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was started in Kerala in 1932.[74] The first president of the Kerala branch of the Sangh was Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai, and G. Ramachandran was its first secretary. In 1935 it had eight district committees and four local committees. Its programmes included, bhajans night schools and day schools, hostels and Ashrams for the Harijans. The first president of Malabar Harijan Sevak Sangh was Kongattil Raman Menon, and P. Sankunni Nambiar its secretary.[75] But in Malabar the

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[72] H.S.S. Kerala Branch Annual Report for 1959-60, Calicut.

[73] Swami Ananda Thirtha, *op. cit.*, p.15.

[74] Ambalakkat Karunakara Menon, "Mahanaya Thakkar Bappa", *Harijan Sevak Sangh Gandhi Janma Sadabdhi Souvenir, Palakkad,* 1969, p.11.

[75] T.P.R. Nambissan, *Harijan Sevak Sangham Keralathil Anchu Pathittandukal (Harijan Sevak Sangh Kerala Sabha Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika* 1985 Palakkad, p. 87.

cause of the Harijans was taken up much before the functioning of the Sevak Sangh. Following the anti untouchability resolution adopted at the Congress conference held at Ernakulam in 1923, T.R. Krishna Swami Iyer founded the Sabari Ashram at Olavakkot in 1924 and Kelappan founded Pakkanarpuram Gandhi Ashram, near Koyilandy in 1926.[76]

In 1937 Raman Menon became Minister in the first Congress Ministry of Madras, representing Malabar. In his place V.R. Nayanar was elected as the president of Malabar, Harijan Sevak Sangh[77]. With Sankunni Nambiar as secretary he was able to revitalise social reform activities in Malabar. During this period they were able to persuade the Madras Government to make financial grants to Sabari Ashram, Pakkanarpuram, Gandhi Ashram and Puthiyara Kasthurba Balika Sadanam. This Sadanam was started by Mrs. Metilda Kellan in 1933 at Ottappalam as instructed by Mahatma Gandhi. She was a teacher at the L.S.N Girls School, Ottappalam. It was shifted to Puthiyara in 1942, following the District Boards' decision to transfer L.S.N. Girls' School (Ottapalam) to a private management, which then denied fee concession to the Harijan inmates of Sadanam. Though Miss Kellan was appointed Head Mistress of Parayanchery L.P. School Calicut, she continued

[76] Tharur P. Kesavan *Op.cit.*, p. 52, T.P.R. Nambissan *Ibid., p. 82.*

[77] T.P.R. Nambissan, *Ibid.*, pp. 88,89.

to be devoted to the cause of Harijan upliftment[78]. She was greatly inspired by the SIS and the Seva Sadan Poona. On their model she sent Harijan girls for training in midwifery, nursing and teaching. Her work was in every way complementary to the programmes of DMRT[79].

The condition of certain communities among the depressed classes like the Nayadis were extremely pathetic. The Nayadis form the lowest and the most wretched caste among the Hindus of Kerala and nothing definite is known about them. There are no Nayadis in north Malabar, but they are found in the talukes of South Malabar and in Cochin territory.[80] The utter contempt with which they were treated is indicated by the Malayalam word "Nayadippad", that is, the distance of 72 feet at which they must stand away from the high caste men. As William Logan says,

> They are most persistent in their clamour for charity, and will follow at respectful distance for miles together any person walking, driving or boating. If anything is given to them it must be laid down, and after the person offering it has proceeded a sufficient distance the recipient comes timidly forward and removes it.[81]

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[78] Padmini Vasu Menon, "Metilda Kellan", *H.S.S. Gandhi Janma Sadabdhi Souvenir*, Palakkad, 1969, pp. 51,52.

[79] Interview with Sri. Theruvath Raman, dated 20-03-2005.

[80] William Logan, *Malabar Vol. I*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, p. 183; S. Appadorai Iyer "Nayadis of Malabar" *Madras Government Museum Bullettin, Anthropology*, M. 235, p.p. 67,73.

[81] William Logan, *op. cit.*

As George Woodcock observes, Kerala Society which was socially heterodox in Indian terms, maintained a complicated caste system, which practised "caste pollution unknown else where, such as the extra ordinary rule by which the beggar Nayadis were not merely untouchables but unseeables".[82] They have to earn their living by calling for alms from the concealment of roadside bushes.

As part of the Harijan tour, [83]Gandhiji visited Malabar in January 1934. In his address he described Malabar as "the land of inequities". He poignantly described how he was moved by the plight of the Nayadis:

> "Early this morning, I entered Malabar-with due deference to our friends who call themselves *sanatanists*-the land of iniquities. As I was passing the familiar places, the face of a solitary Nayadi, whom I had seen during a previous visit, rose before my eyes. It was about ten or eleven in the morning when, in the midst of a discussion about untouchability, 'unapproachability and invisibility', all forms of which are found in no part of the world except Malabar, a shrill voice was head. Those who were talking to me said 'we can show you a live

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[82] George Woodcock, *Kerala: A Portrait of Malabar Coast,* London, 1967, p.p. 29-30.

[83] Gandhiji began his country wide tour for the cause of the Harijan's on November 7, 1933. It was a historic tour which took 9 months and covered more than twenty thousand Kilometers. In the course of his tour Gandhiji addressed meetings, collected funds, visited Harijan colonies opened temples for Harijans, and gave guidance to people engaged in the crusade against untouchability. He put new hopes in the Harijan and made the caste-Hindus aware of their sins, and also conscious of their responsibility. (See Mukut Behari Verma , *History of the Harijan Sevak Sangh 1932-1968*, Delhi, 1971, p.100.

Nayadi'. The public road was not for him. Unshod, he was walking across the fields with a noiseless tread. I went out with the friends and saw the Nayadi. I asked him to come and talk to me. Evidently he was frightened and did not know when a blow would descend upon him. Tremblingly he talked to me. I told him that the public road was as much for him as for me. He said 'It cannot be so. I may not walk on the public road'. I close the scene and ask the *sanatanists* or anybody else to show me the scriptural authority in defence of this inhuman conduct. You will find me smiling with you, laughing with you, and cracking jokes with you, but you may also know that, behind all these jokes and smiles and laughs, the face of the Nayadi and that scene will keep haunting me throughout my tour in Malabar".[84]

Nayadis were living in places like Ernad, Ponnani, Nilambur, Edakkara, Nilambur, Payyanedam, Olavakkode, Pattambi, Manjeri, Kuzhalmannam, Muthalamada, Kollamkode, Pallatheri and Mundoor. Their population is estimated at about 1,000 in 1934.[85] The Nayadis prefer to live in huts errected in isolated places in the forests on the banks of streams. Some of them were employed as labourers by landlords and they stayed in the farm lands.[86] The government had initiated certain programmes for the welfare of the Nayadis in the 1920s. In 1926 Rao Sahib P.V. Gopalan, the District

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[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

[85] File R.Dis No. 687/32, Vol. I, 7-8-1934 p. 6, RAK.

[86] Kolarath Raghavan, "Keralathile Nayadikal" *Mathrubhmi* daily, 15th January, 1956, p.6.

Labour Officer made detailed enquiries about the conditions of Nayadis in Palakkad, Walluvandad and Ponani taluks and submitted proposals for opening a colony for them.[87] Accordingly a colony was opened for their rehabilitation at Olavakkode, with 5 thatched huts, I thatched school building, 1 tiled temple, and 1 tiled cattle fen. [88]

There was considerable opposition against the admission of Nayadi children in aided schools and the schools under the management of local taluk boards. The nayadi children were not prepared to join any village school fearing that the Hindus might stop giving them alms.[89] Moreover, owing to superstitions and their characteristic aversion to deviate from their traditional practices, no significant changes were brought about in their life. As an official note submitted to the Collector made out, "It seems to me that it is an impossibility to improve the present generation. We might therefore make an attempt to improve the future generations. Education alone can mend their present ways."[90] However, in 1932, the government did not go about making any further arrangements for the cause of the Nayadis, but effected a cut in the expenses of the colony[91].

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[87] File R.Dis. No. 11876/32. Dated, 23.2.1934 p. 3.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[90] *Ibid.*, p.11.

[91] *Ibid.*

The DMRT was perhaps the only service organisation which took up the task of improving the Nayadi community. It should also be noticed that the workers of DMRT were also associated with the work of Harijan Sevek Sangh. On 22nd September 1941 the Nayadi colony at Olavakkode was visited by A.V. Thakkar. He was accompanied by V.R. Nayanar, President of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Malabar and the secretary P. Sankunni Nambiar. Ever since his joining the SIS Thakkar was engaged in a vigorous campaign throughout the country for the cause of the depressed classes. After his visit he submitted detailed notes making recommendations[92] for the improvement of the Nayadis of Olavakkode to the Malabar Collector. He recommended that more land should be made available to the families. Another recommendation was to provide them with one or two pairs of bullocks and ploughs. More houses needed to be constructed and boarding grants should be extended to Nayadi students studying in H.E. School. Since considerable reformation had been achieved, Thakkar pleaded that similar colonies should be started elsewhere: "Unless more colonies are established, Nayadis will not improve socially, economically and educationally. For the uplift of this most backward section of people, government should spent more money through the Labour Department and more personal attention be given to Nayadis."[93]

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[92] A.V. Thakkar, Letter dated 26 September, 1951, (Camp Mangalore) to Malabar Collector File D. Dis NO. 9528/41, dt. 31-03-1943, p.p. 1-5, RAK.

[93] *Ibid.*, p. 5

As the true disciples of Gokhale and of Mahatma Gandhi DMRT workers like TPR Nambissan and Karthat Balachandran were devoted in letter and spirit to the cause of the Hairjans and Nayadis. Born and brought up in an aristocratic traditional Nair family of Tanur, Karthat was very much disturbed at the way Harijans were treated by the elders of his family. Besides the practice of pollution, the Harijan women were not even allowed to wear blouses. Even as a young boy he protested against it by refusing to wear shirt. He also gave up his caste name 'Menon'. He even dared to take Harijans to his family temples which were not accessible to them at that time.[94] As a student of the DMRT school at Tanur, he imbibed the spirit of selfless service which the SIS idealised and was inspired by the sense of commitment embodied in the personality of men like V.R. Nayanar.[95] With great enthusiasm for public service, Karthat started on 19.02.1948 a night school at his home village Ozhur called *Bappuji Smaraka Nisa Padasala* (a night school for Harijans) for the education of Harijans on 19-2-1948.[96] Karthat was whole heartedly engaged in the service of the Harijans and Nayadis of Ernad and Ponani taluks. Those who could not tolerate his work

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[94] Karthat Balachandran, "Samuhya Pravarthakare Parichayappetuka", *Vettom*, June 1982, 3, 2, p.6.

[95] Karthat Balachandran, "DMRT Smaranakal", *Vettom*, 25 January, 1982, 2, 9, p.17. Also see Karthat Balachandran, "Samoohya Pravarthakante Ormakurippukal", *Primary Teacher*, December 1978, Vol. 48, Palakkad, pp.27-28.

[96] Invitation for the Anniversary day of the school dated 15.2.1949 (private papers). Also Interview with Karthat on 5.04.2005.

for the Harijans, derogatively called him 'Cheruman Menon' and those who appreciated his services for the Nayadis called him 'Nayadi Sevak'.[97]

Alongwith T.P.R Nambissan, Karthat worked for the rehabilitation and upliftment of the Harijans and Nayadis in places like Ponani, Kadavanad, Edakazhiyur, Nedumgottur, Mankara, and Olavakode. They organized artistic performances and film shows in the various places and raised funds for their work.[98] In 1951 he came to Ponnani as a worker of Harijan Sevak Sangh as adviced by L.N. Rao, [99] who succeeded V.R. Nayanar as honorary secretary of DMRT. The Nayadis of Kadvanad-Puthuponani area had quite a meager existence. They were living in huts which were in a pitiful condition. So he had to collect materials for repairing and thatching the huts. These huts were infact provided for them by V.R. Nayanar a few years back. It was not easy for Karthat to obtain local support because of the political development of those days. A split in Congress had occurred with Kelappan and others forming Kisan Mazdur Praja Party. As Karthat belonged to neither camps he could not approach the Congress groups. The Communists were opposed to the Congress programmes. However with great difficulties he managed to get

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[97] *Primary Teacher*, January 1979, Vol. 49, p.39. Also see orders of appointments from President (Vardhamanan) Malabar H.S.S, Kozhikode, 22nd November, 1952.

[98] Karthat Balachandran, "TPR Nambissan Adaranjali", *Vettoms* September, 1988, 9,5 p.7.

[99] Karthat Balachandran, "Nayatikale Sevikkan" *Vettom*, November, 2000, 21,7, p.p. 5,6. Also see Sri. L.N. Rao's Letter to Sri. Raman Menon, Kozhikode,. dt, 30, May 1951.

local support. He persuaded Nayadi children to go to school. He approached generous minded persons of the area and received contributions from them. The money was used to provide books and clothes to the children.[100] He made arrangements to provide them *Kanji* daily at noon.[101] Harijan Day celebrations were organised every month as instructed by the Madras government. Frequent meetings were arranged in which there were songs and *kirtans*. Occasionally he took Nayadis to local tea shops and temples. Though there were protests against him for those activities, gradually the people and the revenue officials appreciated his work. He got help from the renowned poet Edasserry and many important citizens of the locality.[102]

In 1952 Karthat was appointed Tribal Welfare Worker at Munnar. This time he had to work among the Adivasis. Munnar is a place at a height of 4800 feet from the sea level. The tribals were living in extremely hostile conditions. He began his work with a speech delivered at the local high school, in which he emphasized the need for social reform among the depressed classes. He told them that for a proper change in society it was necessary to drive out the ghost of casteism and to embrace the idea of friendship and co-existence. He recited a poem written by his uncle K.S. Menon which contained the above message and exhorted the need to remove

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[100] Karthat Balachandran, *Op. cit.*, December, 2000, 21, p.p. 19-20.

[101] Order of appointment from the President, the Mabalar Harijan Sevak Sangh, Kozhikode, 3 December, 1953.

[102] Karthat Balachandran, *Op. cit.*

untouchability.[103] He sent reports about tribal life and his experiences among the tribals to L.N. Rao. He started a school for the tribals at Vattayar.[104] As part of his tribal work he made a survey of the material means and social life of the Adivasis – Muthuvan and Mannan – of Marayur, Suryanelli, Muthanmudi, Irupathekkar, Santhanpara and the like places. He had to go on foot 5 to 12 miles to their dwelling places in the inferior forest for this purpose.[105]

The life and teachings of Gokhale was a great source of inspiration to Karthat to become a social worker. Thus motivated, after his primary education he decided to plunge headlong into work for the eradication of untouchability and illiteracy. In Ozhur, apart from his night school, where he was also working as a member of the village Congress committee[106] This day was chosen to commemorate Gokhale as his death anniversary fell on that day.[107] In this work, as in all other programmes, he was also influenced by his experiences at the Tanur DMRT school and his contact with men like

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[103] Karthat Balachandran, "Munnaril Adivasikalkkidayil" *Primary Teacher* Palakkad, September, October, 1979, Vol. 57, 58, pp. 7-8, 7-9.

[104] Letter from the Commissioner for the Advancement of Backward Communities to Karthat Balachandran, dated 15.03.1952 Also see Invitation letter for the inauguration of the school, Vattayar dated 11.03.1952.

[105] Karthat Balachandran, "Nammute Vanangalile Adivasikal", *Khadi Jagath*, Palakkad, July, 1952, 2, 7, p.18.

[106] Certificate dated, 13.07.1948, Ozhur Village Congress Committee.

[107] Karthat Balachandran, "Bapuji Smaraka Nisa Padasala", *Primary Teacher*, December, 1978, Vol. 48, p. 38.

Suryanarayan Rao and V.R. Nayanar.[108] The school was called Bappuji Smaraka Nisapadasala. In 1950 he became an effective Congress member and participated in the constructive activities of the Congress.[109] In 1950 he decided to become an inmate of Gandhi Seva Sadan Peroor with a view to train himself more in constructive programmes.[110] With these activities the interest in the eradication of illiteracy became a common concern and adult education centres began to spring up in various places. In 1951 one such centre Bappuji Vayojana Vidyalaya was opened at Pookayil near Tirur, and was inaugurated by Karthat who by that time had become a Nayadi Sevak.[111] In 1952 the SIS deputed him as Aboriginal Welfare Worker among the Adivasis of Munnar. He used this opportunity to bring out the problems faced by these tribal people and stressed the need for more governmental care for them.[112] While working in this capacity Sri. Karthat was involved in the adult education programmes in the Devikulam and Peermade taluks of Travancore.[113]

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[108] Karthat Balachandran, "Samuhya Pravarthakante Ormakurippukal" *Primary Teacher,* January, 1979, Vol. 48, p. 38.

[109] K.P.C.C., Congress Effective Membership certificate dated 24-11-1950 (Private papers of Karthat).

[110] Farewell meeting notice dated 13-3-1950 (private papers of Karthat).

[111] Notice dated 18-06-1951 the inviting for the inauguration of the school.

[112] Karthat Balachandran, "Adivasis of Munnar", *The Bharat Jyothi,* Pallakkad, 21st August, 1966, p.p. 6,7.

[113] Letter from the Director of Public Instructions No.L.Dis.2910/52, 10-03-1952 (Private Papers of Karthat)

The Bappuji Nisa Padasala at Ozhur brought out a manuscript magazine called *Jnanavani*. Its mottos were truth, equality and liberty. It was edited by Karthat and the deputy editor was Kunhimalu Amma. The Magazine had short articles on neighbourhood relations, women's education, Gandhian ideas, thoughts of Gokhale and Vivekananda, rural upliftment, democracy, patriotism, the responsibilities of youth etc[114] Through this magazine the Night School was striving to spread the message of social reform. The school was meant not only for Harijans but for all adults between the age of 8 and 40 including Muslims. The messages of social and cultural reform was widely recognised by the people in and around Ozhur.

In the true sprit of the SIS and Harijan Sevak Sangh, Karthat was prepared to undertake any kind of work any where. In 1966 he was appointed by the Harijan Sevak Sangh as Bhangi (Night soil workers) Sevak in Palakkad Municipality. It was his task to persuade the house owners to convert service type latrines to PRAI and to supervise the conversion.[115] Karthat also worked for the cause of the potters of Palakkad. He made efforts to bring their problems to public attention.[116] A sarvodaya centre was opened at Andimadam where the potters lived, by Gandhi Smarak Nidhi in 1953. Sri. Karthat was in charge of that centre from 1954. Under the auspices of this

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[114] *Jnanavani*, January 1950 (Private papers).

[115] Harijan Sevak Sangh Letter No.BKM.11/66-67, dated 8-12-66.

[116] Karthat Balachandran, "Andimadathile Manpathra Nirmathakkal", *Mathrubhumi weekly*, 16 May 1956, p.20

centre he was able to organize an adult literacy centre at Kadukkamkunnam, a Sarvodaya Karshaka Samithi, Sarvodaya learning centres, high school and a co-operative society for the production of jaggery were set up.

The centre also made efforts to conduct prayer meetings, Harijan service work, scout work and campaign for public hygiene. Training in spinning was given to some people of the place. Noon meal was also arranged to the children.[117] The centre also gave encouragement to improve agricultural production. Japanees method of cultivation was demonstrated and training in the manufacture of compost and other manures were given. It was a great encouragement to agriculturists and many in South Malabar achieved increased production.[118] During the temple festival at Kalpathi Karthat presented demonstrations on the Japanese method and popularised constructive programmes through songs. He composed a song on Japanese cultivation and recited it during demonstrations.[119] He was also interested in the Bhoodan Movement launched by Vinobha Bhave. He was a member of the reception committee when Vinobha Bhave visited Kerala in 1957 as part

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[117] *Sarvodayam Magazine*, Kozhikode, May, 1955, 5,5, p.p. 170-71.

[118] See reports in *The Hindu*, dated 19-07-1954; *Mathrubhumi Daily* 11-1-1955, 7-03-1954.

[119] *Mathrubhumi Daily* report dated, 18-11-1953; Karthat Balachandran, "Jap Krishi Ganam"

of his Bhoodan tour.[120] From 1978 onwards he had been associated with Kerala Non-formal Education (KANFED) Council and worked as its Palakkad District Convenor.[121] In recognition of his services as the first district convenor of non-formal education and for the work which he did in that respect in Ozhur, Ponani, Andimadam, Kadukkamkunnam, Balussery, Varkala, Kallar etc, he was conferred the P.T. Bhaskara Panikkar Kanfed Award in 1998.[122]

The DMRT workers had initiated a series of campaigns with a view to eradicate evil social practices. The illiterate villagers who were caught up in blind faith followed several superstitious practices. For example, they believed that diseases were caused by evil spirits and so they refrained from taking medicines. Instead, they sought solace in black magic. The DMRT workers with Nayanar as their leader unleashed a consistent campaign against such practices. They explained to the people that practices, such as animal sacrifices in temples and black magic were quite unreasonable.[123] There wee occasions when they had to make direct interventions in such instances and ventured to lie before temples and asked the priests to cut their neck instead of

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[120] Karthat Balachandran, "Acharya Vinoba Bhaveyude Kooteyulla Dinangal", *Swedeshi Evening daily* Palakkad, 15th October, 2001, p.p. 3,4; Karthat Balanchandran, "Smarananjali" *Vinobha Smaranika* Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p. 43.

[121] Kanfed Notice, 1.10.1978.

[122] *Malayala Manorama*, Kozhikode, 26.6.1998, p.3.

[123] Karthat Balachandran, "DMRT smaranakal", *Vettom*, January, 1982, 2, 9, p.17.

the animals.[124] Thus they were driving home to the people a sense of rationality and the need to have a comprehensive understanding through modern education.

Prohibition was another important cause taken up by the DMRT workers. Even as they were economically weak, several men in Malabar were also addicted to the consumption of liquor. This habit added to the misery of a large number of families. Liquor consumption was very rampant among weaker communities like weavers, harijans and among considerable villagers. For the shop owners it was a source of exploitation, while for the poor toiling people it was a means of their impoverishment.[125] All their hard work was of no avail in the face of this bad habit. So, from the point of view of social reform as well as motivated by the nationalist programme, the DMRT took it upon themselves to free the people from this vicious habit.[126] They actively took part in picketing liquor shops; and through magic lantern demonstrations consistently campaigned for prohibition.[127]

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[124] *Ibid.*

[125] V.R. Nayanar, "Harijanodharanathinulla Oru Padhati" *Mathrubhumi weekly,* 1937, Thulam, 16, p.

[126] Interview with P. Paremeswaran, (10-01-2000); T. Assankutty, (20-03-2002) and Karthat Balachandran, (20-04-2005).

[127] Karthat Balachandran, *V. R. Nayanar Smaranika,* Kannur, 1984, p. 37.

To bring about any kind of reform the society had to be free from casteist tangles. With this in view, the DMRT workers arranged interdining sessions frequently and on all special occasions like the anniversary of schools, or the visit of dignitaries. Suryanarayanan Rao and V.R. Nayanar were very particular in organizing such programmes. These were done to inculcate a sense of oneness among communities not only with a view to sort out local tensions but also with larger nationalistic outlook as preached by both Gokhale and Gandhi.[128]

The DMRT gave utmost importance to fostering the spirit of communal harmony in Malabar. The very operations of the SIS and the DMRT were occasioned by the Malabar Rebellion which was one of the most unfortunate episodes in the history of India and of Kerala in particular from the point of view of communal amity. It was therefore quite in the fitness of things that both the SIS and the DMRT strove immensely to establish mutual trust and co-operation between the Hindus and Muslims, between whom, prior to the arrival of the British, there was not much of antagonism. The DMRT was very keen to join hands with Muslim community in its various programmes. T. Assankutty a living DMRT worker is still brimful of the work of V.R. Nayanar in supporting the helpless Muslims after the rebellion

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[128] *Speeches of Gokhale*, "The Hindu-Mahomedan Question" Madras, 1920, p.p. 996-9.

as well as during flood and epidemics.[129] He got men like the Thangal of Kondotty and the like important citizens of that community involved in the DMRT work of relief, education, rural reconstruction and social reform. They frequently arranged prayer sessions in which the sacred texts of all religions were read and their basic principles of benevolence and charity explained.[130] Thus by forging communal harmony the DMRT was providing a healing touch to the public consciousness which was injured by the rebellion.

It was important perception of the SIS that the condition of Indian women had to be improved. The Indian women constitute the most marginalised and unfortunate section of society. Their enfeeblement was tantamount to the weakening of the whole society. Therefore, education of women and recognition of their dignity and status in society were essential to any programme of social reform.[131]In Malabar, during the relief work after the rebellion, the DMRT gave utmost priority in the case of women and children in its relief camps and the rehabilitation centres.[132] Subsequently the DMRT in all its programmes special attention was paid to the cause of the women irrespective of caste and creed. The need for the improvement of the

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[129] T. Assankutty interview on 20.03.2002.

[130] Karthat Balachandran, *Op. cit.*, p. 37; T. Assankutty interview on 29-03-2002.

[131] G.K. Devadhar, *A Note on Female Education,* Poona, 1916, p.p. 3-4.

[132] Interview with Theruvath Raman on 20-03-2005.

condition of women was emphasized by V.R. Nayanar in one of his articles. As he pointed out, unhealthy practices like child marriage, early widowhood and consequent infant mortality and casualty of mothers made the life of India women all the more miserable. Added to this was their illiteracy and socio-economic backwardness.[133] Indian women were the most illiterate in the world. Until Indian women were liberated from the enveloping darkness, there could be no real prosperity in India. He therefore, called upon social reformers to undertake programmes for the education of women as an immediate task.[134]

It was quite curious to observe that Malabar remained rather insulated from the general tempo of the major reform movements of Kerala. Sreenarayana Guru and Ayyankali movements did not make deeper impact in Malabar Society. This fact was realized first by the SIS and later by the DMRT in the days following the Malabar rebellion. Therefore they had to undertake an extraordinary task of mending a society which was corrupt socially, culturally and economically. The worst form of these inequities were found in Malabar society and it was an extremely difficult work which they had to perform in bringing about improvements. They worked at grass root level and the result of course was tremendous as evident from the social,

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[133] V.R. Nayanar, "Bharatasthreekal", *Mathrubhumi weekly*, 17 June, 1935, p.7.
[134] *Ibid.* p. 9.

educational institutions and the healthy practices like communal harmony and social cohesion which they could institutionalize in Malabar society. Though for historical reasons, the SIS work was confined largely to the Malabar area, they had done some considerable work among the tribals in Cochin and Travancore area also.

# CONCLUSION

Gokhale established the SIS in 1905, in order, "to train men, prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit". Its ideology was constitutionalism. Such men, given to a life self-obligation, renunciation of material interest and subjection to rigorous discipline were to strive for the social and political uplift of their country. Through the selfless work of these "ascetic pilgrims of politics", Gokhale intended to spiritualise public life in India. "According to him young men with intellectual capacity, devotion to duty and mental elevation" would work as "national missionaries".

The SIS was considered the powerhouse of Indian national movement though it was not conceived as a political organisation. One of the three men who had joined Gokhale at the founding of the society, G.K. Devadhar, was intimately associated with the SIS work in Kerala. Prominent nationalists and members of SIS like V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, H.N. Kunzru, (Kunzru later also served as member of the Kerala state formation committee) A.V. Thakkar also had connections with SIS work in Kerala. The Society was engaged in a variety of political and social activities, like organisational work for Indian National Congress, journalism, education and social reform. Gokhale was a pioneer in the field of universal elementary education in India. For him

Elementary education meant more than mere capacity to read and write. It meant greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual.

It was the Malabar Rebellion of 1921-22, which occasioned the functioning of SIS in Kerala. It began its work as a relief agency to the people who were in distress consequent on rebellion. But eventually the Society found it necessary to extent its work in a variety of areas such as relief and rehabilitation of the sufferers not only of the rebellion but also of distress caused by disease, famine, flood and other calamities. The DMRT established under the aegis of the SIS further extended activities in the field of education, rural reconstruction and social reform. The SIS work thus signifies an important phase of constitutionalism in Kerala.

The invaluable services rendered by the Society for about four decades, however, was not properly recognised and so remained decimated in the historiography of modern Kerala. It was also a concentrated phase of Constructive Swadeshi as motivated by the Economic Nationalism, which was asserted through the Swadeshi Movement. It is especially noticeable that while most part of Kerala was swept by a wave of socio-religious movements, Malabar was largely uneffected by the new consciousness. In such a condition of insularity the task of infusing a spirit of social, educational, the SIS undertook economic and cultural empowerment. The result of such a multi-faceted task was highly creditable as was attested by the resurgent

political consciousness of Malabar in terms of secular, democratic ideals after the rebellion of 1921.

In Kerala, for historical reasons, the people of Malabar had been the beneficiaries of the services of the SIS. G.K. Devadhar laid down the foundation for SIS work in Kerala. In fact he provided a blue print for action which was improved by workers like Suryanarayana Rao and V.R. Nayanar. The greatest achievement of Devadhar was that he identified the educational backwardness of Malabar as basic to all her problems and handicaps. He was also a pioneer in the field of co-operative movement in Kerala. The role of Devadhar in initiating a wave of social reform on a secular basis was quite remarkable.

Besides ameliorating the distress of the people in the wake of the rebellion, the SIS/DMRT worked constantly against untouchability, pollution, communal disharmony and illiteracy. It was through the selfless work of Suryanarayana Rao, that the people of Malabar realised for the first time the significance of voluntary service in her hours of need during rebellion, famine, epidemic and flood. He was able to get a wide variety of people ranging from laymen to royal personalities and government officials, irrespective of caste and creed, involved in the DMRT programmes.

Suryanarayana Rao was succeeded by V.R. Nayanar under whose leadership and guidance the SIS work, especially as executed through the

DMRT reached the lowly of the lowest and the people who were subject to the most hapless and miserable conditions of life. To the common people of Malabar Nayanar was SIS incarnate. He was soon recognised as a byword for relief and rehabilitation. He was an educationist, social worker, journalist and reformer all rolled into one in remarkable proportions. As a great champion of communal harmony, he was highly revered throughout Malabar. The contact, guidance and inspiration of personalities like A.V. Thakkar Bappa, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri and H.N. Kunzru all contributed to the work of SIS in Kerala which was persuade with extreme zeal and commitment.

The rebellion shattered the communal harmony of Malabar. When hatred and distrust between the Hindus and Muslims grew to larger proportions the SIS worked hard to rouse public spirit to restore amicable relationship between them. Owing to political reasons and governmental opposition the Congress could not enter into large-scale relief operations. The space was creditably filled by the Servants of India Society. Though they had to work in quite inhospitable conditions, relief work received a new pep with the arrival of SIS in the scene. They strove to get more governmental involvement in mitigating the distress of the people. In the true constitutionalist spirit they did not go for any confrontation with the government, but with a sense of spirituality brought consolation to the people, who were beset with agony and misery.

The SIS continued their work even after the winding up of the functioning of the Malabar Central Relief Committee at Calicut. They engaged themselves in the rehabilitation of the released Mappila prisoners, belonging to Calicut, Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks. In this context special mention must be made of the services of R. Suryanarayan Rao in mediating with government and other agencies and influential persons, for the rehabilitation of the released prisoners.

The SIS through the DMRT was the most important relief agency for the people of Malabar who were afflicted by the flood of 1923, the famine of 1939-40 and the cholera of 1942-43. The work of the SIS/DMRT in such occasions was in fact a great feat for even the government machinery was confounded to mitigate the distress of the people. The services of Nayanar in protecting the orphaned children and destitutes by setting up several orphanages and by providing medical aid by opening up a string of 'Serve India' dispensaries throughout Malabar were in fact highly commendable works.

The lessons learnt by the SIS workers during their relief operations, in respect of the wide spread illiteracy, superstitions and evil practices prompted them to undertake extensive educational activities. Throughout the rebellion affected areas of Malabar, educational work became central to the SIS activities as conceived by its master Gokhale. As a staunch advocate of

universal elementary education, Gokhale's ideas had been a source of inspiration for them.

DMRT schools, which were set up in Malabar, were pioneers of vocational education. They evolved a system of education that was "functional" based upon the concept of "application" of knowledge. These schools acted simultaneously as centers of instruction as well as of rural reconstruction and social reform. They fostered the messages of literacy, social change and self-reliance. The DMRT's stress on the education of woman and backward sections was a pointer to their lofty conceptions. They used education as a means to fight against social evils such as untouchability, pollution, unapproachability and the like injustices. The teachers of these schools were infact known as DMRT workers, as they were involved in all its activities. They strove to bring the depressed classes such as Harijans and outcastes like Nayadis to the main stream of society though education. The DMRT was the only organisation which worked for the Nayadi's, the most wretched of the depressed classes of Malabar. Thus they made an organised attempt for the education of Dalits.

The caste rigidity of Malabar was such that it ruthlessly ostracised large sections of people especially the entire people demarcated as "polluted" from the public sphere. The stigma of educational backwardness further aggravated the condition. DMRT schools and reconstruction centers were

also centers which spearheaded campaigns against untouchability, pollution and other social evils like drinking habits, black magic, animal sacrifice and child marriage.

They were also pioneers in the field of literacy, adult education and library movement. The DMRT could well anticipate such modern emphases in education as vocationalisation, social extension and cultural awakening. It is significant to notice that these are aspects seriously discussed and recommended by present day academicians, not only as part of school instruction, but also of higher education curriculum. The DMRT fostered ideals such as equality, justice and communal harmony through their academic programmes.

As in other parts of India, the condition of Malabar villages was quite heart rending. It was strangled by age-old social evils, a handicapped economy, frequent natural calamities and epidemics and wide spread unemployment and rural poverty. Such a dismal state of affairs provided the SIS ground enough to initiate several constructive programmes in Malabar villages. In embarking on such projects the DMRT workers like V.R. Nayanar were informed by a socialistic vision. As he pointed out, landlordism and money lending, coupled with exploitative and oppressive administrative machinery of the British, could only entrench the worst form of capitalism. According to him the effective antidote for such a condition had

to be sought in the constructive swadeshism. Thus the SIS executed programmes to encourage improved agricultural practices and a variety of cottage industries. They set up a string of co-operative societies and stores and motivated the people to enter into co-operative ventures. Through these activities a sense of self-reliance was imparted to the rural poor belonging both to the economically backward and to the depressed classes like the Harijans.

The SIS was characteristically disinclined to agitational politics. Therefore they lost no time in launching programmes to alleviate the sufferings of the villagers. Without waiting for governmental initiative, they started constructive programmes on their own, which, in course of time were well received by the people of Malabar. They conducted surveys and ascertained the real causes of rural backwardness and on the basis of which urged the government to evolve a comprehensive programme to rescue the poor villagers from their plight. The DMRT programmes were a great consolation to the various occupational groups like agriculturists, weavers and fishermen. Organising Seva Samiti Scout Sangh channelised even children into social service and constructive work.

The DMRT village reconstruction centers were quite unique as they combined instruction and reconstruction within the same framework. The workers of the DMRT also joined hands with the activities of the Harijan

Sevak Sangh for the cause of the upliftment of the depressed classes. Art and letters were also brought to use in urging the ideals of social justice, rural reconstruction and communal amity. They could thus go along way in checking communalist and other fissiparous tendencies. The value of solidarity between community in the larger interest of the society and the nation has become ever significant now a days in the face of ever increasing divisive, fundamentalist, terrorist and other antisocial activities. Recent eventualities in Kerala and elsewhere have proved beyond doubt that if secularism and communal harmony are allowed to slacken, the society has to pay a heavy price.

A significant aspect of the DMRT programme was the emphasis given to women in the rural upliftment programmes. They initiated women of all classes to join social work and constructive programmes. That way, they had done quite a lot by way of fostering the ideal of women empowerment in Malabar, vis-à-vis the current stress on the subject. Women were encouraged to come out their domestic confinement to the mainstream of public life.

The DMRT's emphasis to tap indigenous resources and local potential was also quite farsighted. They were perhaps the first to introduce the idea of decentralised planning in developmental programmes. The greatest achievements of DMRT in the matter of rural reconstruction were that they were able to pump considerable energy into the impoverished body of

Malabar society. In this process they could co-ordinate people of all strata of society from the lowly to the highest. The non-sectarian and secular approach followed in the constructive programmes was to form a lasting legacy of the political culture of Malabar.

If Swami Vivekananda called Kerala a "mad house", Mahatma Gandhi described Malabar as the "blackest spot in the untouchability map of India". These two descriptions bring out the nature of the social life of Malabar within the larger context of Kerala and India. This is further born out of the fact that inspite of the progressive ideals and the egalitarian and humanistic outlook propagated by a host of socio-religious reform movements within Kerala, Malabar remained by and large insulated from radical changes in social life. The social and cultural backwardness of Malabar made the DMRT to focus its attention in the area of social reform. But their idea of reform was radically different from contemporary reform movements, which were essentially religious or communitarian in nature. In contrast to these, the DMRT project in this direction was based upon liberal, egalitarian and secular principles.

The DMRT realised that the stability of Malabar society would be a distant dream if it was not built on the bed rock of communal harmony. Therefore they made every effort to remove the distrust between the Hindus and Muslims, which was perpetuated by the rebellion. The DMRT

programmes were all carried out with the active co-operation of the Muslim community. Special attention was paid to the education of Muslim girls. Through their multifarious activities, DMRT could go a long way in institutionalising healthy practices like communal amity and social cohesion in the public life of Malabar.

An important achievement of the SIS/DMRT work was that their idea of rural reconstruction was emulated throughout Kerala as a common agenda. Inspired by them, there sprang up in almost all villages association of men, mainly youths variously known as 'desaposhini', 'deasevini', 'gramodharana samithi', 'gramsevasamithi', 'desasevasamithi' etc. Several such associations came up throughout Kerala during the period under study. It is to be noticed that village level, micro planning, has now been recognised as crucial to modern decentralised developmental programme.

Though generally dubbed as a "moderate" organisation, quite often pejoratively by the extremists, it was a fact that the progressive ideals of the SIS/DMRT had to appealed to men like A.K. Gopalan who later became an eminent communist leader of Kerala. Some of them had their early training in public service in DMRT centres. The SIS/DMRT activities were the models for later day voluntary organisations in Kerala. A close parallel could be seen between the DMRT activities and the various programmes of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad: in their work against social evils for hygienic

practices, for literacy, in using act and letter to spread progressive ideas, in adopting scientific procedures like surveys, in enabling the people to improve and use local resources and in the advocacy of village level decentralized planning.

The way the SIS/DMRT introduced in issue and on occasions of urgency was a remarkable model for crises management. The essential import of dedicated and selfless voluntary service was enormously realized in Kerala during the last Tsunami incident as well as during the widespread attacks of Dengue fever and Chicken Guinea in various parts of Kerala. What committed work with a sense of a public spirit can achieve inspite of the work of the Government was amply missionary proved in such occasions.

In short the SIS/DMRT had done quite a lot towards the cultural renaissances of Malabar, thereby to complement the general awakening of Kerala.

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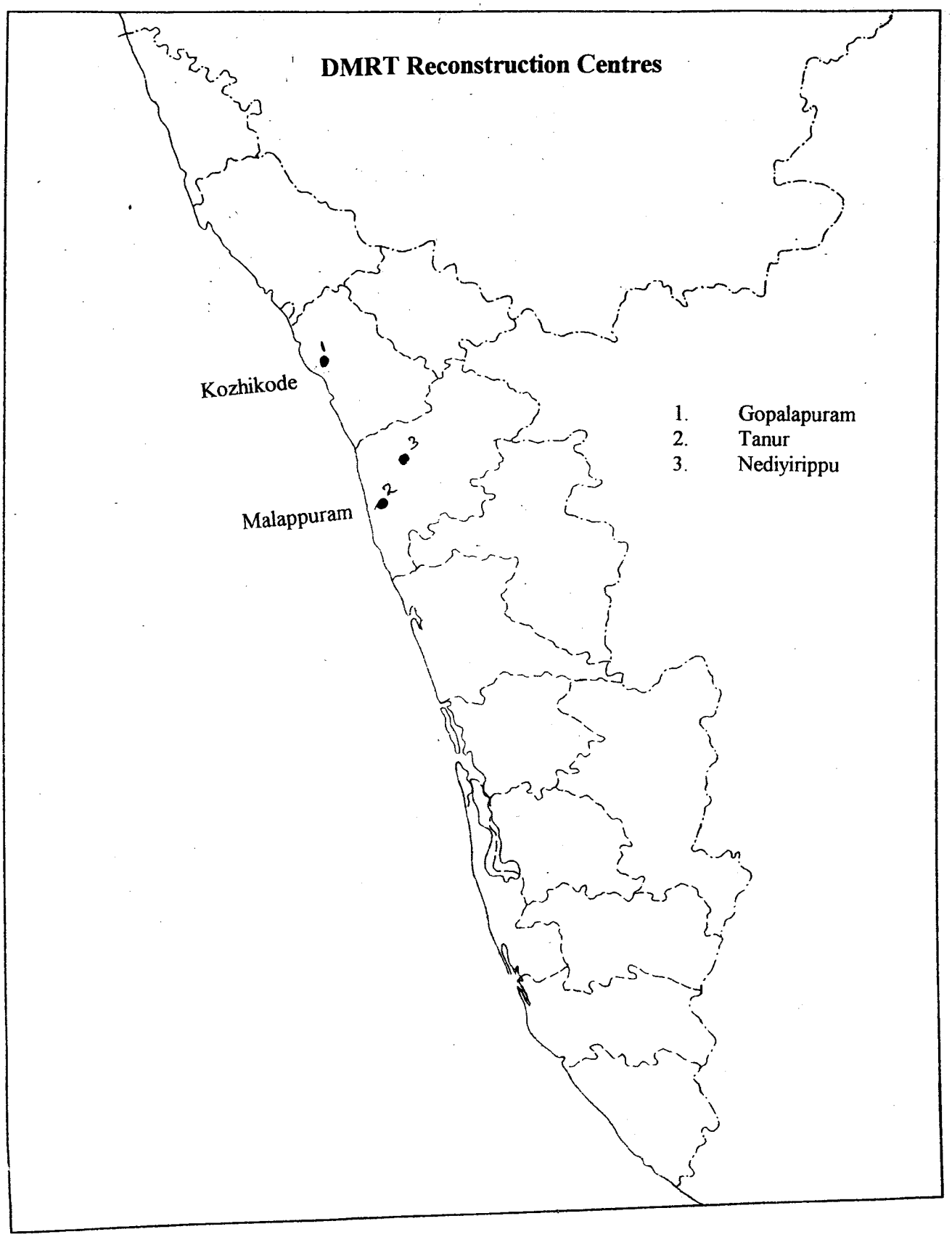
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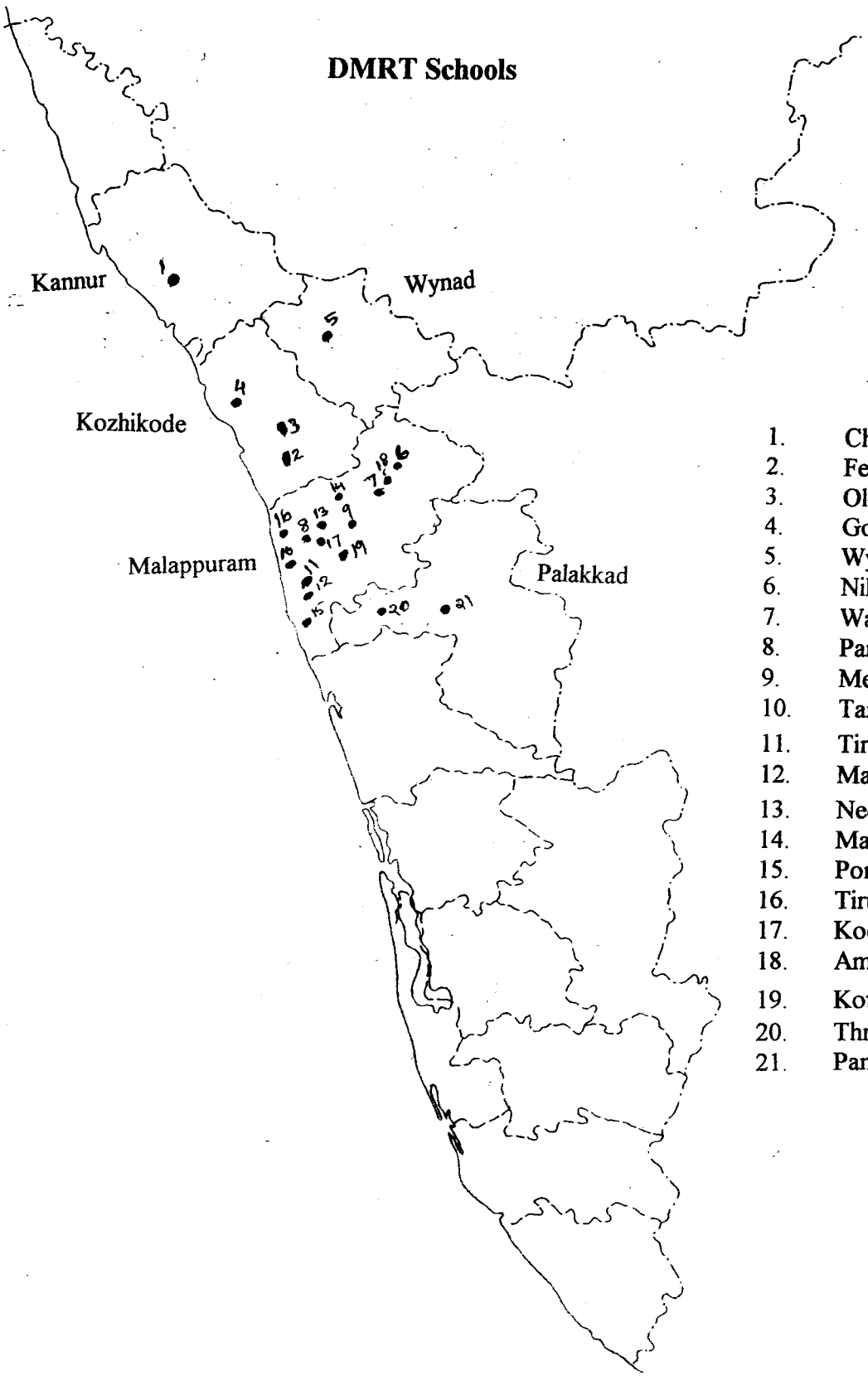
Kozhikode
Malappuram
1. Gopalapuram
2. Tanur
3. Nediyirippu




1. Chalad
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4. Gopalapuram
5. Wynad
6. Nilambur
7. Wandoor
8. Panakkad
9. Melmuri
10. Tanur
11. Tirur
12. Mangattery
13. Nediyiruppu
14. Manjeri
15. Ponnani
16. Tirurangadi
17. Kodotty
18. Amarambalam
19. Kottakkal
20. Thrithala
21. Panamanna

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**Gopal Krishna Devadhar**

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**Gopal Krishna Gokhale**

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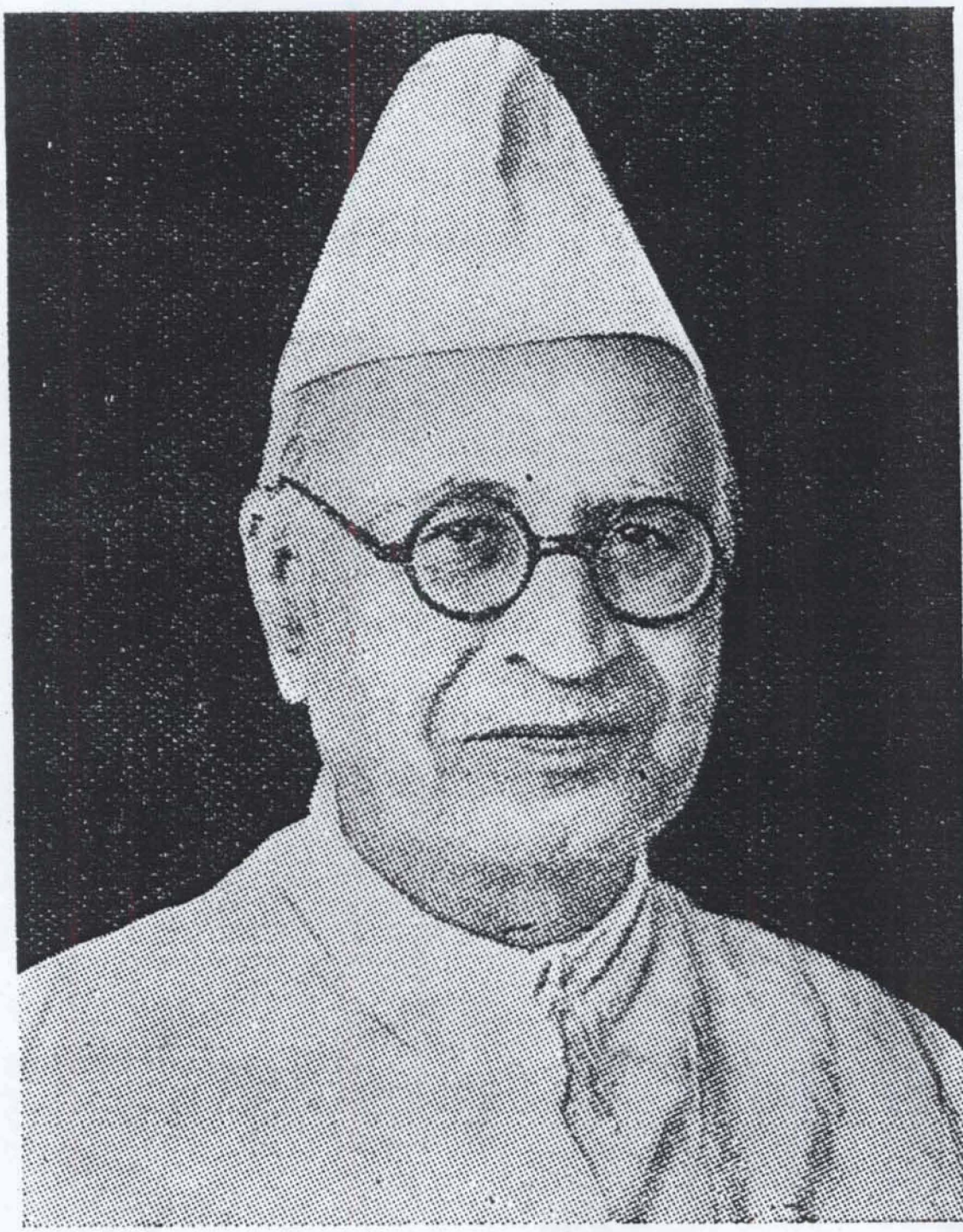

**A.V. Thakkar Bappa**

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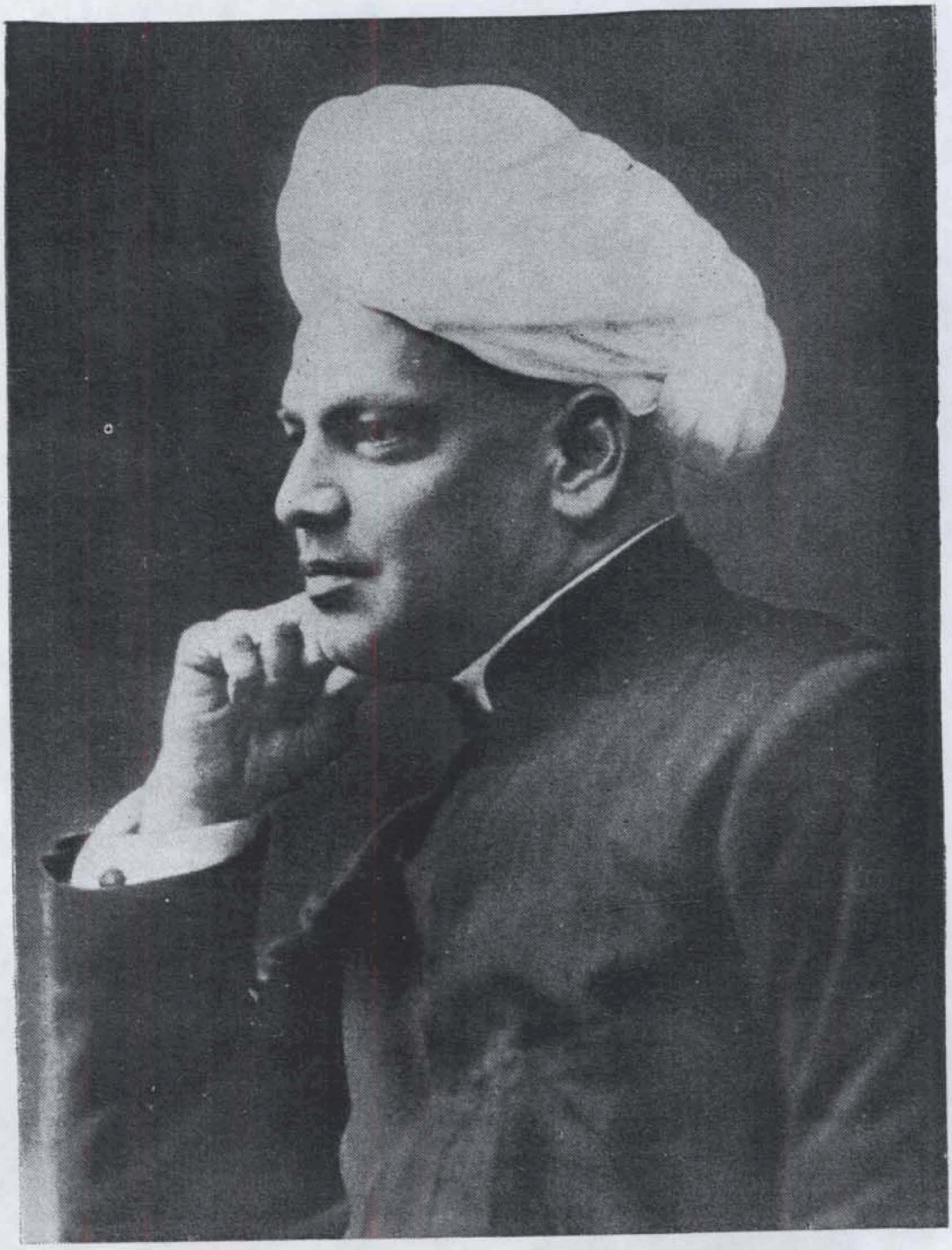

**Sreenivasa Sastri**

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**V.R. Nayanar**

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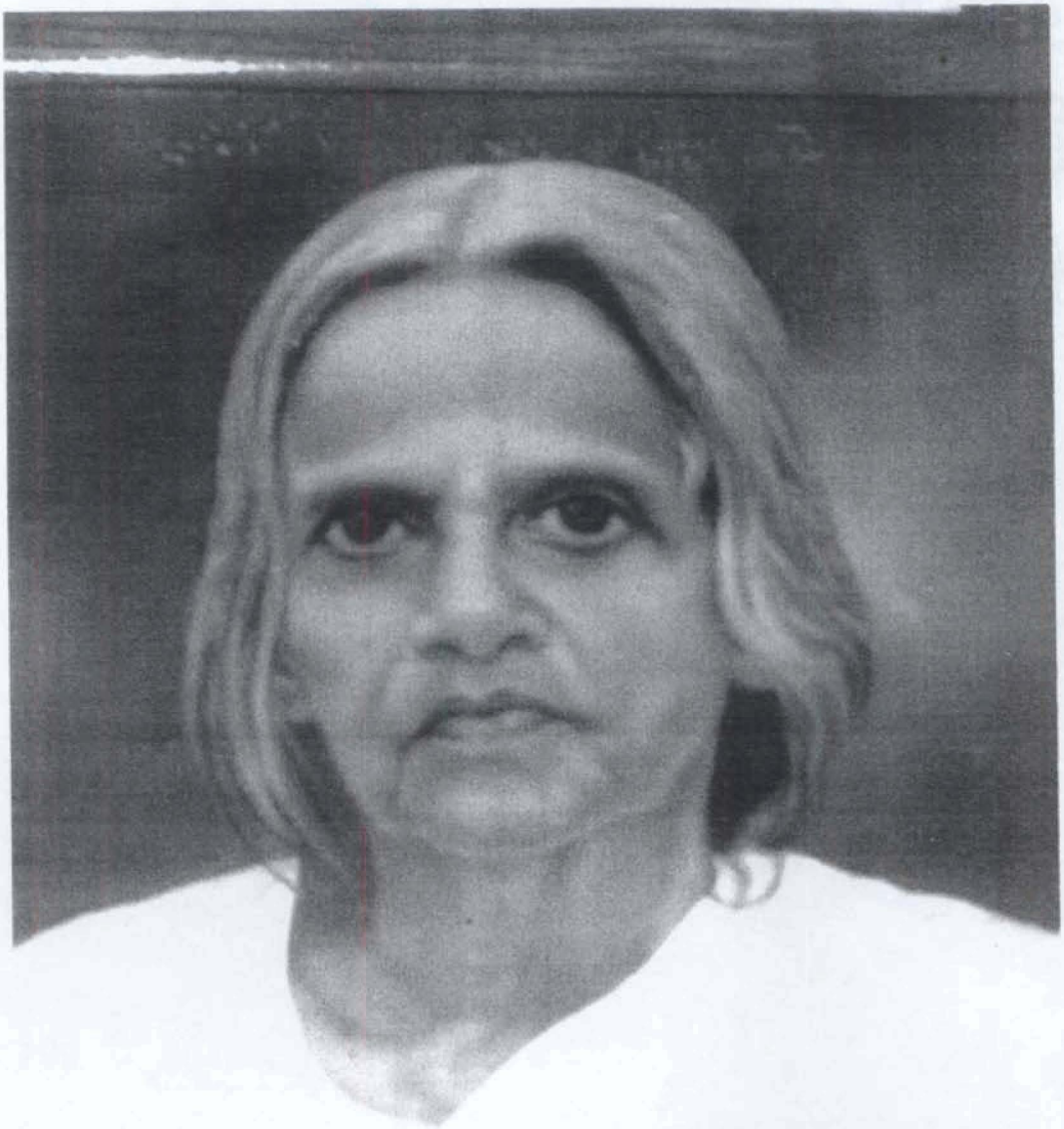


**Mrs. V.R. Nayanar**

## APPENDIX – I

# THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

### *Original Constitution*

*The Servants of India Society was established on 12th June, 1905 when, on the hill behind the Fergusson College, Poona, Gokhale took the vows as given in clause 9 of the Society's constitution and administered them to the first three members, Messrs. N.A. Dravid, G.K. Devadhar and A.V. Patvardhan. A stone tablet on the hill marks the spot where this informal ceremony took place.*

*The following is the original draft of the constitution of the Society drafted by Gokhale :*

For some time past, the conviction has been forcing itself on many earnest and thoughtful minds that a stage has been reached in the political education and advancement of the people, when, for further progress, the devoted labours of a specially trained agency, applying itself to the task in a true missionary spirit, are required. The work that has so far been done has indeed been of the highest value. The growth, during the last fifty years, of a feeling of common nationality, based upon common tradition, common disabilities and common hopes and aspirations, has been most striking. The fact that we are Indians first, and Hindoos, Mahomedans, Parsees or Christians afterwards, is being realized in a steadily increasing measure, and the idea of a united and renovated India, marching onwards to a place among the nations of the world, worthy of her great past, is no longer a mere idle dream of a few imaginative minds, but is the definitely accepted creed of those who form the brain of the community — the educated classes of the country. A creditable beginning has already been made in matters of education and of Local Self-Government; and all classes of the people are slowly but steadily coming under the influence of liberal ideas. The claims of public life are every day receiving wider recognition, and attachment to the land of our birth is growing into a strong and deeply cherished passion of the heart. The annual meetings of the National Congress and of Provincial Conferences, the work of Political Associations, the writings in the columns of the Indian Press — all bear witness to the new life that is coursing in the veins of the people. The results achieved so far are undoubtedly most gratifying, but they only mean that the jungle has been cleared and the foundations laid. The great work of rearing the superstructure has yet to be taken in hand, and the situation demands, on the part of workers, devotion and sacrifices proportionate to the magnitude of the task.

The Servants of India Society has been established to meet in some measure these requirements of the situation. Its members frankly accept the British connection as ordained, in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, for India's good. Self-Government on the lines of English Colonies is their goal.

This goal, they recognize, cannot be attained without years of earnest and patient work and sacrifices worthy of the cause. Moreover, the path is beset with great difficulties — there are constant temptations to turn back — bitter disappointments will repeatedly try the faith of those who have put their hand to the work. But the weary toil can have but one end, if only the workers grow not faint-hearted on the way. One essential condition of success is that a sufficient number of our countrymen must now come forward to devote themselves to the cause in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken. Public life must be spiritualized. Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism, which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the motherland, a dauntless heart, which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence that nothing can shake — equipped with these, the worker must start on his mission, and reverently seek the joy, which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country.

The Servants of India Society will train men, prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit, for the work of political education and agitation, and will seek to promote, by all constitutional means, the national interests of the Indian people. Its headquarters will be at Poona, where it will maintain a Home for its members, and, attached to it, a Library for the study of political questions. The following constitution has been adopted for the Society:

1. The Society shall be called "The Servants of India Society."

2. The objects of the Society are to train men for the work of political education and agitation, and to promote by all constitutional means the national interests of the Indian people.

3. The Society will consist of (*a*) a First Member, (*b*) Ordinary Members, and (*c*) Members under training.

4. The First Member will be the Head of the Society and will hold office for life. [1]

5. Every member, on admission, shall be under a vow of absolute obedience to the First Member for five years. During this period, he will be known as a "Member under training." [2] When a member has completed his five years' discipline, he will be styled an "Ordinary Member" of the Society.

6. Every member of the Society shall be a member for life.

7. The affairs of the Society will be managed, in accordance with bye-laws framed for the purpose, by the First Member, assisted by a Council of three Ordinary Members, of whom one will be nominated by him and two elected by the Ordinary Members. Every second year, one member of the Council

1 Mr. G. K. GOKHALE, B. A., C. I. E., is the first " First Member."

2 The following persons are " Members under training " :
NATESH APPAJI DRAVID, M. A.; 2. GOPAL KRISHNA DEVADHAR, M. A.; and 3. ANANT VINAYAK PATVARDHAN. B. A.

shall retire by rotation, but he will be eligible for re-nomination or re-election, as the case may be.

8. No person will be admitted as a member of the Society, unless his admission is recommended by the Council and the recommendation accepted by the First Member.

9. Every member, at the time of admission, shall take the following seven vows :

(*a*) That the country will always be the first in his thoughts and he will give to her service the best that is in him.

(*b*) That in serving the country he will seek no personal advantage for himself.

(*c*) That he will regard all Indians as brothers, and will work for the advancement of all, without distinction of caste or creed.

(*d*) That he will be content with such provision for himself and his family, if he has any, as the Society may be able to make in accordance with bye-laws framed for the purpose. He will devote no part of his energies to earning money for himself.

(*e*) That he will lead a pure personal life.

(*f*) That he will engage in no personal quarrel with any one.

(*g*) That he will always keep in view the aims of the Society and watch over its interests with the utmost zeal, doing all he can to advance its work. He will never do anything, which is inconsistent with the objects of the Society.

10. Every Member under training will do such work and devote himself to such studies as the First Member may direct. The work and the studies will be so arranged that during the five years of special discipline the Member under training may spend about two years in visiting the different parts of India, and the remaining three in prosecuting political studies in the Society's Home at Poona.

11. An Ordinary Member, i.e., one who has completed his five years' special discipline, may be sent by the First Member and Council to any part of India on special duty or for general work in connection with the Society. He will do the work assigned to him, under the general direction of the First Member and Council, and will obey all orders and instructions that he may receive from them.

12. Every Ordinary Member shall reside for at least two months every year in the Society's Home at Poona.

13. The Society may remove the name of any member from its roll of members on a recommendation to that effect being made by the Council, with the concurrence of three-fourths of the members of the Society, and on the recommendation being accepted by the First Member.

14. It will be the duty of the First Member to recommend in writing to the Council the names of three Ordinary Members, out of whom the members of the Society shall elect a successor to him as First Member, on a vacancy occurring. If no such recommendation has been received by the Council when

the vacancy occurs, the members of the Society may elect any Ordinary Member or in the absence of a suitable Ordinary Member, any member to succeed as First Member.

15. In special circumstances, the First Member may exempt, for reasons to be recorded in writing, any member of the Society from the operation of any rule, save rule No. 9.

16. The Society may admit any person, who is prepared to devote himself for a period of not less than five years to its work, as an Attache of the Society.

17. No person will be admitted as an Attache, unless his admission is recommended by the Council and the recommendation is accepted by the First Member.

18. Attaches, during the period of their connection with the Society as Attaches, shall be subject to the same discipline as Members under training, save that they will not be required to live in the Home of the Society.

19. The First Member and Council may grant a subsistence allowance to an Attache of the Society in accordance with bye-laws framed for the purpose.

20. The First Member and Council may remove the name of any Attache from the list of Attaches of the Society. The Society will not be bound to disclose the reasons for such removal.

21. The Society may admit persons, who are in full sympathy with its objects and who are prepared to devote a portion of their time and resources to the furtherance of its work, as Associates of the Society for such period as the First Member and Council may determine.

22. No person will be admitted as an Associate, unless his admission is recommended by the Council and the recommendation is accepted by the First Member.

23. Every Associate of the Society will be bound, during the time that he is an Associate, to (*a*) devote a portion of his time and resources to the furtherance of the Society's work, (*b*) assist, so far as may be, members of the Society in their work, and (*c*) abstain from any course of conduct inconsistent with the objects of the Society.

24. The First Member and Council may remove from the list of Associates the name of any person whose conduct they may consider to be prejudicial to the interests of the Society. The Society will not be bound to disclose the reasons for such removal.

25. Attaches and Associates will have no voice in the management of the affairs of the Society and no interest in the Society's property or funds.

26. All property of the Society shall belong to the Society in its corporate character, and no member, in his individual capacity, nor the heirs, executors or assigns of any member, shall have any right to any portion of it.

27. The property of the Society shall be held by two Trustees, one of whom will be the First Member for the time being, and the other, such member as may be elected by the members of the Society for the purpose.

28. All contracts, entered into for and on behalf of the Society, shall be in the name of the First Member. In all suits, brought by or against the Society,

the Society shall be represented by the First Member.

29. The Society shall not be dissolved by the death, secession, or removal of any member.

30. The First Member may, with the concurrence of a majority of the Ordinary Members of the Society, make, alter or rescind any bye-law or bye-laws for (1) the management of the affairs of the Society and the conduct of its business; (2) the custody, disposal, and control of the funds of the Society; (3) the provision to be made for members of the Society and their families and the grant of special allowances to them in special circumstances; (4) the grant of leave to members of the Society; (5) the grant of subsistence allowance to Attaches of the Society; and (6) the carrying out in other ways of the objects of the Society.

31. No alteration shall be made in this constitution, unless it is recommended by the Council, with the concurrence of three-fourths of the members of the Society, and the recommendation is accepted by the First Member.

32. During the first five years of the Society's existence, there will be no Council, and all powers vested in the First Member and Council, or in the Council only, under this constitution, will be exercised by the First Member. acting singly.

*Bye-Laws*

The following Bye-laws have been made under Rule 30 (3) :

1. Every Member under training will be granted an allowance of Rs. 30 a month for his family, in addition to his personal expenses, which will be borne by the Society, in accordance with a scale to be fixed from time to time by the First Member.

2. Every Ordinary Member will be granted an allowance of Rs. 50 a month for himself and family, his personal expenses being borne by him.

3. The life of every member will, on admission, be assured by the Society, in favour of the First Member for the time being, for a sum of Rs. 3,000, payable at death. If no Insurance Company accepts the life of any member for assurance, the First Member and Council may make such other arrangement, as they deem fit, to secure, in the case of such member, the object of this bye-law.

4. On the death of a member, whose life has been assured, the First Member shall pay the amount recovered on the life-policy of the deceased to such member or members of his family, as he may, by will or otherwise in writing, have directed. In the absence of such direction, the First Member and Council will have the power to determine whether the amount recovered may be paid to any member or members of the deceased's family, and if so, to whom.

5. For every child of a member, the Society will pay him Rs. 5 a month, on condition that the money is devoted to securing a policy for the child under the Endowment System of Insurance Companies — the form of Endowment being determined with the approval of the First Member.

6. The Society may pay the school or college fees of the children of its members, provided the selection of the school or college is made with the approval of the First Member.

7. The First Member and Council will have the power to grant, in special circumstances, a special allowance to a member, suited to the requirements of his case.

8. If a member secedes from the Society, he and his family shall forfeit all claim to the benefits secured to him or them under these bye-laws.

## APPENDIX – II

# Government of Madras

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT

## G.O. No. 729, 3rd August 1925

Mappilla rebellion—Prisoners—releases—ordered.

READ—the following paper:—

**G.O, No. 136, Public, dated 7th February 1925**

ABSTRACT.—Mappilla rebellion—releases—ordered.

**Order—No. 729, Public, dated 3rd August 1925.**

In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 401 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, and in continuation of G.O. No. 136, Public, dated 7th February 1925, His Excellency the Governor in Council hereby directs that the unexpired portion of the sentences of imprisonment passed on the prisoners named in Annexures A and B to these proceedings shall be remitted and that the prisoners shall be released. This concession is subject to the condition that these prisoners shall remain of good behaviour during the period covered by the sentences of imprisonment passed on them. In the case of prisoners named in Annexure B the concession is subject to the further condition that on return to Malabar they shall report themselves once a month at a police station to be specified by the District Magistrate, Malabar. The prisoners should be directed on arrival in Malabar to appear before the District Magistrate who will give them the necessary instructions.

(By order of the Governor in Council)

A. Y. G. CAMPBELL,
*Chief Secretary.*

To the District Magistrate, Malabar.
,, Inspector-General of Prisons
,, Inspector-General of Police.
,, Law Department.

Copy to the General Officer Commanding, Madras District (with C.L.)
,, District Magistrates of Bellary, Trichinopoly and Coimbatore.
,, Commissioner of Police, Madras.

APPENDIX – III

# THE DEVADHAR MALABAR RECONSTRUCTION TRUST.

"SERVINDIA."

PRESIDENT:
G. K. DEVADHAR, M. A.
*Servants of India Society.*

VICE PRESIDENT:
DEWAN BAHADUR G. T. VURGESE, B. A.
*Retired Deputy Collector.*

HON. SECRETARY & TREASURER:
~~M. S. MADHAVA RAU, B. A.~~
*Servants of India Society.*

SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY,

Calicut, April, 10, 1927.

COLLECTOR'S OFFICE
12 APR 1927
CALICUT

The Collector of Malabar,
Calicut.

Sir,

With reference to your letter Ref. 03/3337/27 dated 1st April, I have the honour to inform you that I am arranging to send the balance of amount of compensation to the Treasury and I shall arrange to send you the receipt in token of the same. I regret very much to learn that you are also of the opinion that the cost of acquisition fixed is not in any way excessive. It is the general opinion in the locality that the cost of land per acre including the value of the trees etc., standing on the land need not be more than Rs. 100 per acre. After all the trees are in a very neglected condition and very few are bearing fruit. I am somewhat surprised to find in the statement enclosed that the value of trees is fixed at Rs. 752-6-8 and I feel this value ought to be included in the value already fixed for the barren and useless land at the rate of Rs. 100 per acre. But in view of your decision in the matter, I do not wish to pursue the matter further. I am perfectly willing to abide by your decision as I feel any objection raised by me will only result in delay in acquiring the land. In view of this increase in the value of acquisition of the land, I am submitting the facts to the Distress Relief Fund Committe and obtain their sanction to a revised scheme for the colony perhaps providing accommodation for a less number of families.

I regret very much to learn that you cannot arrange to get us interest on the amount deposited so long in the Treasury.

Your obedient servant,
Rhyamanayana Rao
Hon. Secretary & Treasurer.

## APPENDIX – IV

No.A.180/30. Malabar District Labour Office,

Calicut, dated 17-6-1930.

From

The District Labour Officer,
Malabar.

To

The Collector of Malabar,
Calicut.

Sir,

Depressed classes - Betterment - Nayadi scheme-
Olavakkot colony - Extension of cultivation.
This office Ref.A-180/30, dated 18-5-1930.

---

After the submission of the above report I received a copy of letter No.1608/29 dated 29-5-1930 from the District Forest Officer, Palghat to the Collector and Conservator of Forests, VI circle. There is no mention in it of the forest building proposed for transfer to the Labour Department. As regards the lease of the forest land the District Forest Officer has recommended to the Conservator the levy of an annual rent of Rs.30 per acre. I inspected the lands and the building when I went to Palghat recently on casual leave. The lands consist of 20 parahs of double crop and 16 parahs of single crop lands measuring 5.90 acres according to the last year's paimash. They had been leased out on a net rental of 200 parahs of paddy before they were acquired by the Forest Department. The price of 200 parahs of paddy at the present market rate (Rs.42 per 70 parahs) is Rs.120/-. This works out to Rs.20 per acre. It is even doubtful whether the old rent can be expected now; the lands have been converted into one compact block for stacking timber and much labour should be spent before the block could be reconverted into a paddy field. I therefore submit that any rent in excess of Rs.15 per acre is likely to result in a loss to the lessee.

p.t.o.

2. The Forest Department has worked out the figures with reference to their auction sales in previous years. There was apparently reckless bidding and I understand that the department had to write off as irrecoverable some of the amounts. It is certainly unfair that an average of such unreasonable figures should be adopted as rent when land is leased out for the benefit of Nayadi colony, which deserves sympathetic consideration at the hands of every Government Department. For my part I should say plainly that any rental in excess of Rs.15 per acre is likely to work out a loss. The Collector may be pleased to induce the District Forest Officer and Conservator not to ask for such high rent as they want, especially because the lands are given for a benevolent object. The matter requires an early settlement as the cultivation season has advanced much. Even transplantation cannot be done unless we get the lands soon, say, within a fortnight.

Your obedient servant,

17.6.20

TR/17-6. -

District Labour Officer.

17/6

137

# The Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust

ntre: Gopalapuram, Post [illegible] Secretary: V. R. NAYANAR.

vities: Paper making Institute,
Harijan Colony,
Gokhale Elg. School,
Gray Boarding House.

DISTRICT LABOUR OFFICER
9-JUN 1939
MALABAR

5-6-39

The District Labour Officer,
Calicut.

Sir,

Scheduled classes- Gray Boarding Home- Construction of a building- Agreement of acceptance- Execution.

Collector's letter No.87/38-26 dated 15-5-39.

I am herewith submitting a stamp paper agreement executed. The agreement may kindly be signed by the office and send to me for execution.

Your obedient servant,

S. Raghavan

for Hon. Secretary.

SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

ROYAPETTAH, MADRAS.

Nov. 12. (1931)

Dear Mr. Wood

I was here on some business & I took advantage of the opportunity to see my old friend at Home. During the long talk I had I mentioned to him the need for providing help to the released Muslim prisoners to enable them in life. He appreciated the point & suggested that I should see you immediately on return to Calicut to discuss the matter with you. I shall be returning to Calicut on the 17th inst. I should feel much obliged to you if you will kindly write & let me know when & where I can meet you. Letters addressed to my Calicut address will reach me all right.

Thanking you, Yours Sincerely
T Srinivasa Iyengar

Proceedings of the meeting of the Mopla Aid Committee Calicut held on 8th January 35 at 4-30.P.M. in the Collector's Office.

Present.

Messrs.A.R.Mac Ewen.I.C.S. President.

B.S.T.Mudaliar.

V.R.Nayanar.Hon Jt.Secretary.

Rao Saheb.U.B.Sreenivasa Rao. Treasurer(Hon)

Resolutions.

1.To close the Mopla Aid Committee and to hand over the assets including the balance in the Bank to the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Committee.

2.To thank the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society for agreeing to take up the work of the Mopla Aid Committee and to request them to co-opt as members of the Society messrs Attakoya Thangal and V.R.Nayanar.

3.Resolved to thank all the members of the Committee and all those who rendered help in its work.

A. MacEwen
President
13.1.35.

## APPENDIX – VII

Servants of India Society

Calicut. Dated 10/1/35

To.

A.R.MacEwen Esq.I.C.S.
Collector of Malabar, President.Mopla Aid Committee

Sir,

I am sending herewith two copies of ~~the proceedings~~ of the Meeting of the Mopla Aid Committee held on the 8th inst Kindly sign them and return to me one copy for my file.

Your obedient servant

Hon.Jt.Secretary

obtained and sent to this office a deed of acceptance from the D.M.R.Trust in respect of the grant in question in the form prescribed in appendix Q to the Grant-in-aid Code. As this deed was not prepared on a stamp paper of proper value and duly registered, it was returned to him. The Collector was unable to get these defects rectified in 1938.

The Honorary Secretary of the Trust now requests that the institution may be exempted from executing the deed and that the deed of agreement signed by all the Trustees may be accepted. A copy of his letter dated 3-1-39 is enclosed. The Collector recommends that, in view of the practical difficulties mentioned by the Secretary and the smallness of the amount involved, the execution of the deed may be waived.

3. In the circumstances explained by the Honorary Secretary of the Trust and the Collector, I recommend that, in the case of the grant in question, a deed of acceptance in the form prescribed in appendix Q to the Grant-in-aid Code signed by all the trustees may be accepted and that the execution of this deed may be waived.

I have the honour to be,

sir,

your most obedient servant,

for Commissioner of Labour.

KRA.15/2.

Copy to the Collector of Malabar, with refefence to his letter Ref.L.1.No.87/38-21 dated 17-1-39.

C.F. 30.

LABOUR **DEPARTMENT.**

*Received* ..... 19 . *Registered* ..... 19 .

*Subject.*

SCHEDULED CLASSES - Malabar District - Construction of a building Half grant to the D.M.R.Trust, Calicut - Deed of acceptance - Execution - Waiver requested.

ENCLOSURES.
No. .....
.....
Spare copies .....

A-6 No. 2210/37.

*Station* MADRAS , *Dated the* 15th February 19 39.

From (Name) S.V.RAMAMURTY, ESQ., M.A., I.C.S.

(Designation) COMMISSIONER OF LABOUR.

To The Secretary to the Government of Madras,

DEVELOPMENT Department.

Sir,

P.No.F.7 5477/36 (j)

Ref: G.O.No.577 Ms. Development Department, dated 8-4-36.

The construction of a building for the Gray Boarding Home, Calicut, was completed and the grant of Rs.850/- sanctioned in the G.O. cited was paid to the D.M.R.Trust, Calicut, on 31-3-37. The following certificates are sent herewith for perusal and return:

(1) Certificate signed by the Assistant Engineer, Tellicherry.

(2) Certificate signed by the Honorary Secretary of the D.M.R.Trust, Calicut.

2. In December 1937, the Collector of Malabar

obtained

**APPENDIX – IX**

DISTRICT LABOUR OFFICE 28 MAR 1938 MALABAR

51

V.S. Nataraja Mudaliar — Managing Director Standard Tile Factory, Feroke.

V.R. Nayanar B.A., — Servants of India Society, Calicut. — Honorary Secretary & Treasurer

D.M.R.T.Office,
Calicut
20- 7 - 37.

(Sd) V.R.Nayanar.
Hon.Secretary and Treasurer

No. of Society. 2 of 1923-24.

Name of Society. The Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust.

Name of document. Annual list of governing body for 1937.

Serial No. 1 of 1937-38.

Date of filing. 23-7-37.

(Sd) M.Kendall
Asst. Registrar.

( S E A L )

( True Copy on two rolls)

Copy prepared by P.K.Kunhambu Nair Clerk.

Copy compared by K.Kunhambu Nair Clerk Reader.
P.K.Kunhambu Nair Clerk Examiner.

Asst. Registrar's Office,
South Malabar, Calicut.
Dated 25th March 1938.

For Asst. Registrar

# APPENDIX – X

C.F. 32.

In reply, please quote number, date and short title.*

_____ DEPARTMENT.

*Received* _____ *Registered* _____

From (Name)

(Designation) The Commissioner of Labour,

POST BOX 429, (STATION) Chepauk, Madras.

*Telegraphic Address* _____

COLLECTOR 17 DEC 1938 MALABAR

To

The Collector of Malabar, Calicut.

A-6 *No.* 2210/37, *dated* the 16th Decr. 1938.

19-DEC 1938 MALABAR

Sir,

* Depressed classes - Malabar district - Gray Boarding Home - construction of a building - half grant to the D.M.R. Trust, Calicut - Your letters L-1-No.87/38-19 dated 16-11-38 and PP105-106 L.1 No.87/38-20 dated 7-12-38.

ENCLOSURES

C.F.

SPARE COPIES

The grant of Rs.850/- was disbursed in March 1937 but there has been a delay of nearly nineteen months in obtaining a proper mortgage deed. I request you to kindly take special steps to obtain the deed as expeditiously as possible.

2. In this connection, I invite reference to article 54 (ii) of the Grant-in-aid Code, the grant should have been disbursed only after obtaining the mortgage deed.

P 11-1206 & 1207 up.

/- [illegible]

for Commissioner of Labour.

K.B.16/12.

Pttn 11/12/38 16/12/38

Mg L1 – 87/38 – 21

(Copy) 7 para 1 forwarded to the Hony Secretary, DMR Trust with a request to expedite the execution of the mortgage deed.

The Collector

C 12-38

4. 20-12-38

90 1

Gr. 32.

In reply, please quote number, date and short title.*

_____DEPARTMENT.

*Received*_____ *Registered*_____

From (Name) THE COMMISSIONER OF LABOUR.

(Designation)

Post Box 429, (Station) Chepauk, Madras.

*Telegraphic Address*_____

COLLECTORATE
25 MAR 1939
MALABAR

To

The Collector of Malabar,

Calicut.

A-6 No.2210/37, *dated* 24th March 19 39

Sir,

Depressed Classes - Malabar District - *Construction of a building - Half grant to the D.M.R.Trust, Calicut - Deed of acceptance - Waiver sanctioned - Your letter L-1-No.87/38-21, dated 17-1-39.

ENCLOSURES_____

SPARE COPIES_____

A copy of G.O.No.Ms.698, Dev. Deptt., dated 20-3-39 is enclosed for your information. Please arrange to obtain the deed of agreement signed by all the Trustees of the D.M.R.Trust Calicut and send it on to me as early as possible. The deed should be in the form sent with the Labour Commissioner's letter A-6-2210/37 dated 10-7-37,

K.KOMANDAPANI PILLAI,

for Commr. of Labour.

FORWARDED (BY ORDER).

MANAGER. 24.3.39

KRA.24/3.

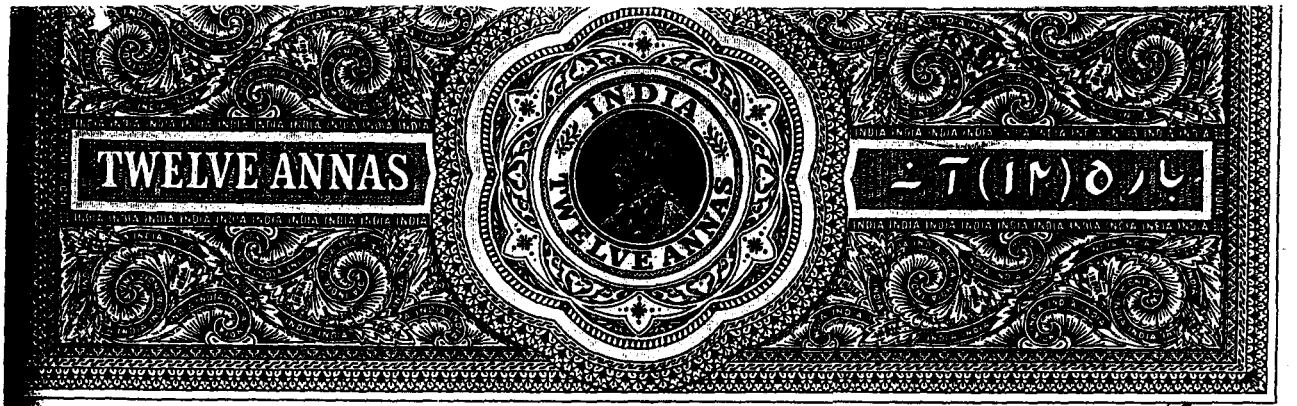
Copy of G.O.No.Ms.698 Dev., dated 20-3-39.

Scheduled Classes - Malabar Dt. - Construction of a building - Half grant to the D.M.R.Trust, Calicut - Deed of acceptance - Waiver - Sanctioned.

ORDER:

His Excellency the Governor of Madras is pleased to accept in lieu of a formal mortgage deed, a deed of acceptance in the Form prescribed in Appendix Q to the Grant-in-Aid Code signed by all the Trustees as sufficient guarantee for the fulfilment of the conditions relating to the disbursement of the grant sanctioned in G.O.No.~~688~~ 577 Development, dated 8th April 1936.

**APPENDIX – XII**




1937

List of Trustees of the Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust for 1937-38.

| No. | Name. | Address | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Pundit Hridayanath Kunzru | President Servants of India Society, Poona 4 | President Ex-officio |
| 2. | V.Venkatasubbiah M.A, | Senior Member Servants of India Society, Royapettah, Madras. | |
| 3. | K. Madhavan Thirumulpad | Senior Raja of Nilambur | Vice President. |
| 4. | Manjeri Rama Iyer B.A.,B.L., | Advocate, Chalapuram, Calicut. | |
| 5. | K.H.D. Mugaseth. | Near Municipal Office, Calicut. | |
| 6. | Haji Aly Berami | Merchant, Beach Road, Calicut. | |

P.T.O.

**APPENDIX – XIII**

REGISTERED 1923.

# THE DEVADHAR MALABAR RECONSTRUCTION TRUST.

TRUSTEES:-

PUNDIT, H. N. KUNZRU, (PRESIDENT);
THE SENIOR RAJA OF NILAMBUR.
MR. V. VENKATASUBIAH.
MR. MANJERI RAMA IYER.
HAJI ALY BARAMY;
MR. K. H. D. MUGASETH,
MR. V. S. NATA RAJA MUDALIAR.
V. R. NAYANAR,
(HON. SECRETARY & TREASURER.)

DISTRICT LABOUR OFFICE 12 MAR 1938 MALABAR

**CENTRES OF WORK.**

1. TANUR.
H. E. School, Weaving Section Agl. & Poultry Farm; Weavers Co-operative Society and Depot.

2. GOPALAPURAM.
PANTHALAYINI; Post MUDATI.
H. E. School, Gray Boarding Home for Harijans; Agricultural Farm and Colony.

3. FEROKE.
Adult Education Centre
Labour Co-operative Stores.

4. NEDIYIRIP.
H. E. School & Farm.

5. MELMURI.
Night School and Reading Room.

6. PANAKAD.
Moplah Elementary School.

7. WANDUR.
Child Welfare Centre.
Day and Night Schools.

8. PANAMANNA.
Day School & Farm.

9. TRITHALA.
Moplah Day School & Night School.

Centre Chalapuram.

Date 14/3/38.

The Collector of Malabar
Calicut.

Sir

PP9-10 CE / Ref. 87/38-1. Dated 12-1-38.

PP35-43CE

We are submitting the articles of Association of the Trust (2). Memorandum Certificate (3) Chalan Receipt of Rs 6-12-0.

PP27-32CE

PP25CE.

Please send the mortgage deed for registration after satisfying yourself that the papers submitted herewith are quite in order.

Your obedient servant,

Hon. Secretary.
Devadhar Trust.

## APPENDIX XIV

# LIST OF DMRT SCHOOLS

| *Day School* | *Night School* |
|---|---|
| Amarambalam | Feroke |
| Feroke | Gopalapuram |
| Gopalapuram | Kondotti |
| Chalad | Kottakkal |
| Manjeri | Malappuram |
| Nediyirippu | Mangatteri |
| Nilambur | Melmuri |
| Panakkad | Olavanna |
| Panamanna | Ponnani |
| Tanur | Tanur |
| Thrithala | Thirurangadi |
| Wandoor | Trithala |
| Wynad | Tirur |
| | Wandoor |

Appendix XV

NB 4980

# Mrs. V. R. Nayanar

(Hon. Secretary, Nayanar Balika Sadanam, Eranhipalam)

requests the honour of your presence at the marriage of

**Kumari P. THANKAMANI**

**(an inmate of the Sadanam)**

to

**Sri K. P. ASOKAN**

on Thursday, 11th April, 1968 at the Sadanam, Eranhipalam.

Muhurtham 10-30 a. m. to 11 a. m.

---

*With the compliments of:*

Sri K. Kelappan, Calicut

Sri E. Raman Menon, President,
Nayanar Childrens' Homes' Society, Kozhikode

&

Members of the Society

# Mrs. V. R. NAYANAR

(NAYANAR BALIKA SADANAM, ERANHIPALAM)

requests the honour of your presence at the marriage of

KUMARI K. PARVATHI BAI

**(an inmate of the Sadanam)**

to

SRI K. K. RAMAKRISHNAN

on Thursday 9th March 1972 at the Gandhi Griham, Calicut

MUHURTHAM 10-30 a. m. to 11 a. m.

---

*With the compliments of:*

Sri E. RAMAN MENON

*President, Nayanar Childrens' Homes' Society, Kozhikode*