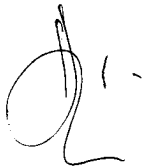


IDEOLOGICAL BASES OF MODERNITY IN KERALA

By
SAHADEVAN. M.

THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILISOPHY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

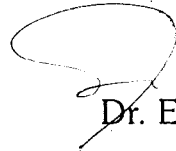


DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
KERALA
NOVEMBER 2002

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled "**IDEOLOGICAL BASES OF MODERNITY IN KERALA**" submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Calicut is a record of bonafide research carried out by Sahadevan M. under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any degree before.

University of Calicut,
November 27, 2002



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DECLARATION

I declare that, this written account entitled "**IDEOLOGICAL BASES OF MODERNITY IN KERALA**" is the record of research work done by me under the supervision of Dr. E.K.G. Nambiar and it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree, diploma or other similar titles of recognition.

University of Calicut,
November 27, 2002



Sahadevan M.

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PREFACE

It is not an unknown fact that ever since the subjection of Kerala to the British, the traditional Malayali society was in the process of a great change that assumed manifold manifestation. That process was accelerated by an ideology based human action. When human action guided by an ideology is subjected to observation, between the two, the observer perceives the mind. Mind is activity or thought. The interaction of ideology and action evolves a changing mind or change in thought. That mind or thought seen in relation to external world means attitude. So a change in thought or of mind in the present context is taken as the attitudinal change in both sentiment and reason which can together be taken as mentality. A changing mentality of the Malayalis towards human self, human relations, society, economic activities, state and governance is the essence of the enquiry attempted in this work. In short the changing self in relation to the environment is the problem of enquiry and the assessment is valuewise and temporalwise.

The Varna Dharma concept of Brahmanical theology that governed the traditional Malayali mind is a social theory founded on the ideal of divinity. It is claimed that God created man into four Varnas with definite duties for them to be pursued in worldly life. Human beings are hierarchically graded as pure-impure categories corresponding to their origins from the pure-impure parts of Lord Brahma the creator. Society

is considered as a structure resembling a human body with organic functions. The theory is intended to structuralise society according to the interests of the varna class which claims superiority over all other varnas, as they have come from the mouth the most pure part of the creator. It is a purely subjective and unilateral theory built up by the Brahmanas who moved to the hegemonical position in the course of history to preserve their hegemonical position. By attributing religiosity and divinity to that theory the hegemonical class was able to captivate and rule over the mind of the so called Hindu and use it as a deterrent against all the outcastes and non-Hindus. The Hindu mind was kept under the magic spell of this theory that negated reason and logic for a very long period. The Malayali society was enslaved to this theory for about one and a half millennium. A theory that denied love and compassion for fellow beings and all other beings in this world served the purpose of subordinating all other people to the service of the Brahmanas. The present thesis is an indepth exploration into the historical question of how and to what extent the ideologies of Advaita, Buddhism, Protestant Christianity, Islam and Socialism played an effective role in conscientizing the people to liberate themselves from this ideology.

The wider dimension of the social change in Kerala struck me when I was studying the role of Sahodaran Ayyappan in the social change as part of a research work. That generated in me an interest to undertake a detailed study of the ideas that inspired the men in action to bring forth a transformation of the Malayali society since I felt that such a study alone

would help a better understanding of the present day Malayali society. So the mutual relation of ideas and activity in bringing about a social change in Kerala is taken as the subject matter of that study. In other words, the attempt is a study of an intellectual cum social history of the Malayalis in a systematic way namely, an assesment of the social change of the Malayalis in relation to their intellectual talents and value conciousness. I have not seen such an attempt forthcoming from the academic circle so far. Thus I ventured upon this work. The present work is organised in six chapters. The first chapter gives a backdrop of the process of change. It is a somewhat lengthy one because to understand the magnitude of the change a comprehensive understanding of the traditional society is essential. It serves as an introduction too. The second and third chapters focus on the ideologies that questioned or contradicted tradition. The fourth one exclusively deals with the question how literature acted as a vehicle that carried ideas antagonistic to tradition. The fifth chapter is intended to give a narration of the impact of the new ideas on polity, society and economy. Though incidental observations have been given appropriately, the findings are summarised in the concluding chapter. I hope that his work would shed some light on the socio-intellectual history of modern Kerala.

The perspective and findings of this work are entirely mine. It is presented in my own language and style and I alone am responsible for errors if any found in this work. But I am indebted to a number of persons and institutions in completing the work.

It is under the supervision of Prof. M.P. Sreekumarán Nair that I began this work. His criticism and suggestions have saved me from serious errors I would have committed. My indebtedness to him as a student of history and researcher in that subject is invaluable. Here I would mention the names of my respected teachers Prof. T.K. Ravindran and Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan who too had a role in initiating me to the world of historical research. I am immensely grateful to Prof. E.K.G. Nambiar for his generosity to accommodate me as a research scholar under his guidance at the later stage of this work. It is his helping hand that has brought this work to a fulfillment. Prof. K.K.N. Kurup who was formerly the Head of the Department of History, University of Calicut was always generous in helping and encouraging me in my research. Prof. V. Kunhali the present Head, Prof. S.M. Mohammed Koya the former Head, and all other teaching and non-teaching staff of the Department of History, University of Calicut were kind and helpful to me in my research career. The sincere cooperation extended to me as a research student by the staff of the History Department Library, and Central Library of Calicut University, Kerala Sahitya Academy Library, Thrissur, Appan Thampuram Memorial Library, Thrissur, Kerala State Legislature Library Thiruvananthapuram, S.N. Public Library and Reading Room, Irinjalakuda, Kombukutty Menon Library, Tharur, Mercy College Library, Palakkad and General Library, Govt. Victoria College, Palakkad is laudable. I am extremely thankful to all of them.

I am a beneficiary of the materials, informations and suggestions provided by my friend and colleague Mr. P.K. Sreekumar. I never felt any difficulty in utilizing Sanskrit sources since Dr. P.M. Abdulrehman was always willing to help me. My wife Smt. K.P. Gouri played her role well as a partner in collecting materials. Prof. Abraham Joseph showed much patience and spent much time to make my English readable. I place on record my deep gratitude to all of them. I owe a great deal to Dr. K.K. Sujatha and her family for helping and encouraging me to complete this work. For enjoying several weeks long stay at the AKGCT Bhavan when I was at Thiruvananthapuram to collect data I am thankful to the AKGCT, Mr. V. Karthikeyan Nair and some of my friends there.

Throughout my work I was missing the presence which I intensely longed for of late Dr. M. Muraleedharan. I had the opportunity to discuss the topic of my research with him and it was in fact he who suggested the title of this work. I felt his love and encouragement irresistible in infusing confidence in me to start and complete this work.

My sincere thanks are due to Miss Vidya and Mr. V.R. Jayesh, and the alpha print tech, Palakkad for the care and sincere cooperation shown in typing and binding this work.

CHAPTER I

MEDIEVAL HERITAGE

With mountains and valleys, rivers and streams, and lagoons and backwaters the intersected land of Kerala presents a beautiful landscape on the western coastal line of the southernmost part of India. At the beginning of the 20th century two-third of her land was covered by forests and the inhabitable area was occupied by less than a million people. She never suffered from bloody wars of conquests of the imperialists from the north of India. So the agrarian economy and a social order based on it had an undisrupted growth. The ideology that sustained such a socio-economic order was Brahmanical social theory of Varna Dharma. It was the binding thread of the segmented polity and society of the geographically fragmented Kerala. That ideology bound the Hindus and all the population which did not profess any particular religion together into a hierarchical order. The ideology of Varna Dharma and the feudal economic order fostered numerous castes and the discriminatory practices like unseeability, unapproachability and untouchability among them based on purity-impurity concept. Seeing the strict observance of such practices the great Hindu saint Vivekananda in the year 1893 described Kerala as a lunatic asylum. Barely a century later Kerala earned fame, true or false, as a model state for her notable achievements in the fields of education and health according to modern standards. How the 'mad' people attained the level of sanity to form a model state is a question that begs historical explanation. Any such explanation seems not possible

without an understanding of the profound change in the mindset of the people. What follows is an attempt to find out one facet of the process of that change leading to the formation of Kerala State in 1956.

History being functional, it is not rare that man looks at the past in correspondence to the needs and aspirations of the present and writes history in some form to justify or refute the establishment. With fictitious construction of causes and meanings in the existing order such an attempt has been made in the anonymously authored historical work *Keralolpathy*¹ justifying and rationalising the existing order. Starting with the origin of the land of Kerala the work dwells at length on the history of Kerala up to the close of the 17th century A.D. Mythically constructing the origin the author says that the land of Kerala was created out of the sea by Parasurama, the divine figure conceived as one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu to provide homeland for Brahmanas as an act of penance to extricate the sin of slaughtering Kshetriyas². The Brahmanas brought by Parasurama to Kerala were made the *jenmis* or sole owners of land to carry on the scriptural rites and observances, namely, *karmakanda* for their own and all other people's well-being³. To deter any hindrance to this religious calling of the Brahmanas, Parasurama arranged for six

1. *Keralolpathy*, Kottayam 1886(?).

2. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6. Karmakanda is that department of the Vedas which relates to ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites. See Vasudev Govind Apte, *The Concise Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Delhi 1996. Also, Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy, I*, Delhi, 1988, pp. 430, 436. The term Karmakanda is taken here in this sense as distinct from the term *karmamarga* or *karmayoga* which means dharma or action or duty one has to perform in worldly life.

months of rainy season to ensure the enrichment of the flora and thereby the abundance of cow wealth and six months of summer season for the unhindered celebration of religious festivals and ceremonial performances which the Vedic Brahmanas were asked to do⁴. The land and its climate were so arranged to secure the success of *karmakanda*. Vedic Brahmanas in turn distributed land to lesser Brahmanas, founded a number of temples and ordered the ceremonials of these temples. They themselves assumed lordship and granted vassalage to the Sudras and prescribed duties for themselves and the Sudras. Their exclusive duties were assumed to be ancestral and divine worship⁵. The ideology of a caste-oriented feudal hierarchy in the social set up is well constructed in this theory of the origin and distribution of land and stipulation of duties for the lords and vassals.

As there was the possibility of internal strife among the Brahmanas, Parasurama entrusted the rule of the land to four *Kazhakams*⁶ namely Perinjalloor, Payyannoor, Parappoor and Chengannoor⁷. When this order became ineffective to fulfil, the function of governance the Brahmanas decided that one *rekshapurushan*, Lord Protector, of each *kazhakam* shall rule for a period of three years⁸. This arrangement proved a failure and corruption and negligence of duty became the order. Subsequently the Brahmanas summoned a general assembly at Thirunavaya for

4. Ibid., p. 6.

5. Ibid., p. 7.

6. Geographical divisions.

7. *Keralolpathy*, p. 8.

8. Ibid.

deliberations and reached the conclusion that a Brahmana ruler shall reign the land for twelve years. This led to a contest among themselves for political power, and ultimately it was decided that the Brahmanas should not take up the responsibility of governance and instead a Kshetriya should be invited for it⁹. As decided afterwards at a meeting of the delegates of the *kazhakams* a Kshetriya named Keyaperumal of Keyapuram was brought to Kerala for governance¹⁰.

After Keyaperumal another Kshetriya ruler was brought from a foreign land along with his sister. She was married to a Brahmana and the progeny of this alliance was to be known as Kshetriyas¹¹. Land was granted to the king and it was known as *viruthi*¹². Kshetriya rulers who were brought successively were known as *Perumals*. With the departure of the last Perumal governance of the land again came into the hands of the Brahmanas¹³. This Brahmanical rule came to an end when Krishnarayar on request from the Brahmanas sent new Perumals to Kerala. Among them Cheraman Perumal ruled for a long period. This Cheraman Perumal, out of guilty conscience for ruling the country which actually was granted by Parasurama to the Brahmanas, converted to Islam and partitioned his kingdom among his own men and left for Mecca. The partition resulted in the emergence of four important *Swaroopams* or

9. Ibid., p. 9.

10. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

11. Ibid., p. 10.

12. Ibid., p. 11.

13. Ibid., p. 21.

kingdoms and a number of principalities¹⁴. A theoretical formulation of the political hegemony of the Brahmanas is achieved in the description by assigning the position of vassalage to the king as the holder of landed fief granted by the Brahmanas and of a political agent appointed by them through recruitment and by asserting themselves through parentage of the Kshetriya community of royal rulers.

The sixth part of the second chapter of the work is devoted to an explanation on the social order, Varna Dharma and the traditional callings of the different castes. We get as many caste as there are callings¹⁵. In conclusion it is said that the land of Kerala being the *karmabhumi*, that is, the land meant for the performance of sacraments and rituals of *karmakanda*, any obstruction to them would result in famine and pestilence. There the observance of the *Varnasrama* Dharma is to be strictly carried out unlike in the lands of knowledge or *jnanabhumi*. The lands of the Europeans are referred to as *jnanabhumi* where there is only one varna and no need of practices like untouchability and unapproachability and the purificatory bath. In this land violation of the varna order is not at all desirable¹⁶. The purpose of this social theory based on Varna Dharma is the legitimization of Brahmanical supremacy in a hierarchically ordered social structure.

The *Keralolpathy* is neither logography nor hagiography nor an historical work in its proper sense. It is not at all an attempt to trace the

14. Ibid., p. 39-43.

15. Ibid., pp. 33-39.

16. Ibid., p. 39.

historical process of evolution of institutions. Its narration of the past is a miserable failure from methodological point of view. Some vague memories about the past without a sense of temporal and logical succession of events as an array of cause and effect are narrated in the work. The purpose or interest behind the narration is the only interesting aspect of the work in the following discussion on the ideological basis of a society that produced the work.

One notable feature of the work is the context in which it is written. It has been written after the advent of the Europeans which for the author seemed to have posed a threat to the tradition of the land. The author warns that the violation of tradition would result in calamity for all^{16.a}. The tone of the work gives a clue about the social rank of the anonymous author and undoubtedly he is a Brahmana since his attempt is to uphold the socio-economic and political order under Brahmanical hegemony. The basic idea the author conveys to the reader is that the land was created for the Brahmanas, the dharma to be followed in that land was *karmakanda* and Varna Dharma, and the legitimacy of the ruler is derived from the Brahmanas. It is to be inferred then that the work was a socio-economic and political treatise in justification of the established order of Brahmanical hegemony in which the Brahmanas as *jenmis* were to own and enjoy the landed property and to profess the only calling of performing *yagas* and other religious rituals protected by the rule of their agents in the context of the European intrusion that seemed to entail political

16.a. Ibid.

confusion and dissolution of a social structure that remained intact on the bedrock of the ideology of Varna Dharma.

The possibility of the Parasurama legend having currency in oral tradition even earlier cannot be dismissed as such a legend was very popular in Karnataka in the 14th century¹⁷. It might have found steady acceptance among the Malayali Brahmanas simultaneously with their emergence as the sole owners or *jenmis* of the land and the politically hegemonical class. There is reference to direct governance of the country by the Brahmanas in this work. It may be an allusion to the *Sankethams* under the Brahmanical rule that rose in the absence of a central political authority following the disintegration of the second Chera empire¹⁸. So it might be for the purpose of establishing their hegemony in the transitional stage that followed the Chera empire and then to perpetuate the consolidated position in the new context of European intrusion, as a forceful argument of the case, that the legend was put in writing.

The point will go home when *Keralolpathy* is read along with *Kerala Mahatmyam* and *Sankara Smriti*. In *Kerala Mahatmyam* also the creation of Kerala is attributed to Parasurama to provide settlement for Brahmanas as an act of penance¹⁹, with more details. It is a well articulated exclusive discourse in Sanskrit on the theme. Here, the land was given to the Brahmanas and their gods of Hindu pantheon for whom a number of

17. M.R. Balakrishna Warriar, "Keralolpathiyum Gramapaddhathiyum", in *Prabhandhamanjari*, Kottayam, 1957, pp. 19-33.

18. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, (hereafter Elamkulam), "The Evolution of the Jenmi System in Kerala" in *Studies in Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1970, p. 325.

19. Seshu Sastrikal, ed., *Kerala Mahatmyam*, Trichur, 1912, p. 32.

temples were constructed. The *mahatmyam* or glory of the land sprang from this fiction that it was the home of heavenly gods and the earthly gods the Brahmanas. Parasurama then brought the other varnas, artisans, Chandalas and men of different callings. Food grains also were brought by him. He dictated that no chastity was required for the Sudras and they should follow matrilineal system of inheritance. The discourse is then an assertion of the acquired social and religious status of the hegemonical class and the land is described as a heaven²⁰. It is indicative of the satisfaction of the hegemonical class with the status quo.

There is no reference to the *Sankara Smriti* and *Keralolpathy* in this work. It might be the earliest of the three works which first mooted the idea of Parasurama creating Kerala for the Brahmanas in an effort to construct a theoretical formulation to bring the society under their hegemony. As the latter were of post-Portuguese period according to internal evidence²¹ they were probably based on the former. A repeated discourse of the former's theme was necessitated by the threat of revolt against the varna system by violation of taboos. The estrangement of the Kunjali Marakkars, the Synod of Diamper aimed at distinguishing the identity of the Christians and the violation of caste rules by translating the epics by Thunchat Ramanujan, a Sudra by caste, were symptomatic of internal tumult of the Kerala society. Against such a background it was necessary for the hegemonical class to assert itself ideologically to counter

20. Ibid., pp. 23-32. *Keralolpathy*, p. 6.

21. *Keralolpathy*. Chelakkara Parameswaran Moossad, (Hereafter Moossad) ed., *Sankara Smriti*, Thrissur, 1924, p. 59.

still more violent strife that might cause the erosion of the Varna Dharma and *karmakanda* in the society.

The *Sankara Smriti* written very much for that purpose is a socio-ethical treatise cleverly attributed to Sri Sankara the great commentator on monistic philosophy and is subtitled as *Leghu Dharma Prakasika*. It is considered as the abridged version of the *Dharma Sastra* namely *Bhargava Smriti*. This Sanskrit work was written in a simple style according to the anonymous author, by Sankara to enlighten the ignorant people of Kerala as the original work was not accessible to them. Its purpose is to explain the duties of the four varnas and *asramas* to be followed by those who formed the Hindu society. The ideology of this work is founded upon the *purusha sukta* of the tenth *mandala* of the *Rg Veda* which expounded that the four varnas of Brahmanas, Kshetriyas Vaisyas and Sudras are created by Lord Brahma from his mouth, hand, thighs and feet respectively, who form the Hindu society in hierarchical order. The dharma as defined in this work is the uncorrupt performance of the rites prescribed by the Vedic texts for the welfare of this whole world. Implied in this theory is the belief that not man's effort but God's will determines the course of human life and the whole world, and for the welfare of humanity gods are to be propitiated through Vedic rites. Brahmanas are held to be the sole agents of the performance of the rites of propitiation and thus the supreme beings on earth. Action intended to obstruct such performances is *adharmā*²².

22. Moossad, ed., *Sankara Smriti*, pp. 1-3.

Those who are born in any of the varnas have to follow the four *asramas* of Brahmacharya, Garhastya, Vanaprasta, and Sanyasa successively. The dharma in general for all people irrespective of varna is also expounded²³. The dharma of the three varnas below the Brahmanas is to live in subordination to them. They must be ready even to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the Brahmanas. Sudras are the servile class while the Kshetriyas and Vaisyas are not to be so. The duties of each varna are explained separately. The protection of the cow is a duty of the Vaisyas and Sudras. Sudras are to serve the three higher castes. Lower varnas should never assume the duties of the higher varnas. The higher varna may assume some times the duty of the lower varna but the Brahmana should never. The primary duty of the Kshetriya is to protect the Brahmanas and cow²⁴. The King is to rule as absolute monarch. The Kshetriyas and Vaisyas are not permitted to learn the Vedas^{24.a.}.

Celibacy is considered as an ideal life for a Brahmana. Generosity and compassion are considered as values that help the attainment of heaven which means communion with God forever and escape from the sufferings of worldly life. Granting of gifts is the noblest of values and the gift of land and cows is the greatest of gifts which are the means of production and standard of wealth for the Brahmanas. But God has authorised only Brahmanas to receive gifts. The privileged position of the Brahmana is a divine gift. Distribution of gift is advocated as the best

23. Ibid., pp. 3-7.

24. Ibid., pp. 11-12. *Keralolpathy*, p. 43.

24.a. Moossad, ed., *Sankara Smriti*, p. 19.

way to secure redemption of sin. Brahmanas are the gods on earth. Women are to subject to men. Only Brahmanas and none else have the right to perform yaga²⁵.

A son is must for Brahmana for his son alone can perform the funeral offerings and other sacraments for the *moksha* of the soul of the deceased and to save the dead from the horrid sufferings of hell²⁶. Sorcery is recommended for curing diseases²⁷. People to whom impurity is ascribed should not be allowed to occupy the residential premises of the Brahmanas^{27.a} to keep up their exclusiveness from others.

Women are subjected to a number of taboos intended to keep them aloof from social life. They are not expected to enjoy freedom and are to be subordinated to men folk. They require no higher learning and are to be satisfied with elementary education. They are forbidden from hearing the enchantment of Vedic hymns like the Sudras. Entertainment and adornment of one's person are denied to her²⁸. Chastity is held to be the greatest virtue of a Brahmana woman and the king is expected to see the observance of it at any cost²⁹. *Smarthavicharam*³⁰ is a means to achieve it and how the trial of a suspicious woman is to be conducted is given in

25. Ibid., pp. 84-94.

26. Ibid., pp. 99-100.

27. Ibid., p. 114.

27.a. Ibid., p. 118.

28. Ibid., pp. 129-30. 214-19.

29. Ibid., p. 131.

30. For details see A.M.N. Chakyar, *The Last Smarthavicharam*, Tripunithura. 1998.

detail³¹. The first part of the eighth chapter is devoted to it. If a Brahmana woman is found guilty of adultery, herself and all the gents involved in it shall be deprived of all privileges and social respect that they could enjoy as members of the first varna by treating them as outcaste. It has to be implemented by the king to preserve the Varna Dharma intact. The strict enforcement of *smarthavicharam* is indicative of the frequent possibility of committing adultery by both the genders in a closed family life of a secluded community like the Brahmanas^{31.a}.

Rules for the sustenance of a polity underpinned by an ideology of Brahmanical hegemony are also prescribed in the *Sankara Smriti*³². Three fourth of the population of the capital should be Brahmanas. Brahmanas are to be exempted from taxation. Brahmanas and cows, and those who seek asylum should be protected. Half of the treasures of hoarding detected should be distributed among the Brahmanas. Administration of justice should be done on the basis of *Smriti*, *Sruti* and the Epics. All these are germinative appendices of Brahmanical theology as an ideology of hegemony. Lands should be granted to the Brahmanas by the king. The king should always seek the guidance of Brahmanas in every aspect of governance. His property in any event should not be taken away and enjoyed by the king. In the event of having no heirs to Brahmana's movable property, it should be drowned in the sea. The will of the Brahmana should ultimately decide the nature of governance. Other than exiling, no

31. Moossad, ed., *Sankara Smriti*, pp. 133-41.

31.a. A.M.N. Chakyar, *Smarthavicharam*, pp. 130-40.

capital punishment should be given to a Brahmana even for a heinous crime³².

The Vaisyas are prohibited from taking profit in trade with Brahmanas. While the right to learn Vedas and to perform *yagas* are denied to the Kshetriyas and Vaisyas, a wider number of rights are denied to the Sudras³³. The Sudras are to lead a life of dependents of the Brahmanas but not as exactly as legally recognised slaves who could be exchanged by monetary transaction. They should not remain illiterate but should not learn *Sastras* and converse in Sanskrit and are not to utter a Sanskrit word. He has no right to do *tapas* and chant hymns. He should not undertake a fast as a religious observance. To say the least a Sudra should not do whatever is prohibited by the master class³⁴. He is conceded the right to hear the epics and the Puranas but has no right to read them. As he has no discerning power to learn right and wrong, he should take the words of the Brahmanas as authority³⁵. He should not pronounce the *Aum* in the five lettered hymn *Aum Na-ma-ssi-va-ya* in praise of Lord Siva. The Brahmanas are prohibited from doing priestly performances for the Sudras³⁶.

If we take the ideology of a hegemonical class as an assertion of the consolidated position they enjoy in the given established order, the

32. Moossad, ed., *Sankara Smriti*, pp. 177-87.

33. Ibid., pp. 196-98.

34. Ibid., p. 198.

35. Moossad, ed., *Sankara Smriti*, p. 199.

36. Ibid. p. 217.

ideology of the three works examined here is very well reflective of the system that prevailed in Kerala at the beginning of 19th century. In that system the four varnas or estates of the Hindu population alone constituted the polity and society proper. Professional groups below the Sudras and not professing any particular faith or ideological status were considered as Chandalas. Other sects of different faiths were excluded from the polity and society in the sense that they were not eligible to enjoy the benefits of *Varnasrama* Dharma order and a share in the government. Hindu society was a formation of varna groups hierarchically divided on the basis of their callings. They were to render different types of service to the Brahmanas i.e, the Kshetriyas political, Vaisyas economic and Sudras menial and personal service. People belonging to the lower varnas and outcastes and followers of other faiths were not considered as fellow beings by the Brahmanas even though they were created by the same God. They were conceived as creations of God for rendering service to the hegemonical class. Even gods were made their servants by propitiating rituals, the performance of which was the monopoly of the Brahmanas themselves. This is an ideology that refutes fraternity of human beings and perpetuates discrimination and servitude. In the order of hierarchy the lower class is always to serve the higher classes and all those who are below the Brahmanas are finally to serve them. Among the four varnas the three below the Brahmanas could enjoy some rights in conformity with their graduated positions in the Hindu order of society. The whole population did not constitute a homogeneous civil society of one nationality but a federation of castes and religious groups subjected to rules and

regulations of caste and religion. In such a set up people were mere subjects and not citizens. So there was no question of people enjoying civic rights. So long as the Kshetriya ruler was wielding political power, the set up could be maintained intact and all the subjects of different castes and religious groups could be subjected to the hegemony of the Brahmanas. Followers of other faiths could not be strictly controlled by this ideology but could be marginalised by the Kshetriya ruler. The duties of all four varnas and the rights and privileges of the Brahmana varna only are the subject of discussion in the *Sankara Smriti* and the other two treatises. The Brahmanas, as the hegemonical class shaped such a Varna Dharma ideology and repeatedly discoursed it to make others believe in it so that they would remain the same servile classes for ever. Tethered by this ideology all others who could not formulate another ideology to counter this were kept in eternal bondage to the Brahmanas in the name of religion. Divide-and-rule strategy is the essence of that ideology. Drawing energy from the source of God the ideology of Varna Dharma teaches a natural division of people by God himself. Through the enforcement of ritualistic status to different callings social mobility and equality were denied and the entire population was compartmentalised and the society was kept in a static state.

The ideas of rationalism, humanism, universal brotherhood, equality, individualism, civil rights etc. that can be called modern are practically absent in the ideology of Varna Dharma. But privileges and racial superiority, purity and exclusiveness of the Brahmanas, servitude of lower varnas and castes to the Brahmanas, duties without rewards of

the servile classes and subjection of women are the repeatedly discussed issues in the three works. Defeatism, exaltation of the heavenly world, escape from the horrible sufferings of this world and the *moksha* or communion with God and eternal bliss with an end to worldly life are ideas pre-eminent in the discourse. It conveys the message of a religious oriented fascist ideology that suppresses creativity and humanism and is oppressive to all humanity including the hegemonical class. Such an ideology does not allow one to attain self-realization in this world through intelligence, perseverance and dynamism. The works discussed here were advocating that ideology to preserve the traditional set up under Bhramanical hegemony.

The emergence of the Brahmanas as the hegemonical class in Kerala has a long history of centuries. Their colonisation of the land had its beginning during the Sangham age. They were migrating to this region through the western coast from Gujarat with the motivating theory of land grant to them by Parasurama³⁷. By the Sangham age Brahmanas had developed a theology with a philosophical foundation to be used as an ideology of hegemony. The Vedas, the Upanisads, the Epics, and the well defined Code of Manu mainly formed the intellectual wealth with interpretative works in justification of the supremacy of the Brahmanas. The intellectual manipulations testified by the *purusha sukta*, an interpolation in the *Rg Veda*³⁸, and the words of Lord Krishna³⁹ himself

37. Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahmin Settlements in Kerala*, Calicut University, 1978, pp. 3-4.

38. R.S. Sharma, *Perspective on Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 67.

39. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, Delhi, 1977, pp. 160, 252, 364-66.

sanctifying the varna system were effectively applied to the social set up with the four varna divisions of all the Hindus and all the others as outcastes and *mlechchas*. The law of *karma* also had been developed to hold all other beings below the Brahmanas as incarnations consistent with the amount of sins committed in the previous birth⁴⁰. Deflation in the amount of sin would lead to successive promotion to higher births culminating in Brahmanahood. Though the theory of the *purusha sukta* and the Law of Karma are inconsistent with each other, the purpose of both is the theoretical establishment of the hegemony of the Brahmanas.

A people in possession of a logically established persuasive ideology of this kind could easily overpower the less advanced people of this land without using any physical force. All could be enticed and be bewildered by the theological buttering of it. That ideology or religion founded on God was turned into a source of absolute power over the world and the Creator of that world. It was institutionalised with the base in the temple where the God is consecrated. And the God is subjugated by chanting hymns to act in subservience to the ideologues / priests. Their religion and gods were more sophisticated than those of the aborigines of the land. Advanced knowledge of astrology, medicine and martial art helped the colonisers to earn intellectual superiority over the aborigines. Their language enriched by such knowledge and philosophical, theological and literary works, well-known for structural strength and beauty, and national in character, that is, pan-Indian, might have added to that superiority.

40. Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, Vol. I. Penguin, 1969, p. 46.

Not being industrial or agricultural producers and traders, it is not the advancement of the colonists in material culture that helped them to enslave the aborigines. Science and technology were not developed by them as a means to exploit the material environment or the earthly resources.

The view that the Sangham society was a caste-ridden one seems to be untenable⁴¹. The divisions that existed in the Sangham society cannot be taken as the same castes that exist in a Hindu society based on Varna concept. The attributes of caste like untouchability, unapproachability etc. in a Hindu society were virtually absent in the Sangham society. The epithets of the social divisions of the Sangham society need be taken only as class groups or professional groups without ideological justification and ritual status which is the core trait of a Hindu caste. Caste groups as in a Varna based Hindu society cannot be detected in the Sangham society. All the Sangham people became *avarnas* in the presence of the Brahmanas and their descendants who were not brought into the Varna fold remained to be so until they were documentarily included in the category of Hindu population with census reporting. But the process of Hinduisation of the society in this land had begun during the Sangham period. For example the rulers actually not Kshetriyas were elevated to that position by the Brahmanas through *yagas* prescribed by their ideology and brought to the varna fold. This is an example of manipulation which can be called political and religious at once. We can see the rise of caste

41. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Reinterpretation in South Indian History*, Trivandrum, 1977, pp. 14-15.

groups with the rise of the Brahmanas as the dominating group. We get references to the Sudras in inscriptions only by 13th century A.D.⁴² by which time the Brahmanas might have given that epithet to the tenant class who received land directly from them. In taking policy decisions in religious matters the king was subordinated to the advisory body namely the *Nalu Tali* or Council of the Brahmanas representing the thirtytwo Brahmana settlements founded during the Sangham period in proper Kerala⁴³. Its members came from the four settlements namely Mulikkalam, Airanikalam, Paravur and Irinjalakkuda. They were actually the authorities of the four temples namely Meltali, Kiltali, Netiyatali and Cingapuram Tali in the capital city of the Cheras. This exclusive position was further consolidated by the unwritten law that Namboothiris or the sons of Namboothiris alone should occupy the royal throne during the post-Chera period⁴⁴, and the usurpation of political power was completed.

Though not yet risen to a position of hegemony during the Sangham age and the entire Chera period, the Brahmanas were able to consolidate their position as a homogeneous exclusive religious community wielding political influence. Their settlements centered around temples which proved to be citadels of their power with the chief and subordinate deities consecrated in them. Temples got land grants and the Brahmanas became the custodians of them. They did not directly cultivate these lands but leased them out to the tenants. Temples got donations of movable

42. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, ed., *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1992, III, pp. 194-95.

43. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Calicut, 1996, 85-87.

44. Elamkulam. "The Second Chera Empire", in *Studies* p. 265.

properties also. They included money, gold etc. Money was lent on interest⁴⁵. The temples rendered the service of hospital and educational institution too⁴⁶. The people around the temple-centered settlement of the Brahmanas became economically dependent on them. Knowledge of medicine and sorcery became the source of power for the Brahmanas over the people. The Brahmanas became the masters of the villages by assuming partial political power through village assemblies membership of which was reserved to them. Priestcraft, knowledge of medicine and sorcery, management of temple wealth and political authority in villages all led to the predominance of the Brahmanas as an exclusive group in the village. But the existence of a central power during the reign of the Cheras prevented the Brahmanas from rising to a hegemonical position.

The uniform pattern of the Brahmana settlements and their representative set up leading to the *Nalu Tali* and the uniform code of conduct like the *Mulikkalam Kaccam*⁴⁷ for the administration of temples all show that the Brahmanas formed a homogeneous community that remained exclusively above and outside of the indigenous population. This exclusiveness of the community and their common heritage of *Sruti* and *Smriti* with a common religion and its deities made them constitute a separate nationality with national gods as elsewhere in Kerala also.

In the first two decades of the ninth century A.D one of the colonists was steadily rising to all India fame by his intellectual pre-eminence as

45. Kesavan, *Settlements*, p. 43.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

47. A grand agreement between the representatives of all Kerala temples setting certain rules for the management of temples which served as a model for all Brahmana.

exemplified by his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra* of Badarayana. He was expounding the monistic philosophy of Advaita most rationally and *karmakanda* simultaneously. The monistic philosophy of “pure morality”, as described by Paul Deussen⁴⁸, which transcends all discriminations and inequalities that cultivate sectarianism or exclusiveness, merely assumed the form of a dogma and a means for intellectual exercise of logic in his hands. His primary interest lay in securing polemical victory over other philosophical schools including that of Buddhism in establishing *Brahman* as the first cause. He does not seem to have any intention to use it as an ideology to create value consciousness oriented towards an egalitarian social set up. His commentary only helped to assert the Brahmanical superiority in the intellectual world and gaining justification for Varna Dharma with emphasis on the inferior varna status of the Sudras. A born Sudra has no right to knowledge, he asserted⁴⁹. He disqualified the Sudras for the knowledge of the *Brahman* through the study of the Vedas in his *Brahma Sutra Bhashya* relying on the authority of *Manu Smriti*⁵⁰. Sankara’s was an attempt to reinstate a philosophical truth expounded by Badarayana and in that attempt he was unconcerned with the well-being of the fellow creatures. Being the supporter of a philosophy of Varna Dharma that categorised human beings into graduated order with the Brahmanas placed in the highest rank, and that denied basic rights to the less fortunate who should have been treated as brothers since all are

48. Nataraja Guru, *The Word of The Guru*, Ernakulam, 1965, p. 59.

49. Sri Sankara, *Brahma Sutra Bhashya*, Tr. Swami Gambhirananda, Calcutta, 1977 Chapter II, p. 232.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 232 ff.

the reflections of the same *Brahman* as he held, he was negating the essence of the monistic philosophy. Sankara's sanction of *karmakanda* was a boon to the ideology of the Brahmanas in the context of the *Bhakthi* Movement. Sankara in fact reserved the *jnanakanda* concerned with the nature of ultimate truth for superior aspirants who require no meditation or worship or action of any kind and *karmakanda* dealing with the injunctions relating to the performance of sacrificial duties and actions for inferior aspirants⁵¹. The categorisation of human beings into superior and inferior, stress on *karmakanda* and his non-interference with the contemporary social life spared him from the attention of the Brahmanas. But the intellectual triumph of Sankara over rival faiths put the Brahmanas on an enviable position in the eye of the non-Brahmana pagan population and gained intellectual superiority for the whole community in the passage of time. His victorious march reinforced the claim of superior social status of the community.

During the post-Sangham period ending with 12th century A.D. the Brahmanas had steadily risen to the top of the social ladder. The structuralisation of the Hindu society into the fourfold division was more or less achieved⁵². The blessings of the Brahmanas were sought after by the monarchs and their slightest wishes were carried out by the authorities. They were revered by the masses as gods on earth. The land could be turned into the *karmabhumi*, *mahagrahara*, and *avijasaraya* (land of

51. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Delhi, 1988, p. 436.

52. N.P. Unni, *A History of Mushikavamsa*, Trivandrum, 1980, p. 197.

sacrifices, the great village of the Brahmanas, land depending on Brahmanas)⁵³. Knowledge of Vedas, *sadangas* and astrology now turned into worldly power that made them unrivalled. By the year 1122 that marked the disintegration of the Chera empire, the Brahmanas had covered half of the distance to the full height of hegemony in Kerala society.

By the close of the Sangham Age the people of Tamilakam, of which Kerala was a part then, had been very much influenced by the ideas of the colonists. Their legal, political and ethical ideas found favour with the indigenous writers like Thiruvalluvar. Though his time is a controversial one he may be placed between the second and the sixth century A.C according to Popley⁵⁴. He belonged to the professional group of Valluvars, the priests of the outcastes⁵⁵ who were lowered to the *avarna* status in the presence of the Varna concept of the colonizers. Thiruvalluvar rose to fame through his magnum opus *The Sacred Kural*. It is in fact a restatement of the *jnanakanda* as against the *karmakanda* the ideological weapon of the colonizers. He imbibed the universal values of the scriptural literature of ancient India which had been superimposed by the Brahmanical interpretations. Without being polemical and pedantic he construed God as the One, the “Supporter and Helper” for all who trust Him, the all-perfect One, Who alone gives joy and rest. He did not advocate the worship of idols, and stood above all sectarianism⁵⁶.

53. Ibid., p. 199.

54. H.A. Popley, *The Sacred Kural or the Tamil Veda of Thiruvalluvar*, Calcutta, 1931, pp. 7-8.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., p. 20.

He stressed on *bhakti*, the combination of faith and love as the way to salvation⁵⁷. Without denouncing the Brahmanas he defined Brahmanahood. One can be a Brahmana not by birth but only by leading a life that is unblemished and self controlled, securing victory over all senses and behaving graciously to all without the sense of high and low⁵⁸. Good deeds alone cut the way to salvation⁵⁹ from births and sorrows of human life. While accepting the theory of transmigration the author denounces the efficacy of sacrifices. The influence of the *Gita*⁶⁰, *Manu Smriti*⁶¹ and *Arthasastra*⁶² is evident in many of the couplets dealing with God, dharma and property, and kingship in contrast to the mechanical and manipulating exposition of scriptures by the Brahmanas. The work is a condensed ethical treatise on values meant for the brightening of human life on earth. Thiruvalluvar expounds the monistic philosophy as pure morality which involves the elements of love for and kindness to all living beings⁶³.

Thiruvalluvar is an instance of a creative mind absorbing the essence of Vedic and Upanisadic teachings while discarding the self-motivated misconstructions of the priestly class which transformed the ancient teachings into a source of wealth and power. He reminds one of

57. Ibid. p. 22.

58. Ibid., p. 39.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., p. 61.

61. Ibid., pp. 73-74, 89.

62. Ibid., p. 88.

63. Ibid., p. 81.

the teachings of the Buddha when he touches upon compassion and non-killing⁶⁴. Like that of the Buddha, his was the well articulated voice of protest of the aborigines for the first time against the colonialism of the Brahmanas. Thiruvalluvar had no successors until 19th century and the legacy of Brahmanical theology triumphed though his tradition did not vanish. He proved that the aboriginal mind was not barren but creative. Yet ultimately the organized and manipulating priest class won.

As a reaction to the mechanism and ceremonialism of Brahmanical theology a host of philosopher-poets sang hymns of *bhakti* after Thiruvalluvar. Sambandar of 7th century A.D, Appar, Sundara Murthi Swami and Manikka Vasahar were some of them. Appar of Vellala caste refuted the efficacy of rituals like bathing in holy waters, chanting of Vedas, hearing of *sastras*, teaching of the book of righteousness, learning of *sadangas*, asceticism, penance and pilgrimage in bringing forth salvation. He exhorted that unflinching faith and love of God alone would lead to release from the pains of life⁶⁵. To Sundara Murthi Swami the objective world is unreal and God alone is real and offers refuge from the unreal. The life on earth is an illusion. It ends in dust. Pain, lust and ruin are the natural corollary of birth. So he taught that one must do only good and be devoted to Siva the Lord of the world⁶⁶. According to Manikka Vasahar God is present everywhere and He is both being and non being.

64. Thiruvalluvar, *The Kural*, Tr. P.S. Sundaram, Penguin, 1990, pp. 43-44, 51.

65. Kingsbury and Phillips, *Hymns of the Tamil Saivite Saints*, OUP, 1921, pp. 49-52.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Being ignorant of this man foolishly dances to the tune of his ego while God from above is pulling the strings⁶⁷.

The concept of God as the Real with His presence everywhere is pre-eminent in the thought of these Saivite Saints. They did not make pedantic constructions but held that simple devotion, love and faith, and good deeds are the right ways to emancipation from the sorrows of life. The general tone of the *bhakti* songs is refutation of *karmakanda* the source of strength of Brahmanical supremacy. The aborigines positively grasped the Upanisadic philosophy of monism and their innocent genius reacted with the *bhakti* philosophy to the manipulation of the colonialists.

Being attributed divine sanction and sanctity, the Varna theory became the conceptual source of caste division of the different vocational groups. Caste among the Hindus became a solid and sectarian institution because of its religious or ritual status. Caste status is different from class status. While class status is flexible caste status is unalterable. A change of one's calling brings a change in his class status. For example an agriculture labourer can become an owner cultivator or a tenant or landowner. But a Vellala by caste cannot become a Brahmana, nor can a Palla become a Vellala⁶⁸. Whereas in class status marriage and commensality are not subjected to restriction in caste it is contrary. The caste is an endogamous group. A member of one caste can marry only within his caste. But he cannot marry from another caste without violating

67. Ibid., p. 91.

68. Andre Beteille, *Caste Class and Power*, Bombay 1969, p. 190.

caste rules. For the convenience of the higher caste the law giver Manu had sanctioned that a man of the higher caste could marry a woman of lower caste. But a man of the lower caste is never entitled to marry from the higher caste⁶⁹. The membership of the caste also determines what a person may eat and with whom. It is the membership of the caste that determines one's customs and rituals, regarding birth, marriage, death etc, as well as his calling.

The Varna and caste concept makes a calling group a community that forms a society within the society and all the castes dubbed as Panchamas form distinct societies outside the Hindu population and each community has its own life style. In the opinion of Max Weber 'castes are status groups that form communities of amorphous character in contrast to classes'⁷⁰. In the Indian context society is thus characterised by "status summations" as one's position in any sphere of society is determined by his caste status. A person of the low caste status thus occupies the same status in the political or economic hierarchy. Caste status, socio-economic status and political status are corresponding to each other⁷¹. The status of an individual in a hierarchically organised caste society is determined in every sense by the status his group enjoys in that society by his birth. His status remains unchangeable by education or wealth or success or failure. A man is born into a caste and he dies in it without any opportunity for self

69. B. Kuppaswamy, *Social Change in India*, Delhi, 1972, p. 125.

70. Quoted in Andre Beteille, *Caste*, p. 188.

71. Anil Bhatt, *Caste Class and Politics*, Delhi, 1975, pp. 22-23.

realisation through a creative life in any field. Although class and caste are distinct identities, in the pre capitalist society of India caste was a manifestation of class⁷².

A historical reconstruction of the evolution of casteism in Kerala has not been done so far and the paucity of materials makes its realisation impossible. Available evidence show that the Hindu population of Kerala was composed of innumerable castes and sub castes at the beginning of the 19th century with all the characteristics given in the foregoing description of caste and all of them seem to be ritualised calling groups or classes. Their ritual status was determined by the ideology of Varna Dharma which does not recognise in practical life the divinity in every being sanctioned by the monistic philosophy. Nor does it grant any respect to human labour as a service to society. Society has no place in that ideology. It is based on categorisation of callings as superior and inferior or pure and vile according to the needs of the Brahmanas. The only pure or superior calling is *karmakanda* performed by them. All other callings are inferior. According to the degree of inferiority in relation to the *karmakanda*, taking it as the standard of value, and the requirement of each calling, they are graduated. Men pursuing them are also graduated accordingly. This inferiority and superiority are marked by pollution attached to touch and approach to one another in degree.

The traditional features of the caste system like heredity, hierarchy, taboos on connubium and commensality, restrictions on choice of occupation, civil and religious disabilities and the privileges of certain

72. Ibid., p. 23.

groups and apartheid prevented the growth of a civil or social or natural bond among the people. Caste is an institution that narrowed down the loyalty of any particular caste to that caste and thus undermined loyalty to the entire society and the growth of nationalism. As an inhibitive force it arrested the progress of the individual and the society as well. The Varna Dharma ideology therefore kept the Kerala society fragmented into exclusive groups. The concept of Varna Dharma acted as a divisive force by sanctions against mobility of groups. It also acted as an uncivilizing force by denying learning to the lower classes. For, the rules of such sanctions were codified, recorded and applied to local circumstances by the Brahmanas as has been pointed out by Kathleen Gough⁷³, so as to strengthen their hold over the social order.

It was not simply through the social concept implied in the Varna Dharma that the hegemonical class subjected the society. It was their domination over the means of production that helped the operation of their ideology in real life. The *Keralolpathy* and *Kerala Mahatmyam* expound the theory that all the land of Kerala had been granted to them by Lord Parasurama with flower and water. This legendary claim was fully founded on factual basis. Their ownership of large tracts of land can be traced to the Sangham period. Since all their lands could not be directly cultivated by them, they sublet them to tenants⁷⁴. The relationship between the landlord and the tenant was regulated by custom based on

73. Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

74. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Reinterpretation*, p. 16.

the principle that every twelve years the agreement between them was to be renewed. We do not have evidence to show that the lords of the land had any political or administrative powers and rights over tenants. It has to be supposed that it was not and could not be so in the presence of a powerful central authority of the king. It may be rightly reasoned that this system was a feature of feudalism that could develop into a full fledged feudal set up in an appropriate matrix. So the view that feudalism existed in the Sangham age seems untenable. According to Elamkualm the Chera-Chola war of the 11th century led to the decline of the central monarchical authority and the rise of Brahmanas to prominence and power, and the origin of feudalism in Kerala. Many people as a way to escape taxation surrendered their lands to temples, or Brahmanas and Brahmanas could become owners of such lands in course of time. Offices of temple administration became hereditary during this period and the Brahmanas, being the trustees of the temples could accumulate political and administrative powers⁷⁵. The Chera-Chola wars could be a cause of insecurity for the propertied class due to military campaigns. In a situation of loss of landed property along with the residential building following military raids, they could be protected by surrendering to the temples or Brahmanas and thereby transforming them into sacred, and free from occupation and destruction. In such cases many landowners might have become tenants of Brahmanas and have paid them a portion of their produce as rent. This would have enabled the Brahmanas to acquire ownership of vast areas of cultivable lands particularly in Malabar and

75. Elamkulam, "The Second Chera Empire", in *Studies*, pp. 263-64.

become landlords. Many of the Nairs became tenants of the Namboothiri Brahmanas and they sublet their lands to the Izhavas or employed Pulayyas as serf labourers⁷⁶. This seems to be a logical explanation for the evolution of *jenmi* system and the rise of Brahmanas to the economically most powerful position of enjoying *jenmam* right, that is “supreme, absolute and unqualified proprietorship to the soil, ... the highest and most complete type of private property in land”⁷⁷. The *jenmi* system elevated the Brahmanas to lordship of the first order and the Nairs to lordship of the second order. Acquisition of economic suzerainty with the ideologically backed supremacy over the society elevated their status to almost that of gods on earth⁷⁸.

In Kerala the four fold Varna system in its entirety never existed and the Vaisyas were a non-existent class⁷⁹. The rulers of the major kingdoms who were known as Kshetriyas are believed to have been raised to that varna status by the Brahmanas and they constituted a negligible number in the census reports⁸⁰. The *Jathinirayam* an authoritative ideological exposition on caste makes mention of 72 principal castes among which the Brahmanas are followed by the Nanajatis in descending order and then the eighteen classes of Sudras. The Nanajatis are a set of *antaralajatis* or intermediate castes of Ambalavasis or temple servants and Samantas or ruling chiefs⁸¹. The Sudras were the Nairs. They had

76. George Woodcock, *Kerala - A Portrait of the Malabar Coast*, London, 1967, p. 27.

77. Quoted in Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance*, New Delhi, 1976, p. 27.

78. *Travancore Census Report, 1875*, p. 191.

79. M.S.A. Rao, *Tradition Rationality and Change*, Bombay, 1972, 118.

80. K.M. Panikkar, *Hindu Society at Cross Roads*, Bombay, 1936, p. 8.

81. M.S.A. Rao, *Tradition*, p. 118.

been described by Pyrrad Lavel as the “ Lords of the land... the best soldiers in the world and courageous, extremely skilful in the use of arms”. Numerically they occupied a major position in the society According to the censuses of 1816, 1836 and 1854 they constituted 30% of the population⁸². They ranged from very large landlords through moderate land holders to the poorest “who were day labourers”⁸³. Eighty one per cent of them enjoyed superior status while the remaining 19% were relegated to inferior status within the community because of sub divisions⁸⁴. They were the chief tenants or *kanakudiyans* of the Brahmanas and they had access to the households and temples of the Brahmanas as servants⁸⁵. They had the privilege of having concubinary marital relations of the Brahmanas with their women⁸⁶. The twin role of the Nairs as the serving class of the Brahmanas and the protectors of the land earned them a respectable position in the society⁸⁷. Thus together with the Brahmanas they formed the lord’s class albeit the fact that the poor and socially condemned continued to exist within the community.

The rank below the Nairs in social ladder was occupied by the one category of people known as Izhavas in the southern parts and Thiyyas in the northern parts (hereafter Izhavas) of Kerala. A few of them constituted

82. Robin Jeffrey, *Decline*, p. 14.

83. Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, London, 1883, p. 111.

84. Robin Jeffrey, *Decline*, pp. 175-76. V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, II, Trivandrum, 1906, p. 350.

85. George Woodcock, *Portrait*, p. 102.

86. C. Achutha Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, p. 913.

87. Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of South India*, Madras, 1908, Vol. V, p. 288.

an elite section within the community. They were the scholars, Ayurvedic physicians, traders, martial artists and soldiers. But a large majority of them engaged in cultivation and the industrial activities of toddy tapping, distilling of arrack and manufacturing of country sugar. As cultivators they were occasionally tenants or usually subtenants rarely of Namboothiris, and mostly of Nairs and Christians. Many were weavers and ordinary labourers⁸⁸. So the Izhavas could be classed as the undertenants or free holders of land with a low occupational status. They were a little better off than the serfs attached to the soil. They were not so degraded as the Pulayas and had no particularity about the kind of work to be taken up⁸⁹. Numerically they held a substantial position equal to that of the Nair and a small elite section of the Izhavas could achieve a respectable position in intellectual and military spheres⁹⁰. Divisions and subdivisions sufficient to generate inequality within the community existed among the Izhavas also⁹¹.

Below the Izhavas and other similar castes of artisans came those who were dispossessed of land in any form and were in possession of their labour only to make a meagre living. They formed the bottom rank

88. M. Sahadevan, *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making - A Study of Sahodaran Ayyappan*, Trichur, 1993, pp. 6-7.

89. Robin Jeffrey, *Decline*, p. 31.

90. L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, Madras, 1908, Vo. I, p. 277. T.K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, I, Trivandrum, 1940, p. 845.

91. P.M. Govindan Vaidyan, "Izhavan", *Vivekodayam*, No. 11, Trivandrum, 1915, Quoted in G. Rajendran, *The Izhava Community and Kerala Politics*, Trivandrum, 1974, p. 127. (Some references in this book are found unreliable).

in the social hierarchy. They were known as the Cherumans, Pariahs etc.⁹² who may be broadly categorised as the depressed class.

Slavery was an age old institution throughout Kerala and slave trade flourished along with it until it was abolished in the 19th century. Slavery was of praedial nature in this land and slaves were attached to the soil as permanent serfs by birth. They formed an integral part of the landed property and the owner was vested with the right to sell them along with the soil or dispose of them in any way they liked⁹³. The question of employing slaves as domestic servants or personal attendants never arose in the light of the pollution concept appended to Varna Dharma. Even in the field at work a slave was an unapproachable⁹⁴ and his condition was extremely pitiable⁹⁵.

The structural disposition of the Kerala society looms large when economically viewed as a class society centered around the nature of possession or non-possession of land the main means of production. Each class in turn had a caste status accorded by the structure of thought namely ideology. Here it was the Varna Dharma ideology. In both thought and practice the structure of society was hierarchical. Each estate in that hierarchy was having the twin status of class economically and caste ritually in a mutually corresponding manner.

92. M. Sahadevan, *Social Justice*, pp. 7-8.

93. Abbe J.A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners Customs and Ceremonies*, Oxford, 1997, pp. 57-8.

94. Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life*, p. 297.

95. Quoted in E.M. Poulouse, *The Protestant Missionaries and Social Reform in Travancore, 1806-65* (Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis), Calicut University, 1980, p. 33.

In descending order the first estate was of the supreme lords of land, the Brahmanas. Parasurama by giving land to the Brahmanas as an act of penance was being absolved from the sin incurred by the slaughter of Kshetriyas and he was actually morally indebted to the Brahmanas and not vice versa. So they were not vassals. The second estate was of the lesser lords of Nairs the vassals of the Brahmanas. Below them were the cultivating tenants of Izhavas, as the third estate. They were holders of land and labourers as well. They can be termed as the commoners. A section of Nairs of lower category among themselves also belonged to the tenant class. Though ritually they were above the Izhavas, in class status they belonged to the same category of commoners. But ritual status forged a strong barrier between them. At the bottom were the dispossessed fourth estate of depressed classes and slaves as labourers in bondage. All the three estates below were exploited and oppressed en masse by the Brahmanas while the second estate was exploiting and oppressing the ones below it.

In such an economic set up a fixed quantity of the produce of land in the form of rental flowed to the granaries of the second and first estates. The first estate remained recipients only of rent while the second estate had to pay rent to the first. In an agrarian economy that depended on nature's grace, sometimes the tenants would not get even the subsistence allowance for their toil. A complete failure of crops due to drought or flood would make them debtors. All the while the lords would be assured of their fixed rent which was not surplus and they were free

from all the uncertainty about income. They would enjoy the benefits of a planned economy.

The ritual status of a class was determined by the pollution and purity concept and the ideological dictates on the hierarchical set up. Pollution might be by touch or approach. It was practised to preserve the exclusiveness of a community from the one below. The Brahmanas were a pure race and therefore were not the polluting class but would be polluted by others. All other communities save the one at the bottom were capable of being polluted and polluting at once. Not only the persons but even towns and market places were considered to be defiled by the approach of certain communities like Cherumans⁹⁶. *Jathinirayam* is an authoritative exposition of caste and pollution. According to it the Pariahs, Pulayas, Nayadis and Ulladans formed the Chandalas of the planes and a Brahmana was to be defiled by the approach of a Nayadi within a distance of three hundred feet. The four groups would pollute one another by touch or approach⁹⁷. The pollution rule was so strictly observed that 'the use of public highways was forbidden to the outcastes and any one daring to pass on within pollution distance of a Nair would be cut down at once'⁹⁸. That the violation of pollution rule was a crime deserving capital punishment, has been attested by Dubois also⁹⁹.

96. Ward and Conner, *Memoir*, p. 160.

97. L.K. Anathakrishna Iyer, *Tribes* - I, pp. 50-67.

98. Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life*, p. 291.

99. Abbe J.A. Dubois, *Manners*, p. 52.

The concept of pollution and purity that enjoined the practice of untouchability or unapproachability was the source of suppression of all civic rights to the individual. The ideology of Varna Dharma that propounded and perpetuated such a concept and oppressive practices emanating from it may rightly be called fascist. Without using any armed force the exponents of this ideology could maintain a fascist regime by subordinating the entire state and society to them through so powerful a weapon of ideology. In practice this ideology denied the fundamental right of travel to the commoners and the depressed classes. Approach roads to temples of the hegemonical class and their residential areas were unapproachable to the third estate of Izhavas¹⁰⁰. The depressed classes in general were forbidden to cross streets inhabited by Brahmanas and the public roads as well¹⁰¹.

A function of the fascist ideology was to keep the people ignorant and superstitious. The poems of Kunchan Nambiar and the *Itihyamala* have to tell us a great deal about the superstitious beliefs of the Malayalis in astrology and sorcery. From the Pariah to the Brahmanas the whole population succumbed to such beliefs. The source of these beliefs was the fear of demons and ghosts. They were supposed to have great power to do mischief. The ways resorted to to avert their influence were charms and incantations¹⁰². Belief in magic and witchcraft was associated with

100. L.A. Subbharaman Iyer, President of the Home Rule, "Letter to Mitavadi", Calicut, 1917, IX, No. 5 p. 52. W.E. Hoar, "Letter to The Madras Mail", Republished in *Mitavadi*, *ibid.*, p. 139.

101. William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, I, Trivandrum, 1981 p. 78. Dubois, *Manners*, p. 52.

102. V. Nagam Aiya, *Manual*, II, p. 55.

demon worship. On the slightest doubt about the haunting of a house or a compound or a woman by the demon the astrologer was consulted. He would name the demon and suggest the means to get relieved of the harm. Then the sorcerer or devil driver would be approached for help¹⁰³. So, as revealed by Kunchan Nambiar, Kerala was the El Dorado of astrologers and sorcerers¹⁰⁴. *Mantravadam*, or chanting the relevant mantra was one of the methods to propitiate or control the spirits. It was believed that like gods the devils also could be kept under custody by the power of mantra for obtaining the service required by a sorcerer¹⁰⁵. The Brahmanas excelled all others in this profession. In many instances as depicted in the *Itihyamala* non-Brahmanas are usually defeated by them. The secrets of the science of *mantra* were passed on to them by Parasurama according to tradition¹⁰⁶. Moreover they alone had the privilege of doing certain kinds of sacrifices which others were never to perform, on the authority of the *Granta Sutras*¹⁰⁷. Not exactly their power but such a belief with which the people were indoctrinated put the Brahmanas in an advantageous position over the believer. Besides amassing wealth by way of fees, the Brahmanas could secure the psychic surrender that always helped to fortify their hegemony over people

103. L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Cochin Tribes* - I, p. 306.

104. Kunchan Nambiar, "Druvacharitam", in P.K. Sivasankara Pillai, (hereafter Pillai), ed., *Kunchan Nambiarute Tullal Kathakal*, Trichur, 1970, p. 897.

105. Kottarathil Sankunni, *Itihyamala*, Kottayam, 1996, p. 8.

106. V. Nagam Aiya, *Manual*, II, p. 63.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

The ritual status of the classes was further solidified by the categorisation of gods to be worshipped by the Brahmanas and other classes. Brahmanas and the second estate had deities of higher status. They were all powerful to create, maintain and destroy a process by which the universe is preserved. Besides Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara, the supreme trio, deities allied with them like Vigneswara, Subramanyan, Sasta or Ayyappan , Hanuman and Bhagawathy were worshipped by them. The Izhavas had their local and inferior gods like Kuttichathan, Parakutty, Karikutty, Mundian and Kandakkaranan and the goddess Kali¹⁰⁸. In Travancore the gods of the lesser classes were Elangath, Yakshi, Butathan, Chudalamadan, Nallamangai, Muppidari etc¹⁰⁹.

According to the law giver, Manu, the Brahmana is the lord of the whole creation. Both the gods and the *Manus* have to receive their offerings through them. They are therefore the most exalted amongst men, so much so, that by his mere birth as a Brahmana a person is the living embodiment of the eternal law¹¹⁰. Without gods the universe cannot exist. The gods in turn exist on the offerings of the Brahmanas. So logically every thing in this universe, the cause and effect as well, exist on the power of the hymns chanted and offerings dedicated by the Brahmanas. The prime duty of the ruler then is to protect them and their wealth the cow. This is the thesis of the *Keralolpathy* based on Manu's theory and the demand of the Brahmanas. The political regime in Kerala was

108. L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Cochin Tribes*, pp. 311-14.

109. V. Nagam Aiya, *Manual*, II, p. 54.

110. G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, Bombay, 1969, p. 89.

organised as to meet their demand. The rulers considered it their duty to protect the privileges of the Brahmana community. They stood above the state being exempted by Kautilya from torture to elicit confession and from corporal punishment except for high treason¹¹¹. A ruler could continue in office only at the pleasure of the Brahmanas. For at any time he could be excommunicated by the Brahmanas. Even after the subjugation of Kerala by the British this privilege of the Brahmanas remained unquestioned¹¹². It was the practice of the Kerala rulers to appease the Brahmanas. In Travancore Marthanda Varma had opened dozens of *uttupuras*, free feeding houses, for Brahmanas throughout his kingdom and inaugurated a sextennial ceremony, *murajapam*, a political at home to the Namboothiris at which the Brahmanas were feasted for fifty six days in return for offering prayers for the well-being of the state¹¹³. A ruler of the Cochin state took a vow not to drink a drop of water until he removed the Izhava magistrate who had punished a Brahmana for contempt of court. The Dewan had to interfere and get the removal of the magistrate¹¹⁴. This instance shows how the rulers were eager to see the Brahmanas placed above the state and to be their servants in maintaining the Varna Dharma regime.

A detailed investigation is necessary to understand the nature of this state. It is not attempted here but what is suggested by known facts

111. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

112. Quoted in K.G. Narayanan, *Izhava - Thiyya Charitrapatanam*, Kayamkulam, 1984, p. 388. George Woodcock, *Portrait*, p. 103.

113. Robin Jeffrey, *Decline*, p. 4.

114. N.R. Krishnan, *Izhavar Annum Innum*, Trichur, 1967, pp. 190-91.

A detailed investigation is necessary to understand the nature of this state. It is not attempted here but what is suggested by known facts is looked into. The castes formed the social units of a heterogeneous population. Such social units were under the supervision of the caste councils. Until the middle of the 18th century people were not paying any land revenue. They paid the rent to the *jennmis* and some dues including professional taxes to the state¹¹⁵. There was only a minimal relation between the state and the subjects. People were only subjects and not citizens. Hendrik Adrian Van Rheede, the Dutch governor of Cochin from 1673 to 1677 wrote thus.

Subjects are not bound to observe any orders, commands or whims and council decisions of the king which are at variance with their laws, prosperity or privileges, and which they have approved of in their own territories and accepted at their political meetings¹¹⁶.

The function of the state was primarily the protection of the people from robbers and enemies. There was no large scale police force or a big standing army. Generally, there were no marauding bands. We get a few references to looting of travellers by members belonging to the Muslim community in the Northern ballads and the *Itihyamala* and they were punished by some martial artists or the ruler. In the absence of affluence and ambition instances of crimes especially theft were rare¹¹⁷.

115. C. Achutha Menon, *The Cochin State Manual*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994, p. 39.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

powers into their own hands and the kings became nominal heads of their jurisdictions. The *Naduvazhis* could not become all powerful as they were to obey the decisions of the caste council of the Nair *Tara*. But with the backing of these councils they could defy the king's orders. In the 18th century conditions were not different¹¹⁸.

The helplessness of the king in defying the Nair chieftains and the Nair caste councils has been attested in the Letters of Canter Visscher in the 18th Century¹¹⁹. All these point to the fact that there was no state in Kerala up to the 19th century in the modern sense of the term. In the presence of a nominal king local administration was carried on by some aristocratic Nair families with the caste councils forming the nuclei of political power. Customs or *maryada* got the force of law¹²⁰ and the *Naduvazhis* could never break them. Fines, fees, forest animals and presents were the items of revenue that the *Naduvazhis* were entitled to collect¹²¹. Disputes over succession to chieftainship was often settled by cock fights or *ankam* by *chekons* as evidenced in the Northern Ballads and not through any codified legal procedure. There was no written legal code to settle civil or criminal cases. Administration of justice was sometimes carried on by the people themselves, through *kudipaka* or blood feud¹²². An eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth was the principle followed in such a system¹²³. The main business of the king in these circumstances

118. Ibid. p. 66.

119. C. Achutha Menon, *Manual*, pp. 66-67.

120. William Logan, *Malabar Manual* (Mal), Kozhikode, 1993, pp. 181-82.

121. A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1970, pp. 261-62.

122. C. Achutha Menon, *Manual*, p. 73.

123. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Survey*, p. 263.

was confined to waging wars and extending the boundaries of his kingdom and organising festivals and patronising temples. His subjects paid some dues in the form of poll tax and the actual revenue of the state was derived mainly from *kandukrishi* or crown lands, customs and monopolies¹²⁴.

During the centuries that followed the fall of the monarchical kingdom of the Chera rulers the state was transformed into an oligarchic and theocratic one with the Brahmanas rising to the position of the sovereign. Such a state still retained some characteristics of a lineage system¹²⁵ with the existence of social units of castes and the link between the ritual and economic status of such social units.

The Keralites were slowly emerging as an independent cultural unit from the Tamilakam's cultural whole with the evolution of a new language which was to develop as Malayalam. As an offspring of Tamil the thought and values it embodied could not be entirely free of the Tamil consciousness. At the same time the infiltration of the ideas of the colonialists began to show its impact on the newly developing language. Malayalam or Malanat-Tamil¹²⁶ as it is called by Elamkulam in its infant stage was taken away from the lap of Tamil by Sanskrit, the language of the colonialists. The result was the development of the *Manipravalam* literature. The theme of that literature produced after the fall of the Chera kingdom was often either erotic or stories from the epics and other

124. C. Achutha Menon, *Manual*, p. 391.

125. Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, Madras, 1996, pp. 10-11.

126. Elamkulam, ed., *Leelathilakam*, Kottayam, 1990, F.N. 1, p. 25.

Sanskrit works of the colonialists. It was the effective part of the process of cultural colonialism. The mind of the natives that is their thought, aspiration, tastes and outlook, was to be moulded in subordination to the ideology of the colonialists. A language was required for the effective expression of such a mind. Language is a reflection of the culture of a given people or it is culture. Cultural identity demands rhetorical and grammatical attunement of language to retain that identity. Positively here it is cultural conditioning consistent with the interest of the hegemonical class and negatively it is a deterrent to cultural aberration or loss of identity of the hegemonical class. The Brahmanas did not allow the natives to learn their language Sanskrit. They did not learn the native language either. They did not have the necessity of both till the fall of the Chera kingdom as they could remain an exclusive group. But during the post-Chera period due to political and economical compulsion the Brahmanas had to have a preliminary knowledge of native language. The need of interaction with their dependents the Sudras as tenants demanded it. This led to the development of a new language style in which we can see the free use of Malanat-Tamil and Sanskrit without any observance of grammatical rules. It was against this background that the *Leelathilakam* prescribing grammatical and rhetorical rules for the use of Malanat-Tamil-Sanskrit blend with Sanskritic predominance was written. The anonymous author, surely a Brahmana, based his rules on Sanskrit grammar and poetics¹²⁷. This new language was deemed to be of the

127. Ibid., pp. 196-97. Suranat Kunjan Pillai, ed., *Leelathilakam*, Trivandrum, 1946, p. 53.

twice born who formed the elite and Malayalam as a Sanskritised -Tamil language had its development from it. The literary works in that Malayalam grew rich with roots in Sanskrit literature. Parallel to it developed the simple Malayalam which can be called Dravidian Malayalam with its roots in Tamil literature as the language of the masses. But we cannot say that the two linguistic styles had no mutual contact at all as the hegemonical class and the masses had been linked through the intermediary class. The two styles developed two cultures which had their manifestation in Ezhuthacchan and Kunchan Nambiar. The former represented the Sudra- Brahmana or Sanskritised style and culture while the latter represented the popular Malayalam or native culture nourished by the humanistic elements in the philosophical heritage.

Leelathilakam was clearly orientating the native cultural developments through the trajectory required by the hegemonical class. The inhibition of the Brahmanas kept the natives away from their language Sanskrit which was presumed to be *devabasha*. But that policy could not be pursued successfully for long and later Sanskrit scholars were available among the tenant and subtenant communities namely the Nairs and the Izhavas. The affinity of the Nair to Brahmanas, the supposed Buddhist heritage of the Izhavas and the generosity of the humanists among the Brahmanas all might be the factors that led to it. Anyhow the acquaintance with Sanskrit brought them direct accessibility to the original teachings of the Vedas and the Upanisads and enabled them to surpass the commentators . We have the instance of Chattampi Swamikal, Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi and Sri Narayana Guru.

As the Brahmanas had permanently settled in this land they lost their foreign identity though social exclusiveness was always retained without harmonising with the natives. Their interaction with the natives who surrendered resulted in the growth of a native culture of the elite parallel to the traditional and native culture which was marginalised by the colonialists. The former had its evolution under the shadow of 'power' and economic domination while the latter survived through folk arts, folk literature, ballads and the animistic religion.

Representing the elite culture flourished the *Manipravalam* literature during the period between 13th and the close of the 15th centuries A.D. Apart from the *Ramacharitam*, *Anathapura Varnanam* and *Vasudevastavam* and some medical books they deal with the leit-motif of lasciviousness or eroticism and devotion to God. This type of literature was a product of the post-Chera socio-economic setting. In the wake of the disintegration of the Chera kingdom the Namboothiri Brahmanas had the opportunity to fill up the political vacuum by assuming direct governance in some principalities and greater ritual supremacy over the chieftains known as *Samantas*. They could muster more lands into their possession and the Sudras other wise known as Nairs became their dependents as tenant holders of their lands. Temple got more prominence in social life and a number of new ones had been constructed. In such temples young women were surrendered to the service of gods who came to be known as *devadasis*¹²⁸ usually from the Sudra community. In the beginning they

128. Elamkulam, "The Devadasi System", in *Studies*, pp. 278-83.

were treated with reverence but later they were metamorphosed into respectable concubines of earthly gods, namely the Brahmanas and the chieftains, the wielders of economic and political power. These ladies were well trained in the art of dance and music. The beautiful among them gained a prestigious position through recognition and reputation in society because of their domineering association with the elite. She was treated at par with a king or a religious ascetic. It was a matter of pride for a king to have a *devadasi* as his wife. The *devadasis* gained enormous wealth also. The *Manipravalam* literature is mainly notable for the picturesque narrative of the beauty of these *devadasis*. The eulogising poems were usually the representation of cultural and social mores and aspirations of the class occupying the super structure of the society in general. They lived in a world of romance contented with the earthly pleasures of which eroticism is the most exciting. Even those Brahmanas respected for their spiritual powers could be seen surging with the libertines¹²⁹.

The undynamic and uninquisitive intellect of this class was capable of producing only this kind of works. Yet they were endowed with fine literary tastes and exhibited the skill to give a metaphorical and realistic narration. One writer even composed a work namely *Vaisikatantram* (Tactics of Prostitution) on the artistic expertise a concubine requires for her professional success¹³⁰. *Unniachicharitham* is a discourse to the young

129. Elamkulam, ed., *Chandrotsavam*, Kottayam, 1962, ed., *Unnunili Sandesam*, Trivandrum, 1953.

130. P.V. Velayudhan Pillai, "Vaisikatantram" in *Manipravalakavitha*, Trivandrum, 1989, pp. 38-44.

men on ways for success in erotic adventures with *devadasis*¹³¹. In its conclusion it is stated that one who attains success is the blessed and the crowned one among the libertines.

In the absence of a centralised controlling authority and threats of foreign invasions or a powerful monarch determined to consolidate political power, the chieftains of small principalities and the Namboothiri *jenmis* could lead a licentious life. Instead of having harems as reflected in the *Manipraivalam* literature they maintained concubinage with the *devadasis*. The same *devadasi* would be the concubine of several men who vied each other to gratify her to win favour for she was an expert in practising all the sixtyfour arts of sex play as prescribed by Vatsyayana. Brahmanas of wealth and position, teachers, spiritual preceptors, linguistic scholars, Vedic pandits, all indulged in this practice¹³². It seems that sexual pleasure might be the best of entertainments, concubinage with reputed *devadasi* the sign of social prestige and literary activity the only intellectual pursuit in those days. The elite did not feel the necessity of developing science as a means to exploit the earthly resources or substitute human labour amidst prosperity that never saw an eclipse. For them the land was an abode of Lakshmi and Kamadeva¹³³ that is blessed with both economic prosperity and unlimited opportunities for sexual gratification. Dwelling upon the erotic theme gave pleasure to the greedy indolent and libertine poets. They wrote the *Manipraivalam* works namely

131. P.V. Krishnan Nair, ed., *Unnichiruthевичаритам*, Changanassery, 1996, pp. 90-91.

132. Elamkulam, ed., *Chandrotsavam*, p. 33.

133. Ibid.

charitams and *sandesakavyas* mainly for the reading and enjoyment of the *trivarnikas*. So the form of these works was to be beautified and gracious, modelled after the Sanskrit literature of their heritage. It was also with this demand that the *Leelatilakam* was composed.

Men of worldly detachment could move to temples dedicated to different gods from one end of the country to the other. The Panchamas and the *mlechchas* are not in the scene. The *Manipravalam* literature presents a world of the *jenmi* Brahmanas and political chieftains residing in a beautiful landscape of forests, lagoons, streams, paddy fields and compounds with luxuriant vegetation. No wonder that literature became merely recreational. The *Manipravalam* literature is despairingly arid of social criticism and devoid of any creative vision of life. Yet a morally indignant witty poet lampoons those people in the *Chandrotsava*.

The common people might have been leading a contented and peaceful life for we hear of no rebellions. They were made to believe in predestination of their position and sufferings consistent with the deeds in previous lives and to desist from the violation of the Varna Dharma so as to achieve promotion to the next higher rank in the social position in the next birth and to avoid demotion to the lower rank. The *mlechchas* might have indulged in independent economic pursuits and been handicapped by the lack of share in political power and their numerically peripheral position. All these would have made them ill-responsive.

An ample and steady supply of grain as rent and an unchallenged supremacy made the Brahmanas nonchalant and lazy. Apart from

occasional wars with traditional weapons and methods of warfare the kings and chieftains could lead an uneventful life. The chieftains and the masses as well accepted the dominance of the Brahmanas. Chieftains were not motivated by conquest and consolidation. The masses never imagined a world of independence and worldly success. We hear of no ideological conflicts or communal wrangling either. Complacency marks the character of the society that produced the *manipravalam* literature. An undynamic ideology of Varna Dharma coupled with an unchallenging and unstimulating material condition shaped that society. The ideology in particular had an arresting effect on the society. It impaired the growth of self awareness while inculcating caste consciousness grafted with superiority-inferiority complex.

Left in the wilderness what was the course open to the native culture is an interesting question to be looked into now. The lot of the common man was pathetic. Even on the occasion of *Onam* festival, an occasion for celebration by having a full meal a day, he had to lament that there was no paddy¹³⁴. It was a land of prosperity for the few and penury for the many. The latter remained nature's children. She was their protector and boon giver. Superstitions and religious beliefs were synonymous. Two thirds of Kerala was covered with forest, and snakes were very common in their homesteads. Seeking protection for their children from the curse of snakes they worshipped them. In the absence

134. G. Sankara Pillai, "Natanpattukal", in K.M. George ed., *Sahityacharitram Prasthanangalilute*, Kottayam, 1973, p. 86.

of any medical cure for snake bite this was the way of protection. It was a Dravidian tradition of the land¹³⁵. They worshipped their own gods by singing hymns in praise of them to ward off misfortune and evils. This mode of worship was known as *Thottampadi Poojikkuka*. Cruel and evil gods like Kalamarutha, Vennittukuttathi, Pachatholady, Ayiravalli, Pillatheenikali, Pulidaivam, Antimekalan, Karinagam etc. were worshiped by Izhavas and others to secure favours or victory over enemies. *Navettupattu* was sung to protect the child from 'evil tongue' and *Kannuttupattu* was sung for protection from the 'evil eye' and accidents. To protect the god from evil eye *Chattupattukal* was recited¹³⁶.

The hegemonical class had its own religious and entertaining ritualistic songs. *Sanghabalipattukal* was performed during the occasion of pregnancy completion, first meal for the child, *upanayanam*, *samavarathanam*, marriage etc. to obtain the favour of gods¹³⁷.

Though distanced and detached from the corridors of power, the essence of Aryan thought had percolated among the common people through the humanists. One example is the *Vallorkavithakal* written in common man's language for the consumption of the common folk. One stanza of it says that the universe has one root with three vines i.e. the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara the Gods of creation, preservation and destruction respectively, and these vines are spread

135. Ibid., pp. 91-92.

136. Ibid., p. 95.

137. Ibid., p. 98.

over the whole and all knowledge emanates from the four Vedas¹³⁸. Through folk songs like *Mavarathu*, *Nizhalkoothu*, *Bheemankatha*, *Seethaswayamvaram*, *Utharayanam*, *Sreekrishnaleela* etc. also the Aryan or Brahmanical theological and mythical ideas found their way into the native mind. They are not however demonstrative of the complete colonialisation of the native mind. Literature carrying the Tamil native tradition continued in existence at least till 16th century¹³⁹. Starting probably in the 12th or 13th century with the *Ramacharitam* of one Cheeraman¹⁴⁰ the process of symbiosis of the native mind with Aryan thought continued through the Niranam poets belonging to the lower strata of society. The simple native mind uncorrupted by association with power and affluence was attempting the absorption of the emotive aspects of the epics and the political and economic concepts from the Aryans true to the model set by *The Sacred Kural* and their expression without being constrained by grammatical or rhetorical rules as stipulated by the *Leelathilakam*¹⁴¹. *Bhashakautilyam*, *Doothavakyam*, *Ramakathapattu* etc. can be cited as the best examples for this¹⁴². It was an attempt of the oppressed native mind to be refined without being profaned by vested interest of the hegemonical class. The stray voice of the humanists giving expression to the monistic philosophy in its purity and simplicity can be

138. Ibid.

139. K.M. George, "Tamizhumisra Sahityam", in K.M. George, ed., *Sahityacharitam*, p. 151.

140. Ibid., p. 158.

141. Ibid., p. 185.

142. Ibid., p. 181.

heard through the legends pleading for freedom, equality and unity based on brotherhood. The well known legend *Parayipetta Panthirukulam*¹⁴³ imparts this message in a most eloquent way. The union of the Brahmana erudite *Vararuchi* and the wise Pariah woman is symbolic of the symbiosis of the Aryan and native minds without one being dominated by the other. Through the characters of Narayanathu Brantan, very popular among the Malayalis, and Akavoor Chatthan, the unknown author speaks for rationalism, simplicity, universalism, brotherhood of man and gender equality and similar values of modern times very cogently as against the unproductive, oppressive and discriminative values of Varna Dharma. But the parallel culture of the natives could not gain popularity and remained debilitated in the outskirts of power centre.

By sixteenth century a marked change in the mental disposition of the elite Malayali was in active progress. It came as a dialectical opposition to the high tide of eroticism that reached the stage of voluptuousness nourished by a temple centered priestly dominated regime underpinned by the Varna Dharma. The vulnerability of that regime and its culture was visible when it encountered alien cultures.

It was in 1498 that Vasco da Gama, the Ferringee, landed at Kapad near Calicut, the capital of Zamorins. The presence and activities of the Portuguese in this land precipitated an ideological conflict and crisis. Organised conflict between groups for securing material benefits was not unknown to this land. A riot between the Muslims and Jews in

143. Kottarathil Sankunny, *Itihyamala*, pp. 42-59.

Kodungallur in the 9th century might be the first such instance¹⁴⁴. Another one is recorded in the year 1524 between them¹⁴⁵. Commercial rivalry was the causative factor of these conflicts. Such conflicts had not become a common or frequent feature of significance. Now the religious policy of oppression towards other faiths and conversion of others to their faith pursued by the Portuguese necessitated self assertion of the natives based on their religion and viewing others from an ideological or religious angle. The first instance of it was the grouping of the Muslims who were hitherto maintaining a cordial relationship with the Zamorins and the Hindus in general. Another instance was the creation of an ideological identity consciousness among the Christians.

The Muslims were first alienated from the native population by the profit motivated capitalistic commercial policy of the Portuguese and of monopolising the trade with the kingdom of Zamorin. The final detente between the Portuguese and Zamorin led to the logical culmination of completing the alienation of the Muslims. When the Marikkars, the trusted allies of the Zamorins who fought most heroically against the foreign conquerors to defend the kingdom of the Zamorin, were left in the lurch by the detente their identity consciousness was awakened. They sought it in the ideology of religion and the Muslim identity became a fact.

Motivated by the idea of securing an ideological footing in this land the Portuguese made an attempt to alienate the Christian folk from the

144. P.A. Sayd Mohammed, *Kerala Muslim Charitram*, Trichur, 1969, p. 75.

145. Ibid., p. 109. Shaik Zainuddin Makhdoom, *Thuhafatul Mujahideen*, ed., C.Hamza, Calicut, 1995, p. 72.

general population by organising them into a separate group owing allegiance to the Pope and tried to gain their political backing, through organising the Synod of Diamper in 1599¹⁴⁶. Despite the failure of the attempt to achieve its immediate goal, identity consciousness was created among the Christians. And the damage had been done by transforming the land of conformity into one of conflict ever since the Muslims and Christians were alienated from the general population.

Amidst these developments the ideology of Varna Dharma failed to sustain the superficially achieved rapport with differing ideology in the land. Moreover in this confused condition of ideological estrangement the down-trodden of the Hindu/ pagan population and the outcastes could seek the shadow of protection under distinct ideological umbrellas. Varna Dharma ideology could no longer be a binding force bringing the divergent castes into one entity. The regime of Brahmanical hegemony did not have the inner strength to meet the external challenge posed by the intruding presence of a ruthless and overbearing foreign power.

Internally a reaction had already set in towards indulgence in sensual pleasure. The restlessness of the time created by the new developments was instrumental in giving the final shape to that reaction. Brought up in the mould of Varna Dharma ideology the Malayali mind could only stare at the new situation. Incapable of mental or physical resistance to adversity Malayali mind's reaction took the form of *bhakti* or devotion to God in search of *moksha* or salvation for ever from the

146. Scaria Zacharia, ed., *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599*, Edamattam 1994.

misereries of worldly life. Instead of infusing vitality into the struggle of life the new doctrine put stress on the negative feature of Indian thought. Passion for sexual pleasure was replaced by passion for union with God. In both instances emotional aspect of the mind is given prominence. The new trend was well represented in the writings of the three eminent poets of medieval Kerala.

The first of the trio to set this new literary trend was Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthacchan who is popularly known as Ezhuthacchan (Hereafter Ezhuthacchan). He is supposed to have lived in the sixteenth century (1500-1580). About thirteen works are ascribed to his authorship but except the two translations of *Adhyatma Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* controversy prevails over the authorship of the remaining works among the literary critics /historians¹⁴⁷.

The main teachings of *Adhyatma Ramayana* which Ezhuthacchan disseminated among the Malayalis through his translation can be paraphrased as follows:

The pains and pleasures of the present for all are the results of the deeds in the previous births¹⁴⁸ since the cause of passion is the instinct of the previous life. Even the saints who have attained wisdom cannot destroy it by practising mental discipline. Then the fate of the ignorant need not be told¹⁴⁹. The Soul as a permanent substance that carries with

147. N.V. Krishna Warriar et al., ed., *Viswaviijnanakosam*, NBS, Kottayam, 1988, p. 498.

148. Ezhuthacchan, *Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilippattu*, Kottayam, 1973, p. 95.

149. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

it the effects of *karma* is taking birth through different forms¹⁵⁰. This transmigration of the soul is determined by the rewards for one's actions¹⁵¹. That means the soul is affected by whatever form of action. So to escape from the sufferings of life one is to abstain from action as a means to put an end to the transmigration of the soul. The journey of the soul comes to an end when it joins the universal soul of which it is part. This is salvation which should be the end of the worldly life.

A discourse on salvation is given in the advice of Rama to Lakshmana¹⁵². The world is an illusion; man is led by the desire for sensual pleasure without knowing that life is ephemeral, that his association with wife, children, friends and wealth is momentary. He is only a traveller in this world; life is very short, and youth, wealth and conjugal pleasures all are impermanent; man does not know how deceptive is this illusion; the body cannot escape old age and diseases; death follows him as the constant companion; body is the cause of egoism; illusion determined by the ugly body constituted by the four elements is inferior and impure; ignorance develops illusion and knowledge destroys it; and ignorance leads to attachment to this world and its pleasures while knowledge destroys passion. So one must educate his mind to turn its attention to salvation and remember that passion, anger, vanity and desire are the enemies of salvation, and always keep the mind focused on the eternal formless unqualified soul that remains above the senses, life and

150. Ibid., p. 95.

151. Ibid., p. 103.

152. Ibid., p. 76.

intelligence in man¹⁵³. The uncritical mind of the poet is not disturbed by the question how an unqualified soul is affected by *karma*. Elsewhere it is pointed out that Lord Rama is the only refuge to reach the blissful state of salvation by the destruction of passions and desires¹⁵⁴. Repeated recitation of His name¹⁵⁵ with devotion¹⁵⁶ is the best way to salvation for an individual.

Lord Rama was born to fulfil the prime duty of destroying those who were obstructing the *yagas* to propitiate the ancestors and gods (the duty of the Brahmanas according to Varna Dharma¹⁵⁷) and protect the Vedic traditions of *karmakanda*¹⁵⁸. Thus Rama's duty as the ruler was to perpetuate the Brahmanical dharma. That dharma is Varna Dharma which was commendably protected under the ideal governance of Rama¹⁵⁹. For instance Jambuka the Sudra who was doing penance for salvation was put to death and the only son of Brahmana who lost life due to the penance of this Sudra, an act forbidden to him, was brought back to life . This story is given in the Uthara Ramacharitham of Ezhuthacchan . His authorship of this work is a controversial issue among linguistic scholars. But the story got propaganda through it in the name of Ezhuthacchan. The purpose of the story is to warn the Sudras and all

153. Ibid., pp. 76-79, 379.

154. Ibid., p. 32.

155. Ibid., p. 88.

156. Ibid., p. 198.

157. See, *Sankara Smriti, and Keralolpathy*.

158. Ezhuthacchan, *Ramayanam*, p. 24.

159. Ibid., p. 421.

subordinate castes against the violation of caste duty or Varna Dharma. In the Kerala context it could help the hegemonical class to perpetuate the psychic bondage of the Sudras to them. All the ideas of the Ramayana discourse are found to be the importation of Varna Dharma-*Karmakanda* ideology and the identity of the contents of *Adhyatma Ramayana* of Ezhuthacchan and *Sankara Smriti* or *Keralolpathy* does not seem coincidental. All of them were written to establish one thesis namely the practice of Varna Dharma recognising the supremacy of the Brahmanas should not be violated.

One significant aspect of Ezhuthacchan's *Adhyatma Ramayana* is that it helped the dissemination of the idea of individual's salvation. By describing all sensual pleasures and family and social relations that lead to worldly bondage and sin, as an impediment to salvation he advocated a philosophy of inaction and escapism from worldly duties at a time when a philosophy of dynamic and determined action was the requirement to safeguard the society from the onslaught of the foreigners. To get salvation he advocated selfless devotion to Rama the God incarnation of *Brahman*¹⁶⁰. Religious sacrament or duties are recommended for the propitiation of that God¹⁶¹. This is inconsistent with the Upanisadic philosophy of monism according to which *Brahman* devoid of any qualities and any form is the ultimate cause of this universe and no scarifices and ceremonies are required to propitiate that ultimate cause. For, the intellectuals can attain salvation by realising this Truth.

160. Ibid., p. 53.

161. Ibid., p. 24.

Off and on he reminds his reader of the momentariness of life that makes man's desires for sensual pleasures meaningless. This inner truth not seen by ordinary eyes is visible only to the inner eyes. So he exhorts them to look at worldly life through the eyes of the soul (the extra sense) and to discern the successive transition of the soul from the universal soul to the worldly being and to back again to the source consistent with the merit of the deeds both ritual and worldly. So abstinence from indulgence is required for the ultimate release from the worldly bondage. Due to egotism man forgets about the chance to be physically ruined in the momentary world without realising that the soul alone is real and the body constituted by the four elements is transient. The realisation of this fact is real knowledge that leads to bliss. The failure to understand this leads to illusion that the material world is real and to the craving for sensual pleasure that brings pain¹⁶². Ezhuthacchan exaggerates the miserable aftereffects of human deeds and to escape from them he advocates *bhakti* as the way of emancipation of the individual soul from worldly bondage instead of making a rational enquiry into the needs of social morality. Society does not figure in the discourse of *Ramayana*. So naturally it does not help to inculcate a social sense or social commitment. Devotion to God, if perfect, brings wisdom through revelation required for salvation. Irrationalism and romantic longing for an idyllic existence after death are the conspicuous elements of such a philosophy. With regard to worldly duties he sticks to Varna Dharma and

162. -----, *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

takes it for granted that the Sudras and women are destined to be servile beings of the *duijas*¹⁶³.

Some other ideas of the *Adhyathma Ramayana* are belief in the pseudo-science of astrology¹⁶⁴ and contempt for the women folk as unrealistic and ignorant¹⁶⁵. These lead to defeatism, the destruction of self confidence and initiative, and gender inequality.

The second of the trio of medieval poets was Poonthanam (1548-1640)¹⁶⁶ of Namboothiri community. He is so popular for his *Jnanapana*. It is a long poem written in simple Malayalam understandable on recitation to any illiterate layman. Devotion is the theme of *Jnanapana* also. In the very beginning of the poem the poet expresses astonishment over the momentary changes in the world around as the play of God.

In the words of the poet innumerable are the works on *karma* and *jnana* to enlighten the lay man who is faced with the labyrinth of life and his own poem *Jnanapana (Song of Wisdom)* is an attempt to repeat the truth revealed by great *jnanins* to attain salvation in the easiest way¹⁶⁷. The world is a manifestation, he continues, of the Absolute that is absolutely detached from every thing that is different from every thing, that is not knowable to the inconsistent mind of man and that is

163. Ezhuthacchan, *Mahabharatam Kilippattu*, P.V. Krishnan Nair, ed., Trichur, 1976, pp. 741, 751, 856-65.

164. *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 84.

165. Kerala Sahitya Academy, ed., *Ezhuthacchante Ratnangal*, Trichur, 1960, pp. 44, 174, 175.

166. P. Soman, *Poonthanam Patavum Patanavum*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p. 13.

167. Poonthanam, *Jnanapana*, Gopikuttan, ed., Thrissur, 1989, p. 61.

independent of everything. Life is seen as spiralling circles of births and rebirths, as transmigration of the soul according to rewards or punishments in each birth because of the play of God. The soul never ceases from birth, it only gets a relief or redemption or a recession from the cycle of birth and rebirths for a short span when it joins with the Absolute. Except for that relief the soul manifests itself in being bound up in action. This earth is the centre of action and on the earth Bharatam is the highest of all countries where the God incarnates and the great holy sages (*rishis*) who recited the holy hymns of Vedas live. Only in this land of Bharatam the *karma* (sacrifice etc.) to cease actions which lead to births is possible. The poet makes a somewhat rational surmise that human being appeared on this earth after a long succession of life that originated first in water and then on the earth in the order of plants, worms, birds and animals. But the human life is only for a short while and so the name of God is to be praised. The provocation for this lamentation was the degeneration that had set in in the Brahmana community. He was pained by the value erosion among his fellowmen. While the poor Brahmana was compelled to sell his child due to poverty the well-to-do were wallowing in competition for sensual pleasures, securing offices and amassing wealth. They were so greedy and insolent that they forgot about the means of securing them and also the momentariness of life¹⁶⁸.

Poonthanam does not appear to be the spokesman of any ideology. His is a personal lamentation of disappointment emanating from the

168. Ibid., pp. 62-90.

loss of his only child¹⁶⁹ and the insolent attitude of the fellow members of his own community because of his lower rank and non proficiency in Sanskrit and scholarship¹⁷⁰. The brunt of his criticism is directed at his fellow castemen and not to others. His criticism of the flourishing foreign trade and the trade in horses and elephants springs from his opposition to involvement of the Brahmanas in such trades in violation of their Varna Dharma. Degeneration of his community is the theme of his poem and a rational discourse on it is not attempted. The poet does not conceal his varna pride over his birth in the land of Vedas and the Vedic rites. He was a devotee of Lord Vishnu who is conceived as the protector, and was pretending to be eager to reach His august presence at His permanent abode Vaikuntam. Nowhere in the *Jnanapana* or in his other important writings¹⁷¹ does he suggest the idea of social well-being in this world. He wants everybody to be a devotee of Lord Vishnu who is misrepresented as the incarnation of the *Brahman*, and to reach His presence to enjoy a brief respite from the bondage of the worldly life. Like many other *bhakti* poets he also advocates personal salvation. Social welfare and social harmony are no concern for the poet. His is a protest against the arrogance, pretensions, greed, machination and moral laxity of the aristocracy of his own community. Failing to confront them the poet suggests refuge in retreat and escape to the other world. Like Ezhuthacchan, Poonthanam also is not perturbed by the illogic and inconsistency in

169. P. Soman, *Poonthanam*, pp. 15-16.

170. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

171. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-145.

assuming the unqualified soul being affected by the consequence of action. Common people and their problems are no concern of the poet. In fact the ideas he represents are defeatism, other worldliness, fatalism, transmigration of soul and contempt for worldly pleasures. Being not effective to develop any new line of thought but effective in providing emotional consolation to personal despondency the recitation of *Jnanapana* could not make the Malayalis morally and rationally progressive. Though written not with an intention to promote the ideology of the hegemonical class, the poet's standpoint is embedded in it. Poonthanam's criticism though for personal reason is yet criticism of a self evaluating character.

Narayaniyam is a Sanskrit poem written in praise of Lord Guruvayurappan or Lord Vishnu. The author has taken Lord Vishnu as the incarnation of *Brahman*, the Absolute, and the poem is actually in veneration of that *Brahman*. *Narayaniyam* is one of the most renowned religious texts of the Malayalis. It was written by the third of the trio of medieval poets Melpathur Narayana Bhatathiri¹⁷² (here after Melpathur).

The ideological premise of the author is the Vedic text. Redemption from the horrors of birth through salvation by attaining harmony with the ultimate reality is conceived as the aim of life¹⁷³. *Bhakti* or devotion to God is the simple way to attain salvation the prerequisite of which is purity of mind. The enemy of pure mind is worldly pleasures. Body is the

172. Ibid., p. 13.

173. Melpathoor Narayana Bhatathiri, (hereafter Melpathoor) *Narayaniyam*, G. Ramanikutty Amma, ed., Alappuzha, 1994, p. 16.

reason for it. When the mind is lost in the tales about Lord Krishna body becomes a non-entity. This detachment from bodily pleasure brings about purity of mind that leads to *Brahmajnana* and salvation is acquired within a short time. So devotion is a short cut to salvation¹⁷⁴. The ideal of salvation as the aim of life here also is not meant for social well-being. It is meant exclusively for the individual as the end of a long line of life since coming into existence as being.

Melpathur also is not free from the premise of Varna Dharma as an ideological concept. The categorisation of human beings, he states, is not to be based on birth but on merit of character. And for that reason he is vehemently critical of the ways of the *dvijas* who indulge in sensual pleasures, kill cows in the name of *yagas* but actually for feeding their own belly, remain ignorant of the essence of the Vedic teachings and are insolent of noble birth, pedantry and all the condemnable deeds¹⁷⁵. The poet defines *bhakti* as the state of mind in which every being and non-being is seen as the manifestation of God and all discriminatory thoughts disappear. Unlike Poonthanam and Ezhuthacchan, Melpathur gives a near rational and positive discourse on *bhakti*. His representation of Vishnu as an incarnation of *Brahman* is not a reduction of *Brahman* to a personal god as in Ezhuthacchan and Poonthanam but only the use of metaphor. The difference is discernible on a comparative reading of their works. Moderation in sensual pleasures rather than running away from worldly

174. Ibid., p. 29.

175. Ibid., pp. 434-35.

life is the thrust of his work. The rational and positive approach of Melpathur to the problems of varna, degeneration of the *dvijas*, *bhakti* and the means to attain salvation is a remarkable deviation from the other two poets and that makes his work noteworthy.

In temporal succession next to the trio came Kunchan Nambiar on the intellectual scene of Kerala. He cannot be acclaimed as the champion of any particular philosophy or ideology. But throughout his writings the spirit of humanism pervades. A born satirist he shines well as a giant among the literary luminaries of Malayalam. Well-versed in Malayalam and Sanskrit, and having a preliminary knowledge of the other Dravidian languages¹⁷⁶, he preferred to write in Malayalam for the Malayalis. He had a purpose. He wanted to awaken or enlighten the people and he devised the visual art of Ottan Tullal¹⁷⁷ for the common folk as a farce to serve that purpose. The new art form was staged in the premises of the temples and open grounds. It soon developed as a popular art as against Kathakali a visual artistic performance confined to the lord's houses, both Sudras and Namboothiris, and their temples. Ottan Tullal was secular in character. Through stinging satire Nambiar was driving home secular and rational ideas rather than the Varna Dharma value or *bhakti* cult of a degenerating society that required a transition to a constructive phase.

176. Kunchan Nambiar, "Nalayanicharitam", in Pillai, ed., *Kathakal*, pp. 1148-49.

177. Tullal is an audio - visual artistic performance developed by Kunchan Nambiar from the folk arts like Patayani Tullal and Kolam Tullal. The artist declaims the song narrating a story and dances, accompanied by the music of drum and cymbals. The dancer is supported by another singer who repeats the lines sang by the dancer. Nambiar developed three types of Tullal namely Ottan, Parayan and Seethankan Tullal. In the absence of drama, Tullal as an audio-visual art was very popular in Kerala.

Through an audio-visual technique Nambiar was alluring the people to the portrait of the elite of his times. He did not exhort the people to run away from worldly life which was dear to him. His rational and analytical mind could judge human nature with sympathy for all its weaknesses¹⁷⁸ and he suggested values which could be followed. He took his plots from the epics and the *Puranas* but the stories taken were attuned to the social conditions of his time. Mahabharata is the poet's pet source. His was an attempt to read the epics critically and rationally to draw lessons for the elite.¹⁷⁹

He was a theist and advocated *bhakti* but not as a cult. Live with solid faith in God, he exhorts, and denies the efficacy of rites and rituals¹⁸⁰. He reminds the reader about the ugliness of the body of all varnas alike that would stink when dead¹⁸¹, and the momentariness of life¹⁸².

Yet he is not exhorting them to negate worldly enjoyment in preference to salvation after death. He attacks the practices which lead to pains and misery in this life. He lashes at the greed for wealth as a cause of value erosion¹⁸³, attacks corruption, lethargy, irresponsibility, cowardice, and hypocrisy. But to him the solution does not lie in the negation of life. He exhorts to remember the unity of Godhead and he

178. Kunchan Nambiar, "Druvacharitam", in Pillai, ed., *Kathakal*, pp. 904, 194, 294.

179. -----, "Ahallyamoksham" in *Ibid.*, p. 546.

180. -----, "Pulindimoksham", in Chandrasekhara Warriar (hereafter Warriar), ed., *Kunchan Nambiarute Tullal Kritikal*, Kottayam, 1997, pp. 1151-52.

181. *Ibid.*, p. 1159.

182. Kunchan Nambiar, "Druvacharitam", *Ibid.*, p. 1024.

183. -----, "Kiratam", in Pillai, ed., *Kathakal*, p. 194.

sees the universe as the manifestation of that God, the *Brahman*. Belief in God for him is a source of morality for the preservation of order and unity in society. He also accepts the premise of the varna concept, probably because he could not refute it in those days, but with a different construct that contradicts hierarchical ranking of social order. He points out that all the people in and outside the varna fold are like the different gems on the same thread. That internal thread that links everybody is *Brahman*. There is no difference in soul, and the Pariah and the Brahmana are spiritually one. What is significant is knowledge or wisdom. The enlightened Pariah and the Brahmana as well get the same place in the other world¹⁸⁴. So discrimination resulting in exploitation and oppression in the name of varna is unjustifiable. He has a clear understanding of the monistic philosophy¹⁸⁵ but did not take it as an ideological premise to provide an orientation in that direction to the changes he anticipated.

Keeping in view only the particular instances of value erosion Nambiar could not deduce the general cause of the problem and suggest a solution. He was only a poet and not a thinker. So a philosophical understanding of the root cause of the social degeneration did not strike him. This is a common failure of the trio of *bhakti* cult and Nambiar the social critic. A philosophical contemplation of the *Brahman* concept would have shown the way. But all the three of the *bhakti* cult were mechanically reiterating it. Being was conceived as a substance and to individual being innate qualities were attributed. This led to their failure to see all as

184. -----, "Pulindimoksham", in Warriar, ed., *Kritikal*, pp. 1152-53.

185. -----, "Druvacharitam", *Ibid.*, pp. 1030-31.

equal from a secular and rational point of view. In this regard Nambiar had gone a step forward. He considered every one as equal in the essence.

Nambiar invariably uses proverbs or aphorisms to convey the general principle or truth underlying the facts relating to human actions¹⁸⁶. It is indicative of the rational level of the deliverer, and the recipient has to be at that level. The deliverer then has to take into consideration the level of the recipient and Nambiar never failed to keep this in mind. As the founder of the new visual art of Tullal, his poems were written in consistency with that purpose. To enlighten the common folk Nambiar used aphorism easily understandable to their rationality as the best means to provide insight into human deeds in causal terms.

While the themes of the writings are taken from the epics and the *Puranas* the gods are treated as ordinary human beings and are held up to ridicule. They are not elevated to divine pedestal but are treated as male characters in literature. They are lampooned for their meanness, naiveties and sensual actions¹⁸⁷. Nambiar handles them in a secular spirit and dares to question the values of the epics and the *Puranas*¹⁸⁸ with the specific purpose of effecting a change in value consciousness of the people while upholding the essence of Vedas and Upanisads.

He does not question the Varna concept. He does not justify it either. But he is indignant and intolerant of the discriminative aspect of

186. -----, "Syamantakam", in Pillai, ed., *Kathakal*, pp. 87, 93.

187. -----, "Syamantakam", *Ibid.*, pp. 59-130 "Nalacharitam", *Ibid.*, p. 224, "Kiratam", *Ibid.*, pp. 186-223, 'Ramacharitam', *Ibid.*, p. 372.

188. -----, "Kallyanasoughandhikam", *Ibid.*, p. 815.

it. Veneration for the Brahmanas is taken not as a value and he does not conceal his dislike for the undeserving patronage extended to the Brahmanas¹⁸⁹. But he advises the king not to alienate them not because of their spiritual supremacy but for the influential position they enjoyed in the society as a tactful means of governance. Of course he exhorts to revere them as gods on earth and men as well. It cannot be taken in the literal sense since a tinge of sarcasm is noticeable in it. The gluttony and greed for wealth, practice of polygamy, stupidity and indulgence in gossiping, scandal mongering, opium consumption and ill-mannered behaviour at social gatherings, snooping, lack of self respect and laziness of the Namboothiri Brahmanas and the Tamil Brahmanas in general are provocatively lambasted¹⁹⁰. The poet exclaims that even the Creator Brahma could not avert the fate of the Brahmanas who waste the wealth of theirs and the temples and while away the precious time. Even then he is sympathetic towards them when they are deceived by the Sudras¹⁹¹. He views it as unethical. No sympathy at all is expressed for the Tamil Brahmanas who are described as gluttonous and greedy for making money by the practice of usury at an exorbitant rate of 25% interest and making huge profit out of their trade¹⁹². They are described as quarrelsome at public gatherings and always pestering their customers. He honours the

189. -----, "Ghoshayatra", Ibid., pp. 137-38.

190. -----, "Rugmini Swayamvaram", Ibid., p. 324. "Satyaswayamvaram", Ibid., p. 434.

191. -----, "Hariniswayamvaram", Ibid., pp. 494-96.

192. -----, "Sitaswayamvaram", Ibid., p. 558. "Pradoshamahatmyam", Ibid., p. 701.

Brahmanas having the prescribed qualities but is appalled at the pathetic demoralization of the community and dares to caveat them¹⁹³.

An intellectually superior poet who is confident of his superiority and belongs to the socially inferior Sudra community is drawing a picture of the Brahmana community that is to be respected for certain qualities and actually is not having any of those qualities, and that has reached the nadir of moral and intellectual decay. He makes the Pariah who is theoretically outside the society according to the Varna concept to tell this truth and wants the lower classes to assert themselves over the degenerated Brahmanas. By referring to *Kaliyuga* the poet reminds the readers of the irrelevance of the Varna concept which has become obsolete. He tries to convince the Brahmanas also of this fact.

Nambiar was a scholar and he was familiar with the Charvaka philosophy. That has influenced him to be a sceptic about the then current philosophy of extreme devotion going to the extent of denying all worldly life with contempt for sensual pleasures and to be pragmatic in expounding a moderate type of *bhakti* without denouncing bodily pleasures. He had to tell some truths unpalatable to the contemporary society and he put the philosophy of Charvaka into the mouth of Sri Krishna, the almighty God of all knowledge. In the *Puranas* there is no such incident. Here Nambiar creates a context not out of necessity but only to spell out the essence of Charvaka philosophy short of its alleged vulgar materialism

193. -----, "Tripuradahanam", in Warriar, ed., *Kritikal*, pp. 1114-15.

with his comment that the meaningful philosophy of Charvaka is acceptable¹⁹⁴.

Reality is this world where one enjoys fortunes and suffers misfortunes; every thing ends with death and the yearning for salvation and heaven is foolishness; the rich enjoy the fortunes and the poor suffer the miseries here itself; since the soul is destroyed at death the body should be kept in good condition without aspiring for the other worldly enjoyment; love those who have love; the gods are of no use to the man on this earth. In a nutshell this is Nambiar's interpretation of Charvaka philosophy that he conveys to us through Krishna. Nambiar does not advocate any extreme kind of indulgence in worldly pleasures but presents a realistic and rational concept about human life. Here we get the best critique of human life by Nambiar whose sympathy lies with the underlings suffering from poverty. He realized that the epicenter around which human life revolves is the economic factor and that the hungry man's salvation is the daily bread in this real world¹⁹⁵. With the denial of an illusory world of life after death and communion with God, and the emphasis on the enjoyments and sufferings of life in this world Nambiar reaches the heights of humanism here.

Nambiar was a social critic with progressive ideas like tolerance, brotherhood, rationalism, secularism and above all humanism. He elicits universal values from *Sruti*, *Smriti* etc.¹⁹⁶ He had a cognitive mind to

194. Ibid., p. 1137.

195. Ibid., pp. 1137-38.

196. Kunchan Nambiar, "Seelavathy" in Pillai ed., *Kathakal*, p. 507.

discern the realities . He had no solution to offer for the social ills but could detect them for the awareness of the people. He could envisage a society in transition and he was very particular that man must master his changing environment by changing himself in accordance with it.

Nambiar was particularly indignant at the servitude of the Nairs to the Brahmana masters. By resorting to subterfuge, Nambiar made use of the epics and the *Puranas* for presenting the pitiable conditions of the existing society. He observed that the Nairs were wanting in discernment¹⁹⁷. The Nairs and the dogs are alike, he complained, in the sense that they don't have any foresight about the danger involved in their thoughtless action. If they are told about it they would get angry. Without any individuality they remain mere dociles of the master class. "Are these truant Nairs, intoxicated by consuming a bellyfull of toddy going to sleep all the time with their yawned mouths?", Nambiar asks astonishingly¹⁹⁸. He ridiculed the Nairs to awaken them from the stupor and apathy they had taken into and make them conscious of their pathetic plight during his time. At the same time he wanted to remind them of their strength to fight against those who exploited them if required. He aimed at inspiring them to acquire the will to do that¹⁹⁹.

The razor-sharp pen of Nambiar never spared the corrupt bureaucracy that practised favouritism, sycophancy and nepotism²⁰⁰.

197. -----, "Pradoshamahatmyam", in Warriar, ed., *Kritikal*, p. 398.

198. -----, "Rugminiswayamvaram", *Ibid.*, p. 217.

199. -----, "Tripuradahanam", *Ibid.*, p. 1128.

200. -----, "Hariniswayamvaram", *Ibid.*, p. 873.

With a moral sense closely resembling that of the reformers yet to come, he consciously strove for an intellectual awakening of the society. But he was helpless because the society was not ripe to assimilate him. The helpless poet lamented that the society was not honouring and recognizing scholarship while the clever men like the *Patakanmar* (story tellers) were acquiring wealth and recognition by narrating silly stories pretending to enlighten the people. The naivety and superstition of the people smothered the rationalism of the poet. He undertook the mission of enlightening them. But society remained indifferent to this witty preacher as there were no challenges to the domination of the elite especially the hegemonical class. An intellectual genius and the literary giant of late medieval Kerala, Nambiar was far ahead of his times. He too was a product of the society as an indication of the ripening of it for transition. The material conditions were yet to be mellowed.

Nambiar's was a futile attempt to make the elite of Kerala aware of themselves. Self awareness comes through rationally criticized memories about one's self. Only forward looking persons do that. A people who look for the future in the other world would not become self aware and they have no need of it. So the people of Kerala could not reap the fruits of Nambiars criticism. Nor were they led by any rational historical narration. *Keralolpathy* and *Kerala Mahatmyam* were an attempt at such a narration. How rational are these works we have analysed? Apart from historical work we get the oral tradition namely legends which are complementary to them to some extent. A compilation of such legends spread over a period probably from that of the Cheras to the 19th century

under the caption *Itihyamala* (A Chain of Legends) collected and compiled by the celebrated author Kottarathil Sankunni. It was published first in eight parts successively in 1909, 1914, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1932 and 1934. From 1974 to 1996, during a period of twenty three years one lakh and eight thousand copies were printed and distributed²⁰¹. This shows the popularity of the work which is indicative of the rationality of the Keralites curious enough to be aware of their self.

The subject matter of this work varies from the wonderful accomplishments of deities and human beings to the wisdom showed by elephants. The feats and greatness and the wisdom and valour displayed by kings, martial artists, poets, devils etc. are themes dealt with. The compiler has demonstrated much skill in giving very lucid and simple narration. If historical writing is considered as a rational activity these legends in no way contribute to historiography. But if historical writing is an attempt to keep alive the collective memory of a people, these legends are oral historical traditions about events and wonders, and biographical sketches of men and animals displaying greatness in action, love, loyalty, bravery, scholarship, munificence, honesty etc., with an eye on their educative value. The legends are a testimony to the historical sense of the makers, the compiler and the readers as well. It is popular history that reveals how a simple agrarian society looks upon events and persons of the past. Self-revelation or self-awareness is not seen in them. They are usually the representations of the languishments of the self. They

201. Kottarathil Sankunni, *Itihyamala*, pp. 9, 14.

reveal the historical sense, aspirations, beliefs, values, customs, concepts and so on of a people.

A description of one hundred and twenty six legends is available in the *Itihyamala*. A typical one among them is the *Parayipetta Pantirukulam*²⁰² which is widely popular among the Malayalis as a myth even today. A longing for a homogeneous society of Malayalis is represented in it. It is a myth about the union of a shrewd and intelligent Brahmana scholar named Vararuchi with an intelligent woman of the lowest caste of Pariah by fate which Vararuchi could not defy. He protested against his fate but could not escape it. The twelve offsprings resulting from this union took to different callings and were known by different castes. The eldest of them formed the Brahmana family of Mezhathur Agnihotri, reputed for scholarship and wealth. Another one Pakkanar set up a Pariah family. Narayanathu Branthan had no family and lived as a wandering philosopher. These two were great *jnanins* or philosophers who realised the truth. One of the twelve was a mute without mouth. Perhaps the character is symbolic of time. Others led ordinary lives. Naranathu Branthan was fearless, rational, secular, egalitarian and humanistic in outlook. One story about him is that one night he was preparing his gruel in a graveyard which was the abode of the very powerful and atrocious goddess Kali. Kali appeared and tried to frighten him away from the place. With a laugh the nonchalant hero asked her to prove her powers by postponing or advancing the time of his death. On her revealing her

202. Ibid., pp. 42-59.

helplessness, he asked her to change the elephantiasis of his one leg to the other. Kali did it and left the place. This legend conveys the lesson that the future is unknowable and unalterable even by the all powerful God but the present can be shaped with ingrained limitations. The unavoidable course of events to come is determined by the course of actions or inactions and man's choice is limited to action or inaction.

One story relating to Pakkanar, the other hero, is that he once gave his stick to his Brahmana masters on pilgrimage to the holy river Ganges to be dipped in it. They lost the stick in Ganges and confessed the fact to Pakkanar on their return. Pakkanar made a call for the stick and it came from the nearby pond. The message is that all waters are the same and it is meaningless to discriminate them as holy and unholy and seek grace by taking a dip in the holy Ganges. It is a reflection instanced by a simple tale on monistic philosophy. He did not accompany the master when invited and now conveyed that rites and rituals are useless. He made a living by acquiring only a bare minimum of things required by labour and led a contented life. The meaninglessness of accumulating wealth and the momentariness of life are given emphasis by him. Among the twelve, there was a trader in salt who was supposed to be a Muslim or Christian. Another one Akavoor Chathan was the servant of a learned Brahmana. On one occasion Chathan taught him the lesson that purity of mind and repentance for sin are the only requirement for a pious life and not bathing in Ganges or visiting holy places. The futility of *karmakanda* and the oneness of this universe, especially of humanity, is a doctrine we are repeatedly reminded of through the stories relating to the

prominent among the twelve. One of them directly states, “Enough is it not to forget that the root of all is the same. Then as many (wells) as required may be dug. Water will be seen in all”²⁰³, with the implied meaning that the difference is all in outward manifestations of beings and the essence of all is the same.

On the occasion of the *sraddham* of their parents all of the Twelve except the Mute used to come to the house of the eldest brother Agnihotri who was a Brahmana reputed for purity and piety. His wife and the Brahmana invitees once resented the presence of his brethren who did not have the purity because of their caste and association with low castes. So Agnihotri arranged separate accommodation for them for the next *sraddham*. In the night when all his brethren were asleep Agnihotri took his wife and the Brahmana invitees to the sleeping ones and asked them to look at them by touching him. To their astonishment, they saw the ten as one in the form of Lord Vishnu. Again the message of the legend is monistic philosophy. It is to be noted that the others could see them as one as they looked touching Agnihotri. That means only one who has secured *Brahmajnana* or real Brahmanahood can see every thing as the manifestation of the One. Or only those who have such a perspective are real Brahmanas.

The understanding that all are one in essence since the ultimate reality is the One, the Absolute and the discriminative ideology of Varna Dharma perpetuating inequality and oppression continued in existence

203. Ibid., p. 55.

side by side. The hegemonical class and their official exponents were the perpetuators of the Varna Dharma and its strict observance. The humanists among the Brahmanas seem to be the propounders of monism. The ideological conflict between them can be seen with the official class holding the upper hand throughout the history of Kerala. The legend of Mahabali, the source of *Onam* festival, also speaks for it. In the legend of Kakkasseri Bhatathiri²⁰⁴ again we get the idea that one who gets the realisation of Brahman would lose all worldly desires and be liberated from all discriminative thoughts. Bhatathiri attained that stage and he could not practise purity and pollution as he had transcended the feeling of otherness. He mingled with all and treated them as equals. This was not liked by the official Brahmanas and he was made an outcaste.

Brahmanas and their Hindu deities are described as invincible. Deities are source of power. Especially the sorcerer is a dependent of a particular deity. Sorcery also is a source of power and in this field the Brahmanas were pre-eminent. Gods, devils, fairies, *gandharvas*, and other supernatural beings were often in alliance with Brahmana sorcerers, and rulers. Their source of strength or competence was considered to be this alliance. These supernatural powers were sometimes acting in subservience to them because of their control over them or they were protecting them as a reward for their consistent propitiation. Snake worship and the snake gods showering blessings on the worshippers are also themes of some legends. All these are suggestive of a primitive society.

204. Ibid., pp. 73-78.

Some legends reveal the prejudices against Muslims but not Islam. Muslims being outside the Varna fold could not be ideologically subjugated by the Brahmanas and in certain fields like martial art and sorcery they were very competent. So they were to be overpowered by propaganda and for that legends describing them as inferior to the Brahmanas in such fields were concocted. Cow slaughter was considered a serious offence and the protection of the cow as an act of piety. Caste prejudice is revealed in suggesting that a low caste like an Izhava was not capable of utilising the service of a deity even if a deity was willing to help him because of his intellectual deficiency²⁰⁵. All these show that the Malayali society was kept mentally retarded by the ideology of Varna Dharma.

All the one hundred and twenty six legends compiled in the *Itihyamala* are not of uniform character. Events and personalities that mainly formed the content of the legends are of different times and are having no logical coherence of thought or temporal succession. Each remains a distinct one while some are subordinated to a main one. Nevertheless they display unity of purpose and we get a clue about the mindset that moulded them. Events relating to personalities are often of successful display of eminence. Such personalities belong to the superstructure of the society with a very few exceptions like Kayamkulam Kochunni²⁰⁶ (Muslim) and Kadamattathu Cathanar²⁰⁷ (Christian) etc. The ideological tone in which the legends are

205. Ibid., pp. 111-12.

206. Ibid., p. 176.

207. Ibid., p. 428.

composed helps their general categorisation into two groups namely one written in praise of the Brahmanas with an intention of creating admiration for their scholarship, spiritual power and invincibility and the efficacy of rites and rituals or *upasana* and the other written to enlighten on monism with an end to promote universal brotherhood as a prerequisite for a homogeneous society as in the case of *Parayipetta Panthirukulam*. To the second category belongs a very few. A discerning eye can see that the second category is crushed by the weight of the first. The legend is so moulded as to drive home a moral. The values and aspirations they reflect are of a simplistic rural society dominated by the landed aristocracy which is the custodian of knowledge. That class here is the Brahmanas. Values and *maryadas* they vindicate are loyalty, fidelity, chastity, honesty, chivalry, gratitude diligence obedience to the master and bravery. Superstitions are fostered to achieve the inculcation of such values. The legends served the propagandizing and educating purpose of historical writing in an unenlightened society of Malayalis.

Omitted from the *Itihyamala* but crowning all the legends and excelling all rather in securing a permanent place in Malayali mind is the Parasurama legend about the origin of their land. As part of gaining legitimacy for Brahmanical hegemony the legend was deliberately disseminated as a historical fact in the late medieval period. As part of it it was put within the reach of the ordinary Malayali in the form of folk song namely *Mamankakoothu*²⁰⁸ written by one Kadanchery Namboothiri

208. K.N. Ezhuthacchan, "Kilipattu", in K.M. George, ed., *Sahityacharitram*, p. 423.

so that the Malayali mindset would be constituted by the ideology of Brahmanical supremacy.

The concept of an all pervading *Brahman* in the form of Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswara the three main Gods of Hindu pantheon and Vedas as the source of all knowledge had been popularised among the servile class also as testified by the folk song,

Three are the branches of the primeval root
That has permeated the world over
Four are the sprouts of the root of knowledge
That has spread in all the branches of knowledge²⁰⁹

This cannot be taken as the articulation of the common mind but one by somebody of the elite class intended for the consumption of the underlings. The impact of it could be only ignorance about the original idea and awesome subjection to the colonialists. The fact that the concept of *Brahman* is in actuality one that grants equal rights for all was concealed from the servile class even though they were conscious of being exploited by the elite. They used to sing while working as follows:

Hearing the fiddle-faddle of the *thampuran*
Theva, bail out the water, Theva!
Even when the time is up
We are being heavily tormented
Giving half a morsel of toddy
We are being heavily tormented

209. G. Sankara Pillai, "Natanpattukal", *Ibid.*, p. 98. Trans. mine.

Giving half a part of the tender coconut

We are being heavily tormented²¹⁰

While the tillers of the soil were singing the bail song at sun set, the upper class was dwelling on either eroticism or religious affairs and salvation. An over view of the literary works known as *Champoos* written by Malayali Brahmanas show that they were written for inculcating devotion to God. The themes are often taken from the epics and the *Puranas*. The *Champoos* also reflect the degenerated life of the hegemonical class. We get a detailed picture of the Namboothiri youth, philanderers, gluttonous seekers of food, sorcerers, pseudo physicians and ignorant Namboothiris wandering in search of gifts²¹¹. The pathetic condition of the aimless life of the junior male members of the Namboothiri families who were denied property right and family life is the theme sometimes. Without having any family responsibilities that bring discipline and an end to life they were left to while away their life in roaming about. Eroticism also is a major motif in the *Champoo* poems²¹².

Devotion to God and eroticism are the two motifs of the *Attakatha* form of literature mainly written during the 18th and 19th centuries. *Attakatha* poems written by Irayimman Tampi of the Travancore royal family are well-known for eroticism. *Orupattunnicharitham* is the most reputed among the *Attakatha* poems for eroticism. A linguistic scholar

210. Ibid., p. 101. Trans. mine.

211. Vadakkumkoor Rajarajavarma , "Bhashachampukkal", Ibid., p. 461.

212. Ibid., p. 467.

S.K.Nair remarks that, "In no other literature would have been written such a vulgar book so full of obscenity"²¹³. The subject matter of the book is the keeping of numerous Namboothiri paramours by a Nair lady. That the upper class in general and the hegemonical class in particular had reached the nadir of moral degeneration is proven by the literary works of the period from 13th century to 19th century. One cannot but wonder whether the Namboothiri lived only for sexual pleasures. At the same time one is reminded that the Epicurean Namboothiris knew well that life is to be enjoyed in this world itself and happiness is not to be sought by *bhakti* and denial of worldly pleasures in the other world. It must be admitted that they are humanistic to the extent that they loved this world. Their excessive indulgence in earthly pleasures was a natural culmination in consequence of socio-economic set up preserved by a political order founded on the ideology of Varna Dharma and *Karmakanda*.

The motif of the popular Sanskrit literature produced by the Keralites from 8th century A.D. to 19th is either *bhakti* or eroticism with the exception of the historical work *Mushikavamsakavya* of Atula. Theological and philosophical works which could not become popular also were written in Sanskrit during this period²¹⁴.

Man with his sorrows and pains, or the conflict within his own soul or his conflicts with the external world, is not represented in any Malayalam literary form till the 19th century. We cannot find a story or

213. S.K. Nair, "Attakatha", *Ibid.*, p. 533.

214. K. Kunjan Raja, *Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature*, Madras, 1980.

poem or drama of such motifs. Man is depicted as a victim of fate or a subject of God. The idea of man struggling with his fellowmen or the nature for his survival never struck the writers with the single exception of Kunchan Nambiar until the 19th century. The epics and the *Puranas* were the everlasting fountainhead of literary works. The life in this world meant only sex and poetry for the writers. Human action in its secular aspect creating man's life and experiencing its consequence was not a problem to be inquired into and explained in its rational and emotional aspect for them. Man lived to enjoy sex and to keep up his stock or to seek heaven in the other world.

The common folk lacked class consciousness but were aware of being exploited by the masters as revealed in the folk song cited above. They also knew the immoral ways through which they were oppressed. The concept of purity and pollution was put into practice for the exploitation, of the down-trodden by the masters. But for the sexual exploitation the concept was not a hurdle. It could be conveniently put aside whenever required and an ordinary bath would remove the stains of pollution. That the Brahmanas occasionally found sexual pleasure with Panchama women was not a secret among the common folk²¹⁵.

Since the development of Malayalam literature usually the themes of poetic literature were freely drawn from the epics and the *Puranas*. This trend continued unbroken till the 19th century. Lofty ideas and ideals of the Vedic and Upanisadic heritage were not much inspiring to

215. G. Sankara Pillai, "Natanpattukul", in K.M. George, ed., *Sahityacharitram*, p. 106.

the litterateurs. But since the sixteenth century descriptive literature on secular subject made its appearance. The *Sangeethasastram*, *Kalariividya* and some works on astronomy by Mazhamangalathu Sankaran Namboothiri were the products of 16th century²¹⁶. Scientific and philosophical works began to be compiled in the 17th century. A notable one is the *Ganithayukti Bhasha*²¹⁷ or the Language of Mathematical Logic. In the 18th century a medical treatise *Mathangaleela*²¹⁸, on elephant treatment and protection was composed. It is a commentary and not a research work of originality.

A commentary on litigation entitled *Vyavaharamala*²¹⁹ was written in the 19th century. The *Tantrasamuchaya* originally written by Chennas Narayanan Namboothiri on the science of architecture in the 15th century got a commentary in prose in the 19th century²²⁰. At the same period a commentary on Vedic thought the *Atmabodhni* was produced²²¹. That these works were written in an atmosphere perturbed by the presence of foreign elements is to be specially noted. In the new circumstances of wars, active trade and religious discordance, the objective world was slowly engrossing the Malayali mind. The prose works are symptomatic of that process. The intellectual talents of the Malayali began to flower.

216. C.L. Antony, "Bhashagadyam", *Ibid.*, pp. 656-58.

217. *Ibid.*, p. 674.

218. *Ibid.*, p. 675.

219. Ullor S. Parameswara Iyer, *Kerala Sahithya Charitram*, Part II-III, University of Travancore, 1954, p. 679.

220. *Ibid.*

221. *Ibid.*, p. 680.

The advent of the Europeans gave a new turn to the thought of the Malayali. The Portuguese in their attempt to secure a support base in the native Christian community convened the Synod of Diamper in 1599 and its canons were written down in prose. It was not an expression of original thought but an attempt to shape the native Christian mind in the ideological mould of the western Catholics²²². They failed to evoke any enthusiasm. Apart from creating an identity consciousness among the Christians, they failed to evoke any enthusiasm either among the Christians or the non-Christians of a consequential nature in the intellectual life of Kerala. But the Protestant missionaries made a dent into the mental world of the Malayalis. They were determined to captivate the native mind. In 1797 an English scholar Robert Drummond published the *Grammar of Malayalam Language*²²³. Grammar is a requisite to systematise and provide clarity to confused but advancing thought. Robert Drummond representing a more rational mind was now making such an attempt. As a corollary to his endeavour came the compilation of Malayalam-English dictionary in 1846 and an English-Malayalam dictionary in 1849 by Benjamin Bailey to bridge the native mind to the European. Joseph Pete, F.Spring and L.Garth composed well-known grammatical works for Malayalam²²⁴. All these have been excelled by the grammatical work finished by the great scholar Hermann Gundert²²⁵ who remarkably contributed to the development of Malayalam language. In fact his was a victory along with

222. Scaria Zacharia, ed., *Acts*.

223. C.L. Antony, "Bhashagadyam", in K.M. George, ed., *Sahityacharitram*, p. 677.

224. *Ibid.*, p. 677.

225. *Ibid.*

his predecessors in orientating the Malayali mind towards rationality and secular thought.

The Catholic missionaries, the Jesuits, also had been contributing in this direction. The *Horthus Malabaricus*, a botanical study of the vegetation of Kerala was published in 1686. In 1772 as a plain attempt at ideological infiltration the *Sumkshepavedartham*, (*A Concise Summary of the Bible*), was published. A secular work worthy of attention by a native Catholic was the *Varthamana Pustakam* published in 1786 by Father Paremmakkal Thomas²²⁶. An anonymous work on values essential for a successful and civilised worldly life supposed to be written by a Catholic, also of this period is available in prose²²⁷.

All these works enriched the Malayalam literature. This quantitative output was a reflection of the qualitative evolution from tradition to modernity that was under way in the field of Malayalam language and literature. Simultaneously these literary works were opening up new vistas of rational and secular ideas and subjects although the motivating force behind them was religious ideology. The establishment of the printing press by the Jesuits in 1579 and by Bailey, the Protestant missionary, in 1821 was a great event that helped the widening of the mental horizon of the Malayali. A plethora of ideas entirely strange to the native mind came through it.

226. Ibid., p. 672.

227. Ibid., p. 673.

It was during the 17th and 18th centuries that numerous copies of *Keralacharitam* and *Keralolpathy* came in circulation. The first historical work produced before them in Kerala was the *Mushikavamsakavya* written in Sanskrit by Atula. It is a chronicle that gives some information on the Mushika rulers. The *Keralolpathy* is a conglomeration of fact and fiction presented from the standpoint of the hegemonical class which could understand the force of history in the present. Yet it was a very feeble attempt to recast the past though in an irrational way as a response to the challenge offered by both material and ideological matrix. It was an attempt to champion a lost cause that is the Varna Dharma ideology.

The history of the Malayalis from the Chera period onward is the story of the colonisation of both their mental and material world by the Brahmana settlers from the north of India. Though they came with the sword and the religion the sword was lost in the process of their religion putting the mind of the natives in fetters and draining their wealth into their coffers. The process was completed during the post-Chera period resulting in the hegemony of the Brahmanas which was soon followed by the degeneration of that class. The by-products of the process constituted the heritage of the 19th century Kerala society.

The monistic philosophy of the settlers found an efficient and successful expositor in Sri Sankara. As a commentator on Badarayana's *Brahma Sutra* Sankara succeeded in establishing the supremacy of Advaita over all other philosophical systems. But he did not correlate the monistic doctrine to practical life. Inconsistent with the spirit of

universalism ingrained in the Advaita philosophy Sankara justified Varna Dharma and upheld *karmakanda* for the intellectually poor to attain salvation. Sankara's ingenious construction of Advaita philosophy did not make any positive impact on Kerala society, and Advaita philosophy did not orientate the Malayali mind towards any moral or material progress. Even so Sankara was later treated as an authority in justification of a social system based on Varna Dharma by the upholders of Brahmanical theology as instanced by the *Sankara Smriti*.

Attempt at the popularisation of the monistic philosophy by seers can be seen in the legends and folk songs. But often such attempts gave wrong construction to it without abandoning the varna premise. The only legend that conveyed its essence in simple manner is the *Parayipetta Panthirukulam*. Beyond affording consolation to the intellectually curious among the oppressed such a legend could not make the doctrine a foundation for a strong movement against ignorance and an oppressive regime. The hegemonical class did not exhibit any inclination to pursue Sankara's strain and to make the philosophy an intellectual stimulant. They indulged in excessive erotic ventures and depicted them picturesquely with poetic imagination. They could only thus exhibit moral and intellectual impoverishment. This trend generated an antithesis of extreme denial of worldliness. The enervating element of this antithesis was *bhakti* as espoused by Ezhuthacchan and Poonthanam. In course of time this doctrine only deepened the imbecility of the common folk while the sensualism of the hegemonical class continued unabated. Monism rationally espoused by Sankara proved to be indigestible to the heralds

of *bhakti* but dwelt upon it as a religious foundation for their doctrine. As a promise to the future appeared on the intellectual realm the ideas of self criticism, secularism, rationalism and humanism freely flowing from the pen of the witty poet Kunchan Nambiar. These ideas foreshadowed the coming era of enlightenment without making an immediate impact on the Malayali mind fossilised by the legacy of the long past. That legacy was the ideas of fatalism, escapism, defeatism, individual salvation in the other world, varna racism, efficacy of sacraments, Brahmanical supremacy and apartheid and so on, all products of the languid and fascist ideology of Varna Dharma and *Karmakanda*, the solid platform of the hegemonical class the Brahmanas.

Religion was the source of Varna Dharma and in the name of that the Brahmanas imposed a forceful division of labour instead of a spontaneous development to maintain an unchanging social order that would conserve the power, wealth and position they had acquired as a class. By such a division the development of both reason and instinct required for man's freedom over environment was kept under restriction. The freedom man enjoyed was only natural freedom, that of an animal to gather and produce food by means of manual labour. Productive force was not allowed to grow beyond human labour. The imaginative power and consciousness of man were arrested in such a condition. The system founded on Varna Dharma or forced division of labour therefore suppressed individual personality and thereby the personality of the society too. In nature that system and the ideology that produced it are fascist. The originators of that ideology and system were actually falling

into a trap prepared by them. Intellectually they also became barren. Being a product of ignorance and faith the fascism of the priestly class remained pacifistic and bloodless since it was practised by an undeveloped mind on an undeveloped mind.

Traversing a distance of one and a half millennium in time the Malayali mind arrived at the dawn of the 19th century only to be dismayed by a world of new ideas and institutions of redemption from its infant garment and tradition. The process of redemption was well on its way by the close of the 19th century. Malayali's redemption means his metabolism to modernity. In the absence of any challenge from the natural or social environment or any alien threat the critical faculty of the Malayali remained slumberous. He silently followed the voice of tradition as dictated by the Brahmanas to perpetuate their hegemonical position. The Malayali did not raise his voice against tradition since he was ignorant of his own voice as a reflective animal. The advent of foreigners who conquered this land and attempted to conquer his mind and the ensuing stir in the social environment awakened the Malayali's critical faculty. It meant his realisation that he has a voice of reflection as against the voice of tradition. In other words, he was becoming aware of his self and that forms the essence of modernity in Kerala context. The process of self awareness of the Malayali synchronised with the structural metamorphosis of his society and that process reflected through the ideas emanating from the changing economic and political milieu. A patternisation of those ideas would yield the ideological bases of modernity in Kerala.

CHAPTER II

THE SPIRITUAL WAY

The contest for political hegemony in Kerala since the advent of the Portuguese was finally settled in favour of the British. Following the defeat of Tipu in the third Anglo-Mysore war Malabar came under the direct control of the British. In 1791 Cochin and in 1805 Travancore accepted subjection to the British by joining the subsidiary alliance and put an end to all the opportunistic political alignments and instabilities of the immediate past. This meant the beginning of a new era in the history of Kerala but never meant that the Brahmanical hegemony over the social structure of Kerala perished. The ball of change was set to move by the contact with the new master class. Their political ideology of democracy and the religious ideology of Protestantism through administrative reorganisation and missionary works were to make an impact on Malayali life. Against this background of change of masters and coming of new ideologies the suppressed classes got an opportunity for self appraisal and to find out a way of social emancipation. The process of that emancipation was not an exclusive but an inclusive one of political social and economic nature springing from different ideological foundations of both indigenous and foreign origin.

The roots of the indigenous foundation lay in the ancient philosophy and divine concept of the pagan thinkers. The religious ideology of the Brahmanas was a perverted outgrowth of Indian philosophy of Advaita

or monism and pantheistic concept of the universe. In the hands of the priestly class of Brahmanas the philosophical and divine concepts were distorted to make room for Varna Dharma and sacrificial worship upon which Brahmanical hegemony was built up. In other words philosophy was superimposed by ritualistic interpretations and *jnanakanda* was displaced by *karmakanda*. The rational law of karma was also contorted to justify the theory of transmigration of soul seeking a place in the hierarchy of animate beings and varna gradation to suit the hegemonical position of the Brahmanas. The self appraisal induced by the change of masters led to the re-reading and the rediscovery of philosophy and religion. The great endeavor in this mission came from the three eminent personalities of modern (in temporal term) Kerala namely Chattampi Swamikal, Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi and Sri Narayana Guru.

Chattampi Swamikal was born of a Nair woman by a Brahmana in the year 1853¹ in the village of Kolloor in Travancore. His original name was Ayyappan but he was affectionately called Kunjan Pillai. The birth was a hapless event for Kunjan Pillai. In the given conditions of those days to be born as the son of a Brahmana by a Nair woman does not mean the birth of a child by a marital relation in the proper sense. It is the birth of a child through *sambandham* that does not entail the rights and eligibility of individual identity. In *sambandham* relations the man does not have the responsibilities of a husband other than creating children, and of a father. The intelligent and diligent Kunjan Pillai could

1. K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Chattampi Swamikal* (Biography), Kottayam, 1960, p. 10. Maheswaran Nair, ed., *Chattampi Swamikal : Jeevithavum Kritikalum*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, p. 14.

soon understand this and absorb the identity problem involved in his birth. His insight induced him to identify his personal problem with the social set up regulated by Brahmanical theology. Here was the birth of the social critic in Chattampi Swamikal as he was reverently known later.

Kunjan pillai got the nick name Chattampi which in due course erased his original names from his teacher Raman Pillai Asan who appointed Kunjan Pillai as Chattampi or monitor of the class². Under Raman Pillai Asan Chattampi earned primary knowledge in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil literature which meant mainly religious texts in those days. During these days of his formal education he used to mingle with the Izhava families in violation of caste rules and had good friends among them³. Later he came into contact with one Thaikkatu Ayyavu from whom Chattampi acquired profound knowledge in yoga. Then he left for Kalladakurichi, a well known centre of learning in Tamilnadu where he got deep knowledge in Vedanta philosophy, Logic and Grammar and Music also from the scholar Jatapaddikal. By the time he returned to Thiruvananthapuram he became an ascetic to be known as Chattampi Swamikal. Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru were thick intellectual friends and both of them had an inclination for travel. Chattampi Swamikal travelled throughout the Travancore and Cochin states where he got a number of disciples. He encouraged people to organise little groups of cultural activities for intellectual discussions. At a time when there were no libraries, cultural organisations and party

2. Bhaskara Pillai, *Chattampi*, p. 51.

3. Maheswaran Nair, *Chattampi*, pp. 55-56.

forums these little groups served as the disseminators of new ideas. The only public venue for the intellectuals to have communication with the masses was the temple. Chattampi Swamikal organised cultural activities in temple premises and house gatherings. There he gave discourses on Vedanta and other subjects. Though a member of the Nair community he did not take up the leadership of a reform movement among the Nairs. But he acted as the fountain of intellectual inspiration to his disciples to do that job⁴.

The disdainful situation of the Nair community in the social set up of Kerala in those days was very similar to that of a Nair son of a Brahmana like Chattampi. His community was not aware of this pathetic condition that they had been trampled down into. In the name of Varna system the exploitation of the Nair community by the Brahmanas had reached an appalling condition, when, to strengthen their own community's economic stability, the Nair community was subordinated to the sexual need of the younger males of the Namboothiri families. Without understanding the sexual subordination resulting from the *sambandham* which denied them any ounce of self respect the Nair community took pride in it as a privilege that was denied to communities below them. It was against this background that Chattampi Swamikal rose to be a historical personage by waging an ideological war against Brahmanical religion. Constructively the war aimed at moulding a Nair psyche of self respect and self confidence and destructively it aimed at the elimination of Brahmanical religion and Brahmanical hegemony. It

4. Ibid., p. 113.

was the outgrowth of the soul searching spirit for identity and respect of a tortured and provoked, confused and restless self that well manifested in Chattampi Swamikal.

To achieve the first of the two aims he tried to give a new interpretation to the ancient history of Kerala as distinct from the one given by the Brahamanas and wrote the *Pracheena Malayalam*⁵. The hegemony of the Brahmanas over the people of Kerala rested on claims that Kerala is the land gifted to them by Parasurama, the Brahmanas are the highest of the four varnas and they are the sole teachers and preachers of all the Hindus. The book was intended to combat these claims on the basis of ancient authorities, traditions and customs through a rational analysis and to establish the thesis that the land actually belonged to the Nairs who occupied the highest rank in society⁶. In that attempt he censures all the authorities namely *Skandapurana*, *Kerala Mahatmyam*, *Keralolpathy* and *Keralavakasakramam* which propounded the claims of the Brahmanas. An internal criticism of these authorities convinced Chattampi Swamikal that they are mutually contradictory statements and that they contain in themselves self contradictory statements which make them incredible and unacceptable. The acceptance of these authorities in justification of Brahmanical hegemony only contributed to the disunity and mutual rancour among the people of Kerala. For all these reasons and also for keeping the society in a withering state, he exhorted to discard these authorities⁷.

5. Chattampi Swamikal, "Pracheena Malayalam", Ibid., p. 303.

6. Ibid., pp. 303-304.

7. Ibid., pp. 306-12, 352.

He argued that the right to land was to be proved by registered documents. The authorities like *Kerala Mahatmyam* and *Keralolpathy* were not such documents. They were purposefully created to protect the vested interests of the Brahmanas. So they need not be examined at all to find out the real owners of land in Kerala⁸. On a verification of registered documents, accounts etc. Nairs were found to be the real owners of land in Kerala⁹. In reality the attempt of Chattampi Swamikal was to question the historicity of the concocted historical explanation as a discourse to establish Brahmanical hegemony and he demanded a rational and scientific reconstruction of the past of Kerala based on documental evidences. He effused the interest in self inquiring that typifies an awakening society.

He tried to trace the *sambandham* relation between the Nairs and the Brahmanas as the source of all misfortunes of the Nair community. According to him well to do Nair families used to encourage the *sambandham* form of marriage and to provide the Brahmanas with munificent hospitality at their homes. The Nairs were also in the habit of getting religious rites performed by them and giving dakshina for it. These practices paved the way for Brahmanical intrusion into the Nair social domain and that brought in its train the evilsome development like family disputes, monetary loss, social humiliation and ill disposed sons which meant total subjection of the Nair community to Brahmanical hegemony. This had gone to the extent of self abnegation of Nairs, of unwanted and

8. Ibid., p. 357.

9. Ibid., p. 358.

unjustifiable obedience to any Brahmana indiscreetly and of having false prestige of being the progeny of Brahmanas and an irrational surrender to them¹⁰. What the people of Kerala especially Nairs required in his opinion was the cultivation of self respect which would not be harmful to any body.

He held that the land of Kerala was not a creation of Parasurama and the claim that Parasurama gave the land to the Brahmanas as an atonement for his sin of killing Kshetriyas was baseless since Parasurama was not a sinner and the Brahmanas were not at all brought to Kerala by Parasurama¹¹. *Pracheena Malayalam* is not an historical work written on the basis of historical evidences to reconstruct the historical evolution that culminated in the establishment of Brahmanical hegemony.

Pracheena Malayalam is a refutation of the claims of the hegemonical class based on the same authority upon which the claims rest. The author made a rational reading of the authorities applying historical criticism with the help of mythology, religious texts, *Upanisads*, *Sruti*, *the Gita* etc. It was a rational attempt to create a historical perspective as a tit for tat of the oppressed class against the hegemonical class. He was trying to apply textual criticism to a fictitious construction of the past. He was not writing history in its proper sense but was showing a historical sense required for a people coming to the stage of history.

10. Ibid., pp. 361-63.

11. Ibid., pp. 314-18.

The focus of *Pracheena Malayalam* is the relation between Nairs and Brahmanas and the author tries to analyse it in the light of the Varna concept¹². Chattampi Swamikal could not make a categorical denial of the Varna concept but took it as theoretically correct and advocated one based on qualities or attributes of individuals exhibited through inherent talents¹³. Varna order of society based on birth was condemned and it was held as the source of evils like laziness, poverty, spite, family feuds, evil customs decline of morality etc.¹⁴ He observed that the varna system was practised because of the misconception that it was created by great men¹⁵ and that misconception had to be shattered, and he refuted the categorisation based on birth with the supportive evidences from *Manu Smriti, Brihadaranyaka Upanisad, the Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata* etc. He argued that every body is born as a Brahmana and by profession he acquires the varna status¹⁶. No forced division was justified and freedom of choice in calling was demanded. He held that Varna difference is determined by quality as a natural attribute and therefore no community had any right to claim superiority over another, and discrimination against right to learning was unjustifiable. In fact there could be no community of varna according to the theoretical formulation of it as given by Chattampi Swamikal. In the particular instance of Keraia he contended that geographically Kerala did not come under the rule of varna system¹⁷

12. Ibid., pp. 397-445.

13. Ibid., pp. 411, 422.

14. Ibid., p. 398.

15. Ibid., p. 398.

16. Ibid., p. 407.

17. Ibid., p. 420.

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and the Nairs for that reason, could not be considered as Sudras. He held the epithet Sudra for Nairs as bitterly loathsome which had no historical validity but was a creation of the Brahmanas to humiliate and keep them as servile.

After becoming well versed in the philosophy of Vedas and Upanisads and the Saivite thought of the Tamil literature during his sojourn at Kalladakurichi for four years Chattampi Swamikal returned to his native state with a light heart. The search for identify took him to the stream of Advaita and a bath in it cooled his restless soul¹⁸. He could now see the *Brahman* as all pervading in the universe transcending all distinctions and discriminations. The sense of belonging to that *Brahman* solved the problem of self identity. The self in him and the self of the Nair community were no longer to be felt inferior to that of a Brahmana. He took up the cause of the Nair community to combat the priestly religion of Brahmanas which was superimposed on the pristine purity of Advaita the philosophy of real Hinduism. Advaita seemed to be the convenient weapon to annihilate the pseudo Hinduism of the Brahmanas and he wrote the *Vedadhikara Nirupanam* and *Advaitachintapanchathi* with this end.



The *Vedadhikara Nirupanam*¹⁹ was a rereading of the authority of the Vedas, the learning of which was a monopoly of the Brahmanas as a means to perpetuate their hold over the Hindu population. So it was an

18. Bhaskara Pillai, *Chattampi*, pp. 24, 26.

19. Chattampi Swamikal, "Vedadhikara Nirupanam" in Maheswaran Nair, *Chattampi*, ed., pp. 461-518.

attempt to question the Brahmanical hegemony. He held that the Vedas undoubtedly constitute a very important work but it is quite untenable to consider them as written by God and not by man. They are to be read discerningly and what seems to be right only requires serious consideration and acceptance. What is untruthful and condemnable, and perpetuating cruel practices must be discarded. Chattampi Swamikal was refuting the infallibility of the Vedas²⁰ upon which rested the legitimacy of Brahmanical religion.

Coming to the main point of dispute that is the discrimination against Sudras, in Kerala context Nairs, Chattampi Swamikal could not accept the version that Vedas prescribed taboos on Sudras learning them. Even when caste was identified as professional group, discursive of the original meaning of varna as he explained in the *Pracheena Malayalam*, Chattampi Swamikal argued that none was forbidden from taking to learning. He tried to establish that none of the authorities along with Vedas was against the right of Sudras and women. If at all there were strictures on such rights in the Vedas they may be assessed in the light of the fact that contradictory dictations are superabundant in them²¹. In his view many of the taboos for Sudras and women were the creation of commentators through suppression of facts or suggestion of false meanings²².

The taboo on Sudras taking to learning does not stand the test of reason also. Everybody requires food for sustenance. If it is prohibited

20. Ibid., pp. 472-73.

21. Ibid., pp. 500-508.

22. Ibid., p. 504.

nobody would obey. Similarly knowledge is required for man to carry on his life forward and if any body or any authority denied it to the Sudras there is no need of obeying such dictations²³. Here it should be remembered that Brahmanical religion which prescribed that *Na stree Sudrou Vedamadhiyatham*²⁴ [Neither women nor Sudra required Vedic learning] had become obsolete in the new moral and material circumstances. That stricture was an impediment on the civic right of the individual. So Chattampi Swamikal was waging an ideological war for the civic rights also of the Nairs against the one that denied it. The taboo on learning Vedas for the Sudras was to keep them ignorant for the benefit of the interested class. So it need not be respected, he argued. He concluded that without being obstinate every body who is willing should be allowed to have learning in the belief that that is the greatest duty and act of compassion, for to act contrary is similar to the denial of food to the hungry²⁵.

The philosophical foundation on which he erected the ideals of self respect, equality, civic right and property right is Advaita or Monism. His version of monism is explained in the *Advaithachintapadhati*²⁶. He accepted the indivisible and perfect whole the *Brahman* that shines eternally as the cause of the universe and all the qualities. The universe and the

23. *Ibid.*, p. 517.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 503.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 518.

26. Chattampi Swamikal, "Advaithachinthapadhathi", in Maheswaran Nair, ed., *Chattampi*, pp. 529-618.

qualities are superimposed on it . *Brahman* is the *sat* and the ephemeral universe is *asat*²⁷. Universe is subjected to creation, evolution and destruction. It is not permanent; it is an illusion. In epistemology the one *sat* is divided into noumina, phenomena and perception for convenience of understanding. Illusions are not considered as nonexistent. Only illusory thing is nonexistent. What is called *sat* is that which shines eternally in awakening, dream and sleep in the form of universal consciousness without any change. That is the soul. Soul is the *sat* that which helps experience. That is the character of it. It cannot be objectively experienced. It radiates from every object in the form of *sat*, *cit* and *ananda*. It is due to ignorance of this reality that every one is taking the form as the reality and becomes incapable of self realization and enjoyment²⁸.

The morals he derived from the philosophy are rationalism, self awareness through knowledge, and liberation through the attainment of self realization. Explanation follows like this. The inner self of man is constituted by four elements namely mind that goes along with the sense, *cit* or inner sense that infers on mind's finding, reason that discerns and takes decision and ego that prompts action. If ego acts without the discernment of reason it will lead to miseries. So a balance among mind, sense and ego is to be kept by reason. Realising that content and not form is of primary importance a life that always follows the content /self, that is awareness of the self through intellectual pursuit is the most desirable for man. On realising that the inner self of the individual is

27. Ibid., pp. 529, 541.

28. Ibid., pp. 554-55, 558-61.

individual is nothing but the world self /consciousness manifested, aberration caused by the misconception of the form as reality will disappear and complete command over self will be possible. This realisation, that is, self realisation is the attainment of liberation²⁹, which is otherwise known as salvation.

A person convinced of the rationality of a philosophy of intellectual transcendence of all inequalities and discriminations could not be lured by any less rational ideology to serve the purpose of combating Brahmanical ideology at a time when conversion to Christianity opened up a vista of social equality and material benefits to the members of the lower rungs in varna order. For the converts it was a break with the tradition of oppression and humiliation. For those who were emotionally at pains to part ways with tradition could not follow it easily. A vague sense of cultural conceit and the irrational aspects of Christian faith which was foreign and of foreign masters made it unacceptable to them. It could not accommodate an intellectual conversion since it could not appear to be consoling to the rational mind stirred with identity crisis. This may be the reason for the censure of Christianity by Chattampi Swamikal when himself and some of his friends like Erathu Krishnan Asan and Kaliyankan Neelakanda Pillai felt the Christian missionaries cajoling their intellectually less fortunate brethren³⁰. What he targeted in his *Christumata Nirupanam*³¹, was the irrational representation of Jesus and the mythological/ theological foundations of the faith while leaving its moral teachings untouched.

29. Ibid., pp. 549-553.

30. Bhaskara Pillai, *Chattampi*, p. 46.

31. Chattampi Swamikal, "Christumata Nirupanam", in Maheswaran Nair, ed., *Chattampi*, pp. 183-298.

The Biblical construction of God seemed to Chattampi Swamikal quite irrational³². In that construction of a personal god, God is incompetent, dependent, egoistic, selfish capricious and not omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and free from attachment. That God is held responsible for the sin of Adam and Eve and He is unkind towards them as He could have prevented all the tragic events as He had foreknowledge of all that was to come³³. The Christian theory of creation was refuted as baseless. For the sin stated to have committed by Adam and Eve God was held responsible and He was held as the real sinner because if man commits any sin it is due to the shortcoming of God. The concept of a personal god punishing man for his sin was questioned by the author.

In his opinion the existence of Jesus itself was a doubtful fact³⁴. Even if his existence was admitted Jesus could be considered only as an ordinary human being and not as the son of God. He was not omniscient because he could not foresee what was going to happen to him. The fact that the information we get about Jesus was written two hundred years after his death by his disciples makes it unconvincing. The wonderful deeds attributed to Jesus were questioned and what is related about the life of Jesus was held irrational and untruthful. His death on the cross could not be considered as a sacrifice for the sin of mankind and their redemption. He was executed for the crime he committed. The claim that he died for the sinners was untenable as the punishment for the sin

32. Ibid., pp. 199-201.

33. Ibid., p. 205.

34. Ibid., pp. 215-24.

committed by one has to be suffered by oneself. The very concept of sin was questioned by him. Being neither a substance nor an attribute sin could not be inherited. Then how all the descendents of Adam and Eve could be considered as sinners ? He questioned the self – contradictory claim that the Father and Son are the same and the Son was sent by a pre-existing God and refutes the concept of Trinity³⁵. The concept of the last judgement also was disputed on the ground that it is meaningless to claim that the unfortunate people who led righteous life following their own theologies without having a chance to know Jesus and the Bible would be sent to hell. Lastly he pointed out that in many of the countries Christianity was spread through horrible and questionable means³⁶.

To the allegation of heinous motive behind this work his answer was that it was in compliance with the Christian concept that acceptance of anything should be made after rational verification that he made an in depth criticism of the Christian faith³⁷. The statement shows that a contemplative and critical native was not enticed by a priestly dominated faith like Christianity and that faith could not be a substitute for Brahmanical theology. The quest of the said native mind was for a rational and humanistic ideology.

Unlike Sri Narayana Guru Chattampi Swamikal was acquainted with western writings and quoted from western scientists, physicians and religious teachers to substantiate his views against killing of animals. It is

35. Ibid., pp. 250-61, 277-78, 281-82.

36. Ibid., pp. 288-95.

37. Bhaskara Pillai, *Chattampi*, p. 47.

not on the ground of nonviolence as a universal value that Chattampi Swamikal advocated the non-killing of animals. No discourse on compassion was forthcoming from him. He presented a rational and pragmatic view. In his opinion killing of animals mainly for food is a habit of man and what he proposed was a deliverance from this habit for two reasons. Firstly the belief in meat eating as a means to increase intelligence and physical strength is a false notion. In support of this argument he presented the views of the western scientists like Newman, John E.B. Mayor and Edward Watson. On the testimony of western physicians he argued that non-vegetarian food promotes several diseases. His value based argument was based on the authority of the Buddha, Pythagoras, Milton, Christian saints and Vivekananda³⁸. Secondly meat eating is a natural habit of animals. If non-vegetarian food for human beings is justified in the name of nature that means man is not better than animals. It should not be so. Man is the noblest creation in this world and he is superior to all other animals in intelligence. So he should not follow nature's order. Instead he must use his volition to overcome animal's nature. Man is not expected to live by natural instincts. Being rational he has created his own laws to regulate his individual and social life. Similarly by his own will he must prevent his primitive natural impulses and turn to vegetarianism in food habit³⁹. He argued that religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity are against violence⁴⁰. He

38. Chattampi Swamikal, "Jeevakarunya Nirupanam", in Maheswaran Nair, ed., *Chattampi*, pp. 763-64.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 766.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 766-70.

stressed that Jesus never justified but only denounced killing of animals or other beings for food or any other purpose. A liberation from animal instincts by following a rational living by abstaining from violence is the essence of his arguments⁴¹.

Chattampi Swamikal was an advocate of women's equality with men⁴². He denounced the oft-quoted statement of the law giver Manu that 'No woman deserves freedom' as idiotic. Man and woman are interdependents and mutually corresponding in his opinion and woman is not to be treated as a machine to produce children and an object of oppression at the whims and fancies of an arrogant man. The prosperity of the family and the society in fact depends on woman. She suffers a lot as a wife and mother only for the well-being of others. The respect that she deserves in society is never too much. So she is to be educated and given a position of equality and respect by man without any discrimination.

Upon the foundation of the philosophy of Advaita Chattampi Swamikal was building up a value consciousness aimed at the regeneration of the existing social life of Kerala. The ideological components of his thought that disseminated through his writings and disciples were self-respect, rationalism, equality, gender equality, woman's freedom, non-violence and humanism.

Sri Narayana who emerged as the most effective discourser on Advaita philosophy, was born in an Izhava family at Chempazhanthi

41. Ibid., pp. 747-70.

42. Chattampi Swamikal, "Prapanchathil Streepurushanmarkkulla Sthanam", in Maheswaran Nair, ed., *Chattampi*, pp. 805-20.

village of Travancore state in the year 1854. He was the only son of his parents Kutti Amma and Madan Asan. Since the Izhavas remained outside the pale of Varna society he could not claim the religious status of a Hindu. But in the census report the Izhavas and others who had no particular religion were enrolled as Hindus. And Sri Narayana also became a Hindu. His economic status in the society was of the servile class. He was an untouchable and unseeable by his ritual status for the Varna Hindus.

His family enjoyed moderate means of livelihood. His father was a physician by profession by which he earned an income and the respect of the villagers. He was a scholar in Malayalam, Tamil and Sanskrit. The original name of Sri Narayana was Nanu. Little Nanu had his elementary education under a village teacher Chempazhanthi Asan upto the age of ten. Then he became a cowherd for some time. Due to the intervention of his maternal uncle Nanu was sent to Varanapally where under Kummampally Raman Pillai Asan he started the study of Sanskrit literature, grammar and logic and rhetoric⁴³. After completing the study he returned home and started a small school which was called Kudipallikkudam. Nanu became an Asan or teacher and soon was to be popular as Nanu Asan⁴⁴. The influence of the Sanskrit learning had its appearance in Nanu's character at Varanapally and it continued to be strong. He was showing some aversion to worldly life and was interested in devotion and detachment. A kind of unrest of a searcher after something

43. M.K. Sanu, *Narayana Guru Swami*, Kottayam, 1976 pp. 53-4.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

was visible in him⁴⁵. The intellectual quest awakened by the studies at Varanapally and the instinctive spirit of altruism together might have produced this unrest. This unrest finally constrained him to bid farewell to his home and family life for ever. The unrest tempted him to be a wanderer walking aimlessly. The wanderer once met another wanderer Kunjan Pillai Chattampi. They became bosom friends. It was an intellectual friendship of mutual solace and intellectual exchange. Chattampi introduced Nanu Asan to his guru Thykattu Ayyavu an expert in yoga practice. Nanu Asan took many lessons in yoga from him. Meanwhile he gained profound knowledge of Tamil literature on *bhakti* scriptural teaching and philosophical questions⁴⁶. All these developments ultimately led him to choose the life of an ascetic. His spiritual turn and the parental heritage of proficiency in medical practice made him revered and popular among the village folk. At a time when there were no advanced medical facilities the simple medicines he administered for diseases and sterility brought relief to many. This was a time of metamorphosis in his life. He was emerging as a *Swamikal*, the revered position of saint and guru. But his search did not reach the terminal point. So he did not settle anywhere and continued to wander. He reached the Marutva mountain near Nagarcoil now a part of Tamil Nadu on the southernmost part of India. There he spent a life of withdrawal from the human world in penance struggling with himself to find a way to synthesise the thought, word and deed into one, to be an intellectual and activist of realisation committed to social well-being.

45. Ibid., pp. 56-74.

46. Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *Sri Narayana Guru a brief biographical sketch*, Srinivasapuram, n.d. p.,7.

Nanu Asan, the Swamikal, in his prime youth left the cave and descended the mountain to march to the midst of the society with the assertive foot of a determinate revolutionary. He went to Aruvippuram, a suburb of Travancore state, and there at the bank of the river Neyyar consecrated the idol in the form of a stone which he called Siva one of the trio of the supreme Gods of the Brahmanas. It was in the year 1888. This marked the birth of a social activist who incessantly worked for the upliftment of the down-trodden in the society. It was the humble beginning of a long-standing struggle against the age old racial fascism and oppression founded on religion and sanctioned by *Smritis*. Without shedding a single drop of blood, without uttering a word of hatred and without hurting the sentiment of any he shattered the myth that gods are handmades of the hegemonical class the Brahmanas, a myth cooked up to establish and preserve the myth that the Brahmanas are ineluctable to preserve the universe. Tradition says that a Namboothiri Brahmana questioned the propriety of his action and the rebuttal came in a soft voice of the calm mind that he consecrated an Izhava Siva. That was sufficient to silence the questioner. The ruler of the theocratic state of Travancore bound to protect the Brahmanical privileges as dictated by the *Sruti* could do nothing but kneel before the spiritual halo of the revolutionary who by this time had earned the respect and devotion of a large number of people across caste and religion. Actually it was the intellectual calibre proven by his profundity of knowledge in Indian philosophy of monism and identification with the Indian tradition of renunciation that silenced the hierophants and the government.

It was after a prolonged self conflict and bitter confusion of thought that Sri Narayana chose the way of a benevolent recluse. The poems written in the formative phase of his ascetic life reflect this conflict very patently. They are addressed to different deities like Lord Subramanya, Lord Ganapathy, Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva. He had to survive the crisis created by a blend of emotional impulse and rational deductions⁴⁷. For instance he says to god Shanmukha, "Like the wave and its cause the perennial flow of the sea dissolve at last in itself as the multitudinous of water, this universe rises from you and submerges in yourself"⁴⁸. Read in the context, the rational inference is sublimated into the emotive realisation of the oneness of the universe. What he seeks from the god is deliverance from emotional attachment to worldly life and redemption from desires created by selfishness⁴⁹. Due to the onslaught of the savage band of desires the poet experiences mental wavering and to defeat them seeks the help of the god⁵⁰ to practise renunciation as a means to the attainment of wisdom. These are to be taken as the monologues of the poet and not as appeals to a personal god. Sri Narayana as an exponent of monism could not have believed in the existence of such gods. He saw the universe as a process of becoming through creation and destruction. The process is dialectical in form and the poet's demand was for the release from

47. Sri. Narayana Guru, "Shanmukhastotram", in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Sri Narayana Guruvinte Sampoorana Kritikal*, Calicut. 1995, pp. 31ff. "Shanmaturastavam", *Ibid.*, p. 58. "Subramanyakeertanam", *Ibid.*, p. 68. "Navamanjari", *Ibid.*, p. 80.

48. -----, "Shanmukhastotram", *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

49. -----, "Shanmaturastavam", *Ibid.*, p. 58.

50. -----, "Subramanyakeertanam", *Ibid.*, p. 68.

that process⁵¹. When the mind ran after and was lost in the external world which is illusory, and when tempting desires were multiplying he sought the help of Siva to be conscious of the self and to control it⁵². The prayers of Sri Narayana were to attain the light of wisdom through the elimination of intellectual woes. An impediment to it was the zeal for worldly enjoyment and he sought the destruction of that zeal. In a mystic way the ascetic poet was addressing his own self using the symbols of gods worshipped by the hegemonical class and familiar to his fellowmen as a means to awaken them also. The most abominable worldly enjoyment for the poet seems to be sexual pleasure⁵³ that fetters man to excessive worldliness. He was dreaded by it. Sexual fervour was viewed as an obstruction to self-realisation through creative work and as a trait that destroys creativity⁵⁴. The urge for unrestrained sensual pleasures was taken as a causative factor of sorrow in life. The senses do not directly experience sorrow but they bring it. The reward for their action is born by the soul. So free from the ways of the senses⁵⁵, he prayed. This was the helpless cry of a seeker of truth who felt the agony of choice between an ordinary married family life and a life of benevolence devoted to social cause. These cries were primarily of personal nature and not exhortative to others. He often sought refuge with Lord Siva who is the symbol of *vairagya* or detachment unlike Lord Vishnu the symbol of fondness for

51. -----, "Jananeenavaratnamanjari", Ibid., p. 103.

52. -----, "Sivaprasadapanchakam", Ibid., p. 136.

53. -----, "Sivasatakam", Ibid., p. 206.

54. -----, "Mananatheetam", Ibid., p. 266.

55. -----, "Indriyavairagyam", Ibid., pp. 225-31.

devotees and bestower of boons, and who was considered as the Lord Supreme of this universe by the Tamil Saivite saints of the 7th to 9th centuries.

When the tension created by the tug between the rational and emotional elements and the victory of the former over the latter was sought, and it became extremely unbearable the tortured soul of the poet lamented sceptically that the wise so says that fate is unviolative. He was otherwise convinced of the truth that the contradictions and conflicts are the characteristic features of life in a world of dialectical process. He had no faith in fate and here or anywhere he does not advise us to seek solace in fate and escape from realities.

Along with the struggle within the self, Sri Narayana was deducing the philosophy through speculation about the secret and nature of the universe which became the sole foundation of all his pious teachings. That philosophy was Advaita or monism. Using beautiful poetic imageries he expounded this theory very lucidly in a number of poems. In Sri Narayana as in other speculative philosophers we see the searcher of truth about the individual and social life, confronting nature, and ultimately yearning for the truth about the nature or universe itself. The deduction they arrived at is Idea as in the case of Plato or God (Theologian) or Reason (Hegel). The humanistic philosophers of India called the same as *Brahman*. *Brahman* is equated with God. The theory of *Brahman* is well exposed in some of the Upanisads.

In *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad* Yajnavalkya defines it as “ not that, not that”⁵⁶ . Without using the term *Brahman* the undefinable *Brahman* was defined by Sri Narayana as the Creator, the Creation, the Creative process and the means of Creation all in one⁵⁷ . In another canto he says that *Brahman* is the One Who is illusion, Who creates illusion, Who enjoys illusion and Who removes illusion and let realise the reality⁵⁸ . The illusion here is to the changing world observed by the changing mind. What is the reality behind the changes that happen to be an illusion? That reality is nonexistent to the senses and existent to the self. That reality is what the world glimmers in, the soul of this world, from whom the soul took birth and in what that soul exists, that what has no birth but eternally exists and that before what the pure hearted seer prostrates for salvation⁵⁹ . It is equated with or identified as *ananda*⁶⁰ . It is also explained as that which remains constant in the dialectical⁶¹ process of becoming through creation and destruction⁶² . What is constant in the process is consciousness. The process is consciousness in activity to know itself⁶³ . Consciousness alone is the reality. Universe is the manifestation of consciousness as the wave is of the water. The two are

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56. Mridananda Swamikal, ed., *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Trichur, 1990 pp. 172-74.
57. Sri Narayana Guru, “Daivadasakam’, in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, p. 249.
58. Ibid., p. 249.
59. -----, “Brahmavidyapanchakam”, Ibid., pp. 254-55.
60. -----, “Darsanamala”, Ibid., p. 433, Swami Gambhirananda, ed., *Taittiriya Upanisad*, Calcutta, 1995, p. 162.
61. Sri Narayana Guru, “Jananeenavaratnamanjari”, in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, p. 103.
62. -----, “Atmopadesasatakam”, Ibid., p. 391.
63. -----, Ibid., p. 368.

not related as cause and effect. What is seen as effect is cause itself⁶⁴. “As the watery ocean doesn’t remain without waves, so the ocean of unconditioned Consciousness does not remain inactive. Its potential for activity is unbounded and so immense and potent that it manifests itself in infinite expressions as every thing.... It is the ceaseless flux of the Self’s reality. It is the endless *maya* (illusion) in consciousness”⁶⁵. Consciousness is the entity up on which the universe depends and it has no other separate entity⁶⁶. In other words there is a link between Consciousness and universe or there is no disconnection between them. It is explained in another way more convincingly. It is the objective world that becomes the subjective world as knowledge⁶⁷. The objective world and the subjective world have no separate entity as there is no separation between the knower and the knowledge. Both are identically the same⁶⁸. Knowledge, the known and the knower are but one; the Primeval Intelligence⁶⁹. This speculative insight is supported by the Nobel Laureate Erwin Schrodinger. This well known physicist writes:

It is the same elements that go to compose my mind and the world. This situation is the same for every mind and its world... The world is given to me only once, not one existing and not one perceived. *Subject and object are one. The barrier between them cannot be*

64. -----, “Advaithadeepika”, *Ibid.*, pp. 283-84.

65. Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, *Vedanta Sutras of Narayana Guru*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 64.

66. Sri Narayana Guru, “Atmopadesasatakam”, in T. Bhaskaran, ed. *Kritikal*, p. 355.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 380.

68. *Ibid.* p. 386.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

said to have broken down as a result of recent experience in the physical sciences, for this barrier does not exist⁷⁰.

Implied in this assumption is the question of the relation between the whole and the part. Sri Narayana assumes that the whole is in the part and the part is in the whole⁷¹. The final answer to the question of the ultimate truth about the universe offered by Yajnavalkya to his wife Gargi is the following:

Gargi, do not ask question too much about the beyond, lest your head should fall off. Verily you are questioning too much about the divinity, about which we are not supposed to ask. Do not, O'Gargi, ask too much about the beyond⁷².

Sri Narayana also subscribed to the implied meaning of Yajnavalkya's observation that the phenomena of the universe is not fully comprehensive to be revealed in any sense to the cogitative observer. A convincing argument about it remains elusive. His well contemplated conclusion is "Though it does not but appear as a mirage in an unreflective state, on contemplation all this shines as mind itself^{72.a}". Whatever flaws may be there in the explanation provided by Sri Narayana about the beyond which is not comprehensive to Yajnavalkya, he presented a standpoint that the world is one. The derivative point is that inequality and discrimination are unjustifiable.

70. Erwin Schrodinger, *What is Life?*, New York, 1992, p. 127.

71. Sri Narayana Guru, "Atmopadesasatakam", in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, p. 396.

72. Mridananda Swami ed., *Brihadaranyaka*, p. 274.

72.a. Sri Narayana Guru, "Chijjada Chintanam", in T. Bhaskaran, e d., *Krithikal*, p. 612.

Sri Narayana made an inquiry into the secret of the universe not for its own sake. Starting with the illusory nature of the universe he comes to pairing the antipodal stressing the oneness of them at the source, and evokes the theory at the final stage of thought that everything has existence in reality. So his is not a philosophy of negating the existing world but one that suggests the internal unity of the passing world and the reality of consciousness. The unity or the meeting point between the two, can be called by any name like God or *Brahman* and so on as the seeker of truth likes according to Sri Narayana. If the epistemological aspect of his philosophy is kept apart, its historical importance is contextual. The inquiry and explanation came when racial discrimination and oppression reached their heights in Kerala.

About eleven centuries ago a rational explanation had been attempted on the problem of the beyond by the world renowned scholar Sri Sankara. Among the attributes he claimed for a seeker of the beyond was the one that he should not be a Sudra⁷³. The monistic philosopher could not become free from the discriminatory consciousness. The story goes that later he wrote the *Maneeshapanchakam* to correct himself. Whoever may be the author of *Maneeshapanchakam* the thrust of it is on the inner unity of the world which somewhat crudely survived in Kerala through the legend of *Parayipetta Panthirukulam* and now manifested in the philosophy of Sri Narayana. Ramanuja held proficiency in Vedic teachings and rituals which was denied to Sudras and other lower castes

73. Sri Sankara, *Brahma Sutra Bhashya*, Tr. Swami Gambhirananda, Culcutta, 1977, pp. 232-34.

as a precondition for the seeker of *Brahman*⁷⁴. For both Sankara and Ramanuja therefore the pursuit of knowledge about the beyond was a monopoly of the *dvijas*. This bankruptcy of value consciousness is due to the failure to assimilate the spirit of monism. True to the spirit of that same philosophy Sri Narayana did not attribute any birth status or any a priori knowledge of the Vedas which was denied to Sudras and women, to a seeker of truth. A curious seeker of self-realisation through the knowledge of *Brahman* with the six qualities of calmness, restraint, resignation, endurance, concentration and perseverance was fit to know about the beyond that is *Brahman*⁷⁵ according to Sri Narayana.

The guiding spirit behind the commentary on *Brahma Sutra* written by Sankara was the refutation of other philosophical treatises. An element of ideological intolerance and a craving for intellectual superiority can be detected in the discourse of Sankara. Unprejudiced by such interests Sri Narayana's is a search for universally valid and absolute standard of value for mankind. He took ignorance as the basic cause of human follies. Prejudices and discriminations are the progeny of ignorance. The restless soul of the young Nanu Asan reached the abode of the Advaita philosophy through the Saivite literature and Upanisads and found it illuminating. He assimilated and presented it in an illuminating way to remove the darkness that enveloped the Malayali mind. Advaita in his hands transformed into a philosophy of moral liberation of the individual and

74. Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, *Vedanta Sutras*, pp. 17-18.

75. Sri Narayana Guru, "Brahmavidyapanchakam", in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, p. 252.

the society leading to social, economic and political emancipation. Advaita became a creative philosophy in application.

Sri Narayana's construction of Advaita is more illuminating than that of Sankara as the former leaves no room for any kind of *bheda*/discrimination and it is more akin to the Vedanta. This point has been well explained by one of his followers in the following words.

Narayana Guru when referring to modes of human consciousness, mentions only the wakeful and sleeping states, considering individuated human life and all perceived externals to be dream like. His vision accords with actual experience as life's flow, a flow of Consciousness, not compartmentalized. There is no place in the Guru's thinking (as there is not in the Bhagawad-Gita or the major Upanisads) for the concepts of gross, subtle and causal bodies. Some post-Sankara Vedantins holding on to these concepts, believe that the subtle body leaves the discarded gross body at the time of death to seek new gross body in a world beyond. The Guru, however, considers gross, subtle, and causal merely as different conditioned modes, or luminescences (*Bhava*) of the one consciousness. He views gross body and all other gross objects to be illusory appearance of the functioning mode of *cit* which, because *cit* is also *sat*, seem real. In this view the concept of a subtle body leaving the gross body at death simply does not arise. The Guru's vision is thus more in accord with Vedanta's fundamental teaching that one Reality alone exists. Even the fourth state (*Turiya*) which is

the transcendental non-dual consciousness attained in meditation is, as a concept, considered by the Guru to be a *bhava* (A conditioned, luminous state). The Guru's concepts of *sthula-bhava*, *sukshma-bhava*, *karana- bhava* and *turiya -bhava*, (gross, subtle, causal and transcendental conditioned luminescences of consciousness) may therefore be considered as a revision and reevaluation of the Sankara School's concepts of gross, subtle and causal bodies. It is a revision which revitalizes the concepts and makes them more true to the spirit of Vedanta⁷⁶.

The jettisoning of the twin concepts of *jivatma* and *paramatma* as two entities of the Sankara school by Sri Narayana is also a unique achievement as it does not allow any watering down of the Advaita concept to accommodate discrimination⁷⁷. While Sri Narayana likens the one Reality Consciousness and Its manifestation of 'I's to the one sea and its waves, the Reality appears as indivisible. But Sankara treats the separateness of 'I' and *Brahman* as a semantic issue and holds that they are not the equation of the One⁷⁸. So in terms of value consciousness, intention and epistemology Sri Narayana and Sri Sankara stand poles apart. This point is to be borne in mind to see how the same philosophy happened to be a dynamic force in directing and actuating the course of history in the hands of Sri Narayana. Sri Narayana used it as an ideological weapon in the fight against injustice while Sri Sankara found

76. Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, *Vedanta Sutras*, pp. 92-93.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

in it a convenient tool for gaining personal glory by establishing intellectual superiority through polemical victories.

Sri Narayana viewed the world as the creation of the World Consciousness⁷⁹. Though he did not explicitly give a motivation for this particular action he followed the general principle of the *Taittiriya Upanisad* as an explanation that self delight or bliss is the motivating force of all actions and World Consciousness also is motivated by bliss⁸⁰. As cause and effect are not separate, Consciousness itself is identified as bliss⁸¹. Every animate being seeks its own delight. For example a husband seeks his happiness and not his wife's and the wife seeks her delight and not her husband's. Each one of them is seeking one's own happiness in the other⁸². *Bhakti* also was defined as self enjoyment. One who has realized that he is bliss, he is soul and he is World Consciousness is the real devotee for he would follow the self. World Consciousness being bliss the devotee would search for it. Everybody seeks bliss. Nobody seeks sorrow. Meditating on the self is then *bhakti*. Bliss is the only truth. That alone is shining. Nothing else is real and shining. So everything is bliss motivated. Being conscious of consciousness, that consciousness is called *bhakti*⁸³. If everybody is seeking the enjoyment of the self of the same World Consciousness the Whole what is the need of a conflict? Sri Narayana answers that there is no need of it. One's delight is the delight of the

79. Sri Narayana Guru, "Darsanamala", in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, pp. 417-26.

80. Swami Gambhirananda, ed., *Taittiriya*, p. 162.

81. Sri Narayana Guru, "Darsanamala", in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, pp. 433-34, 471.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 471, Mridanandaswami, ed., *Brihadaranyaka*, pp. 463-65.

83. Sri Narayana Guru, "Darsanamala", in T. Bhaskaran, *Kritikal*, pp. 433, 467-71.

other. When this fact that the individual delight and the general delight of all is the same efforts on the part of all to attain it would do good for humanity⁸⁴. It is not out of any contract (as in the case of Rousseau in the Social Contract) that one is obliged to work for the general good. The ground for it is that all creatures identified as individual beings are the sequential progeny of the Prime Self. So what one desires for one's own well-being should be for the well-being of others also⁸⁵. Sri Narayana demanded the utmost commitment to social cause from the individual being. He warned that one who works only for his own good, and cause sorrow to others is inimical to himself and he indignantly cursed that this kind of people would be burnt in the fire of hell⁸⁶. But at the same time he consoled himself that ignorance is the reason for the individual's selfish deeds. Ignorance here does not mean the want of factual knowledge or ratiocinated conclusion but the intuitive knowledge that one and all belong to the same principle that comes from the instructive intelligence⁸⁷. Sri Narayana did not believe that any external force could compel the individual to be socially committed to work for the general weal sacrificing his own. He was conscious that it is to come willy-nilly from the individual and the prerequisite for it is compassion. Persons who have compassion for others would work all the time incessantly for them. In contrast the greedy work for themselves alone. In the end it would lead

84. -----, "Atmopadesasatakam", Ibid., pp. 357-58.

85. Ibid., p. 359.

86. Ibid., p. 360.

87. Ibid., pp. 361-62.

to the destruction of themselves and others⁸⁸. If each member of the society turns a self seeker at the cost of the society that society won't be able to stand by itself. He was unconsciously pointing to a perennial problem of the Indian society. He observed that self seekers would not do anything for the elimination of evil without being rewarded. To expect individuals to be compassionate and socially committed is vain for even right men are carried away from the right path by nature⁸⁹.

Sri Narayana also spoke of *bhakti*. It is not for salvation in the life after death. It is to be achieved in this life. He did not use the term salvation for it; he used the term Nirvana which means liberation. Liberation is identification of the self with the Whole. Detachment from that Whole means selfishness that is serving selfish interest only. Liberation or Nirvana is achieved through *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the unbroken commitment to the World Consciousness in its whole and part to secure bliss. Consciousness is bliss; self or part also is bliss. So Nirvana is the attainment of bliss for oneself and the society. To work for it is *bhakti*⁹⁰. So the need of social commitment of individual is stressed and *bhakti* was elevated to the status of a social value.

In the cruel world of untouchability and unapproachability and purity and defilement fostered by Brahmanical ideology, Sri Narayana felt the need of dwelling upon compassion as an essential human quality. He prayed to the Consciousness that he should be endowed with

88. Ibid., p. 355.

89. Ibid., p. 375.

90. -----, "Darsanamala", Ibid., pp. 467-73.

compassion that creates the feeling that not even an ant be injured⁹¹, for compassion brings happiness and a heart without compassion causes sorrow⁹². The star that guides life is the one signification of three words- grace, affection and tenderness. 'A being that has compassion alone is a living creature'⁹³. A human being without grace is a stenching compound of mere bone, nerve and stem. He is like the flower without grace that bears fruit⁹⁴. To act against the interest of others who are the parts of the Whole while seeking one's own interest forgetting that he is the part of the same Whole would bring the ultimate disaster to oneself and others. Compassion is invincible like wisdom. It survives through the glory of the compassionate⁹⁵. Sri Narayana found it difficult to define one who is compassionate and asked himself who-the philosopher, the teacher, the value setter, the prophet, the mystic-is the compassionate? One who makes lasting contributions to enrich human life without seeking reward is the compassionate! He found out the answer⁹⁶. In one of his poems Sri Narayana stated that one who kills is no better than an animal and he does not deserve compassion. Killing is the source of all evils and he asked how one who believes in the universal brotherhood of all beings could kill any being?⁹⁷.

91. -----, "Anukambadasakam", Ibid., p. 516.

92. Ibid.,

93. Ibid., p. 517.

94. Ibid., p. 516.

95. Ibid., p. 519.

96. Ibid., p. 521.

97. -----, "Jeevakarunyapanchakam", Ibid., pp. 511-15.

Again ignorance is held as the fountain of unkindness since realization of wisdom that one is the part of the whole makes one compassionate. Compassion brings tolerance and unkindness causes intolerance. When one, due to ignorance, sees the parts only, the difference in form appears to be the truth. When one looks at religions like this, one cannot understand that they are all one in essence. The wise man understands that on removal of the form the content is the same and there is no meaning in the claim of 'mine' 'thine' and 'his'⁹⁸. If one thinks like this one can easily understand that the essence of all religions though variant in details is the same. So one should not be confused by the different interpretations given to that essence by the ignorant ones⁹⁹. Quarrels over faiths would not bring victory to one and destruction to the other. On the other, it is better to understand that a religious disputant would ruin on his own¹⁰⁰. When everybody wants others to follow his religion it is actually an argument unknowingly for one religion. Wise men know this secret¹⁰¹. All the beings in this world are endeavouring always for self delight. Realizing that this is the only one religion in this world one should control oneself from going astray¹⁰². In this way Sri Narayana was preaching tolerance of the highest kind towards any differing concept.

98. -----, "Aimopadesasatakam", Ibid., p. 378.

99. Ibid., p. 376.

100. Ibid., p. 377.

101. Ibid., p. 378.

102. Ibid., p. 379.

After establishing that religious quarrels are human follies due to aberration of illusion about the essence Sri Narayana turned against casteism. In the Indian context the customs and practices in the name of Varna and caste were the creations of such an aberration . Sri Narayana in his usual style did not make any direct attack against the expounders of the Varna concept. His exhortation was to the self and his self acted in thought and deed. He challenged the supremacy of the Brahmana in the name of varna by installing Siva at Aruvipuram. In the premise of this consecration a board was erected with the following dictum. “This is the ideal place where everybody dwells in brotherhood without caste distinction and religious hatred.” This was a pointer to the burning problems of the day in Kerala . It was the mad practices of the Keralites in the name of caste that prompted Vivekananda to describe the land as a ‘lunatic asylum’ in 1893. The consecration of Siva at Aruvipuram was the beginning of a series of consecrations. At a glance it may seem to be problematic in the life of a rational thinker. On a close observation the problem may disappear. It was with a definite purpose that he started upon this career. It was in tune with his assertions that every being in this world is incessantly striving for happiness. In his opinion that happiness cannot be separated into spiritual and secular. The aim of all spiritual and secular associations is the attainment of this dual happiness. Man’s spiritual happiness depends on the rational level attained by his society . For that the religious and moral development is very essential. To achieve this, places of worship and temples are found useful. But without material progress and economic prosperity this would not be

possible. So to secure the spiritual and secular well-being of the people a coordinated effort in that direction was necessary. It was in 1905 that he expressed this opinion¹⁰³. He was not erecting the temples for a people rationally and spiritually at a higher level. Worship of god had not been recognised by him as a must for the said purpose. He was consecrating gods of national character like Siva, Vishnu etc. and goddess Sarada worshipped by the hegemonical class for the classes who were denied the formal worship of these gods and goddess in temples. In the particular instances it was for the Izhavas. These people were worshipping evil forces in an uncivilised style. Putting an end to this and taking these believers to the symbols of refined ideas he was placing them on a par with the hegemonical class. Here also he had shown an inclination to Lord Siva the deity of the Tamil mystics. By providing refined symbols of worship and refined mode of worship he intended to lift the morally and spiritually backward classes to a higher rational level for the series of consecrations in the final stage culminated in the adoption of light at Karamukku in 1920 and mirror at Kalavamkodam in 1927¹⁰⁴. These two symbols were aptly in consistency with his philosophical treatise. One symbolised the effulgence he viewed in every thing and the other reflected the self which is to be meditated on for the realisation of one's own self. And in 1917 he had expressed the doubt about the fulfillment of the objective of educating the people through temples to discard the barriers of caste, and exhorted them to consider educational institutions as the temple of worship¹⁰⁵. He

103. -----, "Advaithajeevitham", Ibid, p. 1.

104. M.K. Sanu, *Narayana Guru*, pp. 549-550.

105. P.K. Balakrishnan, ed., *Narayana Guru Samaharagrantham*, Kottayam, 1969, p. 76.

had clarified that in his opinion the deities like Siva and Rama would have been benevolent leaders who had been deified by the people¹⁰⁶ and stories about gods are only poetic creations¹⁰⁷. So at practical level temples were established as a means to achieve cultural awakening along with material advancement¹⁰⁸. Worshipping god was suggested as a means to preserve the purity of body and mind and not to get salvation in the life after death. Nor was it to get favours. A higher level of meaning was attributed to it. Instead of bribing a personal god here worship was meant for self cultivation. Moreover the gods selected were familiar symbols to the pagan mind. Sympathetic to the rationally inferior folk of the servile class he could not feed them directly with the high sounding philosophical articulations. Instead, the psychological and practical considerations were to be given primary importance in attempting a mental awakening of them.

As a philosopher who held form and content equally important, he advised people to increase wealth through agricultural, commercial and industrial pursuits and to practise thriftiness. It was also to compel the Izhavas to practise economy that he opposed the expensive and wasteful ceremonials like *Talikettu Kallyanam*. He was convinced that only an ideological transformation would help people to acquire wealth and progress in civilization¹⁰⁹. The interdependence of the *sat* and *cit* is applied here also. And in economic activities the need of individual's focus on

106. Ibid., p p. 154-55.

107. Ibid., p. 157.

108. Sri Narayana Guru, "Advaita Jeevitham, in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, p. 1.

109. P.K. Balakrishnan, ed., *Guru*, p. 152.

the general welfare is a strong point in his thought. For instance he insisted that every benefit the individual gets from the society should be returned in the form of service or in kind amounting in value equal to or more than what he received¹¹⁰. He was attaching human value to economic activity of the individual to prevent accumulation of wealth by some and the widening of the gulf between the haves and have-nots.

By word also without expressing any malice towards the hegemonical class Sri Narayana shattered the myth of Brahmanical superiority His logical formulation in the two poems *Jathinirayam* and *Jatilakshanam* could plug up any argument in favour of varna or caste. Human beings cannot be categorised into Brahmanas etc. and they are one in kind because of human quality as cow has only bovinity. The so called Brahmana and Pariah are born of the same category¹¹¹. So beings are to be categorised on the basis of general traits. The possibility of procreation of the same kind through mating and the same general physical features and gestures are the bases of categorization. As distinction of each category is visible in appearance, the wise can easily understand the category, and inquiry of kind is unnecessary. The underlying principle of categories is the level of consciousness inherited from the general source of consciousness to which all categories belong. Categorical heritage and among category individual heritage of the level of consciousness is the identifying mark of each. In the absence of such heritage no identity

110. K. Ayyappan, "Swamiyilekku Oru Thirinjunottam", in P.K. Balakrishnan, ed., *Guru*, p. 197.

111. Sri Narayana Guru, "Jatinirayam", in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, pp. 496, 498.

would have been possible¹¹². These two poems bring out beyond doubt the meaninglessness of caste and racial categorization of the one category of human beings. The myth of Varna concept is smithereneed. Proven that by source the world is one, by category humanity is one and by motivation all are one as all are craving for self delight and that being the religion Sri Narayana coined the dictum “One caste one faith and one God for man”¹¹³.

The Portuguese had resorted to forced conversion of natives to Christianity to secure a support base in the population for their political ambitions. It could not make much headway. After the establishment of the British suzerainty over Kerala the Basel Evangelical Mission, the London Mission Society and the Church Mission Society were much active in spreading their gospel in Kerala where a congenial atmosphere prevailed. Acceptance of the ideology of Christianity was a way to equality and social respect besides material progress. So many of the so called Hindus oppressed by Varna Dharma ideology found refuge in that ideology. It was in these circumstances that Sri Narayana preached religious toleration. He never uttered a word for or against conversion. He did not take the issue at its external and material aspect but went deep into the problem. Conversion meant only a change in form and it was not enough for a total upliftment of the down-trodden people. The change was to come at the conscious level. He did not see any thing

112. -----, “Jatilakshanam”, Ibid., pp. 501-06.

113. Ibid., p. 497.

abominable in religions other than Hinduism. Whether in Hindu fold or Christian fold or in any other community man was to be enlightened and so a formal conversion was found immaterial.

For a time conversion of Izhavas to some other religion to gain self respect was a lively and serious issue in Kerala. It was in that context a reputed intellectual of the time. C.V. Kunjuraman stated that “We don’t want this hopeless vulgar religion” about Brahmanical religion. Under that caption he wrote an article in which he says “.... Today the Brahmanas have made new contextually suitable constructions to the great sententious sayings like ‘Brahmoham and Tatwamasi’. We have come to know by experience that today the words Brahmoham means ‘I am Brahmana’ and Tatwamasi means ‘You are but you’”¹¹⁴. He was arguing for mass conversion of Izhavas to Buddhism. It was amidst such hue and cry for conversion that Sri Narayana without supporting or opposing the argument, was enlightening them on the real issue at stake. Keeping away from the controversy he gave the dictum ‘Whatever is one’s faith man is to be good’. The faithful who professes the best religion/ ideology need not be good. The religion/ ideology becomes good when the follower lives by it. All his life Sri Narayana remained true to his ideology and his effort was to make man good. He was very particular that this was to be achieved through non-injury. Even for food beings are not to be killed was his doctrine.

As a seeker after truth Sri Narayana admitted that the world remains

114. C.V. Kunjuraman, “Ee Gathiketta Abhasamatam Namukku Venda”, in P.K. Balakrishnan, ed., *Guru*, p. 85.

unrevealed to the viewer even though it appears as it is viewed by the observer¹¹⁵. Some of the suggestions were made by him with full faith in this fact in the form of questions or expressions of doubt. He saw the reality of sorrow everywhere. Man is a tragic figure in this world amidst all his relatives, friends and fellow creatures. Bliss, hell and heaven all are illusions. They are the creations of the scriptures¹¹⁶. When reason fails to supersede emotion the poet Sri Narayana asked himself, 'Has man no control over happenings? Are they taking place as preordained by fate? And he mutters, he does not know but wisemen say that fate is unavoidable'. He himself had no conviction in fate but was sceptical of human capability to see things happen as they wish¹¹⁷.

Even if human thought is considered as to be a material product the fact that human life is primarily guided by thought and that he is creating himself through his thought is irresistible. Since he is a social being he is to be guided in that process by thought that brings a balance between individual action and social requirements in the sense that every human action is to be value based. This endeavor is often undertaken by man himself. Then human being is a human artifact and not the creation of a personal god or other supernatural beings and the environment on its own. The basic constituent of the thought and action of Sri Narayana can be considered to be this aspect. Monistic philosophy is the ideological tool he used for it because its scope was very wide in

115. Sri. Narayana Guru, "Chijjada Chintanam", in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Kritikal*, pp. 609-15.

116. -----, "Sivasatakam", *Ibid.*, pp. 192-215.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

regulating human relation and upgrading him and a very strong weapon against political social and economic exploitation. True to the spirit of the philosophy, he could synthesise it with the compulsions of his time.

Sri Narayana was not preaching any revolution. Nor was he an economic doctrinaire to effect a class struggle. But by doing things based on an idealistic philosophical foundation he was undermining the ideological basis of the social structure in Kerala. With the exception of temperance and meat eating he did not ask any one to follow any ideal denying worldly pleasure. By encouraging educational and industrial training he was showing the path towards economic progress. Self- help and self enjoyment without injuring fellow creatures, he advocated. Simultaneously progress of the individual and the society conditioned by the ethical principle that one must strive for material and spiritual advancement that would benefit the society is the most progressive idea Sri Narayana contributed to the Kerala society. All the teachings of Sri Narayana were given in a nutshell in the *Atmopadesa Satakam*. Even here he was not advising or addressing others. He was instructing the self within. At the same time it was meant for others also since he did not set any demarcation between himself and others. Those who are willing, across caste and creed, could be benefited was the attitude. He was not preaching exclusively to the Izhava community to which he belonged. In a world of sectarianism he was conceived and represented as sectarian. He himself had to state that he was not a sectarian. But it was the tragedy of this great philosopher that he was born in a lower rank of a sectarian society. His greatness also was a creation of that

sectarianism against which he fought. The Keralites who could never rise above sectarianism could not see him otherwise. He was actually a communitarian or communist philosopher who identified the individual and society mutually. The compassionate man according to him is one who by thought, word and deed aims at the creation of better human beings and Sri Narayana was compassion incarnate in that sense. How unbelievably he was taking the mind to modernity with an exhortation to fold the arms before Shiva the symbol of the Whole to start with and Self finally to know oneself as the Greeks welcomed those who entered their city with the words 'know thyself'!. Without using the words of sin, redemption and salvation in after life he preached spiritual upliftment through mental awakening and material well-being and a creative life in this world of the universal man. Whatever may be one's faith in any sense, secular or religious, man should be good with the implication to be aware of the self. He was conveying the gospel of live consciously and conscientiously.

As a speculative philosopher Sri Narayana was searching for the spiritual truth of the universe. His prayers to god in soliloquium were to attain self realization through a life of social utility. It was this lofty goal that helped him to construe the philosophy of monism as one of pure morality for both the individual and the society. All the teachings of Sri Narayana subsequently were individual instances of this philosophy. In essence his philosophy of monism can be reduced to a philosophy of altruism. In spirit, in thought, in word and in action he lived by this

ideal. He personified it. In *Darsanamala* he says that one who follows *Brahman*, a *Brahmajnanin*, digests everything with the fire of knowledge to do his duties as required for the well-being of the world¹¹⁸. It means that one who realizes that he is the World Consciousness manifest, who has transcended the whole and part distinction follows the World Consciousness in performing his duties aimed at the well-being of the world in a wise manner.

Sri Narayana construed the monistic philosophy as an ideological foundation of a social economic and political revolution in Kerala. Monism took the place of the social contract theory and the law of nature that grants certain fundamental rights to man of western tradition in justification of political revolution in the hands of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. Those thinkers focussed the state as the symbol of collectivity that acts externally to promote the ideals they preached. It was to bring about a change in the nature of State that they spoke in justification of political revolution. Monism is more an ethical philosophy aimed at revolutionizing the individual consciousness and subsequently the social consciousness that manifests itself in all realms of life for a total revolution through a value system enjoining that every human action should be for human well-being. It is for the consumption of the leaders and the led and the rulers and the ruled. Monism in Sri Narayana's construction acquired vitality and dynamism carrying with it the ideas of eternal values of liberty equality, fraternity, compassion, altruism and oneness of humanity. All in one it pulsates with humanism that shines as

118. -----, "Darsanamala", *Ibid.*, p. 482.

a guiding star in the process of man making his own destiny on this earth.

Yet another social critic and value setter whose standpoint was rooted in Advaita philosophy was one who was popularly known as Vagbhatananda a title conferred upon him by Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi. His original name was Kunhikannan. Hailing from the village of Patyam in the present day Kannur district of Northern Kerala he started his social career as a disciple of Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi. He was born in 1885 as the son of Koran, a Sanskrit scholar and teacher and Cheeru Amma. He died in 1939. His social life was very much associated with a cultural organisation called Atma Vidya Sangham founded by him in 1917 to spread the progressive ideas aimed at reforming the Hindu mental world. It had more than eighteen branches spread all over Kerala¹¹⁹.

Belief in religion and God is the basis of a good social life in his opinion. Religion is a great programme to uplift man to greatness. It is a source of values to make man morally good¹²⁰. It teaches man to worship God. His God is not a personal god. But his God is that God Who shines in one's self¹²¹. The all pervading God shines in the whole universe like the oil in the sesame¹²². That God is formless, traitless¹²³, eternal,

119. Vagbhatanandan, *Vagbhatanandante Sampurna Kritikal*, Calicut, 1988, p. vff.

120. -----, "Matam", *Ibid.*, p. 245.

121. *Ibid.*

122. -----, "Yogamritam", *Ibid.*, p. 180.

123. -----, "Gadyaparthana", *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

unblemished, pure and the one Reality¹²⁴. At one place mind is described as God and the cause and effect in one¹²⁵. But elsewhere he says that mind is not one, it is divisible and beyond it there is the effulgence which is eternal, finite and pure. In support of this he cites *Kena Upanisad* which states that that which the mind fails to see but which sees the mind is called the *Brahman*; it is the effulgence independent of everything. He asked man to worship only that *Brahman*. Mind is to be guided and controlled by *Brahman*. For that mind is to be concentrated on *Brahman*. This practice described as *Rajayoga* was advocated by him as the means to attain happiness on the authority of the *Bhagavat Gita*, *Bhagavatam* etc. It was also called *Manolayam*. The essential for it was contemplation with the belief that nothing in this world could be claimed as 'mine'. And mind should not be allowed to go astray in search of sensual pleasures¹²⁶.

Everybody is striving for happiness but it cannot be attained without moral values. Happiness lies within the self and the ordinary yoga postures in which body is situated are not conducive to it as claimed by many. They are waste¹²⁷. What is required is the knowledge of the self or the awareness of the self or *Brahman*¹²⁸. When the learned one fails to keep the mind under the control of the self, scholarship becomes useless, or mere scholarship is not sufficient to attain happiness¹²⁹.

124. -----, 'Nidrarambha Prarthana', Ibid., p. 213.

125. -----, "Iswara Vicharam", Ibid., p. 174.

126. -----, "Rajayogam", Ibid., pp. 247-48.

127. -----, "Manassinotu", Ibid., p. 173.

128. -----, "Atmabodham", Ibid., p. 227.

129. Ibid.

World is unreal but it appears to be real and the life in this world is to be made happy and meaningful. It should be made useful for oneself and others¹³⁰. Excessive indulgence in worldly pleasures would not bring happiness. That is a form of vulgarised happiness¹³¹. Real happiness is to be achieved through a detached life. Detachment is not escapism but means only control of mind that helps to lead a cautious life and makes one brave to face the problems of life¹³².

Vagbhatananda also recited the dictum 'one God, one Religion and one Caste' of Sri Narayana putting emphasis on universal brotherhood¹³³. He denounced the concept of Varna and caste as an artificial creation of the evil traits in man like ego and jealousy and propagated by some wicked fellows as caste could not be detected in any part or organ of human body¹³⁴. The class basis of caste had also been criticised by him. Stigmatization of certain callings so long as they were useful to society had no justification and the degradation of man in the name of his calling identified with low caste was vehemently opposed by him. This feudal legacy and similar ones had been questioned by him. To become parasites on the social body without doing any work and to look down upon those who were engaged in socially useful works and producing wealth, and the exploitation of the workers by the landlords had not been spared from criticism¹³⁵.

130. -----, "Advaithamangalam", Ibid., p. 224.

131. -----, "Dharmam", Ibid., p. 324.

132. -----, "Atmavidya", Ibid., pp. 271-77.

133. -----, "Swatantriachintanam", Ibid., pp. 165-67.

134. -----, "Durvasanaye Doorikarikkuka", Ibid., p. 283.

135. -----, "Karmam", Ibid., p. 297.

He was an ardent critic of idol worship, and other rites and rituals as part of *karmakanda* for two reasons. Firstly they are of no use in securing happiness and secondly wealth created by the starving millions is wasted in the name of these¹³⁶. Accumulation of wealth and knowledge without inner development would only lead to degeneration and vulgarity, he pointed out¹³⁷. The essence of his ideas can be condensed like this : A moderate life leading to moral and material well-being of the individual and society is the ideal one.

Vagbhatananda was not a consistent and systematic thinker interested in the secret of the universe or in the nature of man to set a philosophical foundation of a value system. He saw religion as an enlightening ideology and made a secular and rational interpretation of it. His ideas were not available in an integrated form of discourse either in prose or poetry but they lay scattered in his writings and speeches. Almost all of them were a reiteration of what had already been expounded by his senior contemporaries Sri Narayana and Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi. What made him a historical figure was his role in disseminating those ideas-rationalism secularism, liberty, equality, fraternity and altruism-in the northern parts of Kerala.

Sri Narayana was discoursing on the Advaita philosophy as a source of universal values and not preaching any new faith. His teachings could not serve the purpose of achieving the material benefits of a faith.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

It may be for this reason that Buddhism, as a faith to combat the discriminatory character of the Hindu society, became popular among the Izhava social reformers. The argument that the Izhavas have a Buddhist tradition was popularised by some of them and the idea of conversion to Buddhism became a live issue among them. In the seventeenth annual conference of the SNDP Yogam a resolution suggesting mass conversion to Christianity with the intention of bringing an end to the social disabilities caused by caste system rooted in Varna Dharma ideology had been introduced¹³⁸. The resolution was withdrawn but it was a sign of the discontent of the social reformers of the community. They were sporting with the idea of conversion from Hinduism to any other faith as a way of escape from the cruelties of casteism. As a part of the demand for conversion C.V. Kunjuraman even wrote an article "Thiyyarkku Nallathu Buddhamatam Thanneyanu"¹³⁹. Kumaran Asan the most renowned leader of the SNDP Yogam was against conversion to Buddhism on practical grounds¹⁴⁰. But he was an admirer of Buddhism and as pointed out in chapter IV of this work he had used his pen much to spread the Buddhist values¹⁴¹. Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer also had advocated the revival of Buddhism¹⁴². What these writers meant was not the formal conversion to Buddhist faith but the revival of its great ideals

138. P.S. Velayudhan, *SNDP Yoga Charitram*, Quilon, 1978, p. 201.

139. C.V. Kunjuraman, "Thiyyarkunallathu Buddhamatam Thanne", cited in K.P. Achuthan, *C. Krishnan*, (Biography), Kottayam, 1971, p. 23.

140. N. Kumaran Asan, *Mataparivarthanasavadam*, Trivandrum, M.E. 1109, p. 1ff.

141. See *Asante Padyakritikal*, Kottayam, 1998.

142. Ulloor. S. Parameswara Iyer, "Kapilavasthuvile Karmayogi", in *Kiranaivali*, Trivandrum, 1966, pp. 97-106.

of equality and fraternity based on the love of humanity. C. Krishnan a prominent social reformer of the Izhava community was a zealous advocate of conversion to Buddhism and had made commendable service to spread Buddhist teachings through the press and platform¹⁴³. He and Sahodaran Ayyappan even proclaimed the acceptance of Buddhism at a conference held at Ernakulam in 1926¹⁴⁴.

In his search for values to bring about an equalitarian society Sahodaran Ayyappan was more fascinated by Buddhism during the early stage of his career as a social reformer than the teachings of Sri Narayana. Buddhism had an appeal to the rationalists in general¹⁴⁵. To Ayyappan the Buddha was the herald of universal brotherhood. No wonder that the *ashtanga marga*, the principle of purity of mind, the denunciation of the authority of scriptures and casteism, the silence on the existence of God, and the emphasis on universal brotherhood and non-injury to all of Buddhism made an appeal to men like Ayyappan¹⁴⁶ in the context of an awakening against the evils and superstitions that the Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology promoted and the struggle for democratic values. It was actually the secular and rational character of the Buddhist teachings which stressed on a secular social morality that appealed to them. As he put man above faiths Sri Narayana was giving certain human values for his moral and material development based on the principle of oneness of

143. K.R. Achuthan, *Krishnan*, pp. 231-44.

144. M. Sahadevan, *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making - A study of Sahodaran Ayyappan*, Trichur, 1993, p. 48.

145. See Chapter IV of this work.

146. M. Sahadevan, *Social Justice*, p. 48.

humanity and oneness of the universe. So conversion from one faith did not make any meaning for Sri Narayana. One faith was seen as good as another. It was also not his fashion to attack any faith or faithlessness. But he denounced what is in human being that retains him at the level of an animal. His was an attempt to reform the man from inside and he preached the highest morality of Advaita which is inclusive of all the moral elements of any religion. So his followers were not enthusiastic about conversion and he never encouraged such enthusiasm of certain leaders. The question of conversion came only when the hatred of one's own faith raised its head. Conversion of faith without moral conversion, that is a conversion to values of individual and social progress, is meaningless. When such a conversion takes place in an individual religious conversion becomes immaterial. Sri Narayana never preached any religion and he never spoke anything for or against Hinduism. He never used the word Hindu or Hinduism but only revived the rational and secular values of the Indian thought, Advaita. Those values were meant for any man of any faith and country. The values of Sri Narayana and the Buddha in essence did not have any difference. So a follower of Sri Narayana need not have felt any difficulty in accepting the Buddhist Dharma. The formal acceptance of it by Ayyappan and some others did not make any difference. Yet they were fascinated by Buddhism because of its religious halo as against Brahmanical theology. It would satisfy the purpose of an outer coverage in the fight against the Varna Dharma ideology of Brahmanical theology. Buddhism had wider acceptance also as a religion than the teachings of Sri Narayana.

Ayyappan believed that Buddhism would bring great moral benefits to man as a religion that inculcated a higher moral consciousness based on the values of humanism and equalitarianism. So he advocated the acceptance of the Buddhist Dharma which is based on the law of *karma* that is the deeds of man and not the deeds of God. It taught that one's own way of life and not any faith in God is responsible for one's own happiness and affliction. It insisted that man should have an awareness of his own dealings in the form of thought, word and deed. Man himself is his saviour. There is no question of submission to any external force¹⁴⁷. Ayyappan believed that the *Panchaseela* taught by Buddhism for practical life could be the religion of all religions, capable of providing serenity, tranquility and happiness to man¹⁴⁸. Buddhism rejected subjection to or negation of texts and great men. It taught universal love, universal equality and universal freedom¹⁴⁹. It also taught self awareness. Ayyappan felt the Buddhist Dharma capable of leading man to achieve international co-operation and peace and the establishment of human greatness and human freedom¹⁵⁰. Buddhism has its source in human reason and it is not actually a religion founded on faith in God. Sri Narayana was seen in Kerala as an Izhava only and he could not get wider acceptance. These facts also might have induced men like Ayyappan to go after Buddhism as an ideological base for their struggle against casteism and discrimination.

147. K. Ayyappan, "Matathinteyum Dharmathinteyum Vyathiasangal", in *Mithavadi Viseshal Prati*, 1924, Calicut, pp. 75-78.

148. -----, "Buddhastotram", in *Sahodarante Padyakritikal*, Kottayam, 1981, pp. 133-35.

149. -----, 'Buddhamargam', *Ibid.*, pp. 151-52.

150. -----, "Matathinteyum", *Mithavadi*, pp. 76-78.

Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi¹⁵¹ was also an admirer of Buddhism. In fact the thrust of his teachings namely the attainment of serenity of mind by the elimination of desires and non-injury to all is evident of the influence of Buddhism on him. His denial of scriptures as authority and the refutation of reliance on authority and the *karmakanda* way to salvation also support this view.

The prevailing casteism with its horrible feature of pollution by touch or approach prompted many to seek the ideology of Buddhism in place of Brahmanical theology. It had the advantage of being an indigenous faith rooted in Indian philosophy¹⁵². It was with the intention of removing casteism that a pamphlet captioned “Buddha Dharma” was published by Manjeri Rama Iyer and Manjeri Ramakrishna Iyer in 1927. The authors claimed that Hinduism had become so obsolete that it could not bring about the moral and material upliftment of crores of depressed classes who were denied food and learning¹⁵³. The religions of Islam and Christianity were also found to be lacking in these requirements. Buddhism is the national heritage unlike those faiths¹⁵⁴. The Buddha never claimed that he was an incarnation of God. But he had made it clear that he was a mere human being. He tried to inculcate the ideals of service mindedness, diligence and alertness. He had given a universally valid

151. See Chapter III of this work.

152. Manjeri Rama Iyer and Manjeri Krishna Iyer, *Buddha Dharmam*, Calicut, 1927, p. 15.

153. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

154. *Ibid.*

absolute dharma for all time transcending place and context¹⁵⁵. He had revealed that religion is not meant to create an illusory world but a value concept that can be practised in ordinary life. The Buddha never sanctioned violence to any being in any context while Hindu dharma sanctioned it in religious rituals and sacrifices¹⁵⁶. The Buddha made non-violence a universal value. Righteousness or dharma was held as the foundation of life and not as a dictate of faith. It was held as the irrefutable law of the universe and Buddhism exhorted man to follow this law¹⁵⁷ in practical life. According to Hindu dharma the way to *moksha*, the ultimate aim of life, is to be attained through the successive births in different castes and the *karmakanda* or ceremonials. But Buddhism enjoined purity of mind and righteousness as the ways to *moksha* or liberation¹⁵⁸. These were the arguments the pamphlet presented in favour of Buddhism.

It seems that the rational and secular philosophy of Buddhism was taken by the authors as a substitute for the Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology for the achievement of social concord among the Hindus in Kerala. The intelligentsia across all castes felt the existing social order utterly degenerated and the need of rejuvenating it. None of the existing religions in Kerala was found to be a means to achieve it. What they wanted was a new set of values and they found out it in Buddhism.

155. Ibid., p. 43.

156. Ibid., p. 44.

157. Ibid., pp. 47-48.

158. Ibid., p. 48.

About the degeneration of the Buddhist followers they had no first hand information. Only Kumaran Asan had it and he opposed conversion to Buddhism on that ground. They saw it as an ideal ideology of values based on reason. It was an ideology that developed at a time when the Vedic religion degenerated into one of bloody sacrifices and Varna Dharma. So it got much relevance and acceptance as an ideology in the given context of Kerala.

Advaitha philosophy and Buddhist Dharma are not mutually conflicting ideologies. In essence both contain the same universal values based on secularism and rationalism. In Kerala those intellectuals who had an urge for creating a social order based on liberty, equality and fraternity among the Hindus were profoundly influenced by these ideologies. They saw in them the means to achieve the spiritual or moral upliftment namely a change at the conscious level as a prerequisite to a democratic revolution.

CHAPTER III

THE RATIONAL WAY

Search for new values led some intellectuals to the extreme of refuting God and attacking religion based on belief in personal god and worship of Him. The brunt of their attack ultimately pointed to the priestly dominated feudal society. One of them is seen occupying a place among the three great spiritual leaders, who tried to rediscover the meaning of Hindu thought with much success and made lasting contributions to Kerala society. He was Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi (hereafter Sivayogi). He took the name and robe of a spiritual leader but his approach was materialistic. This made him distinct from the other two and his rationalism was more akin to that of the materialistic intellectuals who came after him. Sivayogi's real name was Govindan. He was born in Kollangode in the present day Palakkad district which was then a part of British Malabar in 1852¹. After completing elementary education he began to study Sanskrit². He could secure only an elementary knowledge of English but was proficient in Sanskrit, Malayalam and Tamil. For a short while he worked as a village officer. Then he became a language teacher of Sanskrit in the Native School at Kozhikode³. Here he got the friendship of a small group of western educated youngsters interested in social reform and had the opportunity to associate with the Brahma Samajists. He

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1. Brahmanadaswami Sivayogi, (hereafter Sivayogi), *Siddhanubhuti*, Palakkad, 1988, pp. 27-28.
 2. *Saragrahi*, Vol. IX, No. 6-7, Alathur, 1956, p. 134.
 3. A.K. Nair, *Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi*, (Biography), Kannur, 1971, pp. 18-19.

once wrote a poem in praise of the Brahma Samaj and earned the title Brahmanandaswami from the Brahma Samajists⁴. It is probable that he was influenced by the ideas and programmes of the Brahma Samaj and inspired to start the conscientizing mission he undertook later on. He was married but took the vow of celibacy when he was in Kozhikode and had no issues⁵. His wife continued to be his spiritual companion until his death in 1929. When he became a teacher in the Alathur School in 1899 he established the Siddhasrama at Vanur. Later it was shifted to Alathur where it still exists⁶.

The cause of creation (genesis) is bliss; the driving force of life is bliss; the end of life is bliss; and the life ends in bliss⁷. This is the explanation of *Brahman* given in the *Taittiriya Upanisad*⁸. As narrated in this work Brigu the son of Varuna approached his father as an inquirer of *Brahman*. He was advised to know it himself by penance and through penance he came to know that *Brahman* is *annam* (food), *pranavam* (Vital Force) *manas* (mind), *jnanam* (knowledge) and finally *anandam* (bliss) in succession. Without taking much pains to discourse on Advaita philosophy Sivayogi directly took the idea of *Brahman* as *ananda*. On this premise he infers that mind is born out of bliss and that mind is differently called as soul or *Brahman* or bliss. The principle of bliss is energy. It is the source of action for all beings, animate and inanimate,

4. Ibid., pp. 24-25.

5. Ibid., p. 30.

6. Ibid., pp. 30-35.

7. Sivayogi, *Ananda Sutram*, Alathur, 1987, P. 7. *Moksha Pradeepam*, Alathur, 1991 p. 310.

8. Swami Mridananda, ed., *Taittiriya Upanisad*, Trichur, 1994, pp. 89-101.

and even God. Forms are only different means for the manifestation of energy. By nature energy is indivisible and infinite; it is indeterminate and universal. And it is blissful⁹. His theory of energy as the source of all was based on *Devibhagavatham*, the *Bhagavat Gita* and *Rudrayamalam*¹⁰.

This was the theoretical formulation from which Sivayogi started the critique of religion and God, which he claimed to be indisputable to the followers of any religion, and theists and atheists alike¹¹. It was a well founded theory of polemics against institutionalised religion the strength of which derives from the conceptual source of a personal god who can be propitiated to get salvation by *karma* or religious duties which means the ceremonialism of *karmakanda*.

Sivayogi defined salvation as the deliverance from sorrow and miseries in this world itself¹² and not the attainment of heaven or unity with God as taught by the exponents of *karma*¹³. The concept of heaven and hell, and holy-unholy action¹⁴ leading to either was refuted. Salvation means bliss and the primary aim of Sivayogi as he declared was to enlighten the people on *yoga* as a means to attain eternal bliss¹⁵. The theory of *yoga* was based on the explanations given in different works

9. Sivayogi, *Pradeepam*, pp. 2-5.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-13.

11. -----, *Sutram*, pp. 1-6.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

13. -----, *Pradeepam*, pp. 173-81. *Anandavimanam*, Alathur, 1986, p. 90.

14. -----, *Sutram*, p. 73.

15. -----, *Pradeepam*, p. II.

like *Brahmabindu Upanisad*, *Yogasikha Upanisad*, *Brahmajnanatantra*, *Vasistam*, some of the *Puranas*, *Yajnavalkya Smiriti*, *Yogabhijam*, the *Bhagavat Gita* etc. It was mainly built upon the sixth chapter of the *Gita*¹⁶. He took yoga theory as the gem of all knowledge as a means to achieve salvation and he said that he was only translating the idea from the Sanskrit works to Malayalam to make it accessible to the ordinary people¹⁷. The idea of eternal bliss need be taken only as a myth to make his discourse attractive since he was not attempting to systematise a philosophy of the origin of the universe¹⁸ which couldnot be rationally established by anybody, in his opinion.

“Ananda or eternal bliss is supreme of all religions; absorption of mind into itself is eternal bliss; conquest of mind is the greatest of all success; and not to cause any injury is the greatest of all virtues”¹⁹. These are the basic principles of yoga theory. Any religion that expounds the conquest of mind as its final aim was considered a good religion by Sivayogi²⁰. Theory of yoga is the final thesis of the *jnanakanda* philosophy. According to it the real and righteous seeker of truth allows the mind to be absorbed into itself instead of the external world²¹. In other words mind should not be allowed to be determined or ruled by the external world but external world should be determined or ruled by the mind²².

16. Ibid., pp. 29, 34, 36-37, 41-47.

17. Ibid., p. V.

18. Ibid., pp. 266-67.

19. -----, Quoted in all his works.

20. -----, *Pradeepam*, p. IX.

21. Ibid., pp. 62, 71, 73.

22. -----, *Vimanam*, p. 11.

This is the doctrine of the monistic philosophy that the *Brahman* or Consciousness, the *sat*, is the real, and the external, *asat*, which is unreal, is dependent on the former. The form is unreal and the content is real according to this theory. Sivayogi had not given such an explanation but he had taken mind as real. So mind is to be independent. This can be achieved through knowledge or realisation of truth. When mind is left to depend on the external world, pleasures and pain associated with the feeling of self as distinct from the whole are the results. The absorption of mind provides no space for such a feeling. Therefore what is to be refined is the mind itself. The external world on its own is neither good nor bad and it is not the real cause of pain or happiness. When mind becomes capable of discriminating between good and bad and accepting what is good for itself pain is removed. Then mind becomes independent and happy²³.

Sivayogi claimed that the essence of the teachings of the *Gita* the most revered scriptural text of the Hindus is the emphasis on *yoga* and not *karma*. The *karma*, which Krishna speaks of is not the rites and rituals meant to attain glory in this world or salvation in the other world but the worldly actions and the performance of responsibilities required for prosperity and security in life here itself. Laziness makes life a burden and suffering while hard work earns wealth and happiness²⁴. This reading of the *Gita* is consistent with Sivayogi's understanding of the ills of the social order of his own times. He appreciated the achievements that the Indians could acquire under the British rule and praised the qualities of

23. -----, *Pradeepam*, On Yoga, pp. 22-26.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

mental discipline, diligence, and determination that promoted their success in establishing an empire and the accumulation of wealth²⁵. In his opinion, the Indians failed to cultivate such qualities and lost their independence. His reading is that the moral and intellectual degeneration of the Indians was the main reason for the foreign occupation of their land.

Looking around he pointed out that society was degenerating because of the gluttony of the rich, the lords, the dogmatists and jurists ignoring the principle of equality. While some were earning their livelihood through beggary and butchery, some others were acquiring wealth for themselves and still others destroying the wealth and the treasure of knowledge of others in the name of religion²⁶. The Brahmanas, kings and the subjects were all wasting their wealth and time on *karma* believing in the infallibility of false texts which were available in thousands²⁷. He was living in a feudal society where some were to work and others to remain idle living as parasites without any sense of equality. That society, he was convinced, was certain of moral degeneration and material disintegration. So on the authority of the *Gita* he was suggesting that for worldly success, wealth and prosperity man had to depend on his own intelligence and efforts and not on external powers. That is the moral of *manolaya* and *manojaya* which he meant by the theory of *yoga*.

To practise *yoga* the body need not be subjected to specific postures that will only torture it²⁸. It could be practised in ordinary life with the

25. Ibid., p. 92.

26. Ibid., p. 98.

27. Ibid., p. 100.

28. -----, *Sutram*, pp. 87-88.

necessary requirement of keeping always the self or mind under its own control²⁹. Renunciation of bodily needs would not help mental health. Physical ill health would be a disability to the worldly enjoyment and also to the attainment of eternal bliss through *yoga*³⁰. A restrained physical enjoyment without suppressing all sensual pleasures and avoiding harm to oneself and others is desirable for a seeker of truth and bliss³¹. Quoting Sankara, Sivayogi pinpointed the fact that when one comes to understand that mind is thought and thought can be subjected to thought, thought or mind can be transformed into bliss by consciousness of the same fact³².

The second aim of Sivayogi was the elimination of the sense of inequality and discrimination practised by the Hindus and thereby the rejuvenation of Hinduism³³. A great impediment to the attainment of bliss according to Sivayogi was the decline of *jnanakanda* and the victory over it by *karmakanda*. *Karmakanda* is the devil that should have been annihilated instead of Ravana and his men by Lord Rama, said Sivayogi, and he had clarified that he did not believe the story of Rama as true³⁴. *Karmakanda* was perpetuated by tradition and false texts which were blindly followed as authorities among the Hindus³⁵ and the people in

29. -----, *Pradeepam*, p. 119.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23, 242.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-79.

32. -----, *Sutram*, p. 22.

33. -----, *Pradeepam*, p. II, *Sutram*, P. I.

34. -----, *Pradeepam*, pp. XIII - IV.

35. -----, *Sutram*, pp. I - II.

general. So he undertook the job to prove that tradition and authorities as well as reason and observation were against *karmakanda*.

In his opinion some of the commentaries on the *Bhagavat Gita* and other Hindu religious texts were written in such a way that they perpetuate inequality and hierarchical division of the society. That corpus of literature was super-imposed on the heart of the Hindu philosophy and the followers of Hinduism were disabled to understand and follow it. The Hindus would regenerate only when such literature is completely burnt or when all the superstitions germinated by them are eliminated³⁶. For this Sivayogi assumed the role of a discourser on the *Gita*. The *Gita* is a mixture of philosophies, he held³⁷. The tone of the text is the emphasis on yoga as superior even to empirical knowledge³⁸. The core of it is that everyone has to do his duties that he is capable of as it suits his own time and condition in a harmless way without losing control of one's self, he asserted³⁹.

A rational reading of the *Gita* was suggested by him. Self contradictory statements in the *Gita* were pointed out as strong evidences to prove that forces of vested interests had interpolated false texts into it. For instance, God has not created castes with duties and responsibilities enjoined on them and the law of *karma* with rewards and punishments.

36. -----, *Pradeepam*, p. 107.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

The inference about human action is that man is doing what he is capable of by nature⁴⁰.

As a textual critic Sivayogi was well aware of its method and showed great skill in applying it. He had the following suggestions by way of caution to prevent the thought of the reader from falling asunder. First of all he cautioned the reader that exaggerating things and eulogizing kings and teachers as incarnations and so on are the ways of poets and they often do that to secure material gains⁴¹. So the reader must know that, whoever may be the author, no text is infallible. The text is only a discourse of the author's reason. The reader has to apply his own reason to the discourse and find out his own lesson. Otherwise his own intelligence will remain barren. So the interpolated Hindu religious texts have to be rationally discoursed⁴².

Speculative thought on the different aspects of the self leads one nowhere and the seeker of truth gets muddled when he goes beyond a certain stage of search. That is the defect of the Vedanta, he opined. So it is better for an ordinary man whom he wanted to enlighten to stop at the point the mind experiences the internal and external world in the search for the truth about self. A doctor is not bound to give a discourse on the chemical contents of the medicine he administers but has to give proper treatment for the disease. Similarly a seeker of truth aiming at the well-being of the society need not go into the questions on the origin

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 116 - 17.

41. -----, *Vimanam*, p. 65.

42. -----, *Pradeepam*, p. 124.

of the self or the universe which cannot be logically, rationally and conclusively answered⁴³.

As a discourses he was not the spokesman of any caste or creed. He was trying to find out the truth of the Hindu philosophy as distinct from the dictates of Varna Dharma and *Karmakanda* ideology of the Brahmanas. Truth being a subjective proposition of the truth seeker to give objectively to it Sivayogi accepted the criterion that it ought to serve the cause of the society⁴⁴. He took utmost care to observe objectivity in his thought, it was an objectivity developed in relation to the progress and prosperity of the society as a whole.

The sword of the discourses fell heavily on the inconsistent elements in the *Gita*. The philosophy of self seeking, inequality, caste discrimination and status oriented social order as contained in the *Gita* and supported by *Manu Smriti* and *Sankara Smriti* was flayed⁴⁵. Krishna who advises Arjuna to do his duties without any desire for rewards is himself desirous of offerings and unquestioning obedience like his fellow gods⁴⁶. The dharma that Krishna tries to preserve is not the real dharma but is the dharma of selfishness, violence and bloodshed⁴⁷. The *Gita* reflects the feudal interests when it commands the subordination and slavery of the lower castes⁴⁸. Like a religious dogmatic, the arrogant, greedy and

43. Ibid., pp. 266 - 67.

44. Ibid., pp. 234 - 36.

45. -----, *Vimanam*, pp. 85 - 87.

46. Ibid., p. 106.

47. Ibid., p. 104.

48. Ibid., p. 109.

capricious God Krishna appears to be desiring bribes from his own children symbolising the absolute, nepotic and theocratic state protecting the interests of the Brahmanas⁴⁹.

The language of the hegemonical class of the pre-colonial Kerala was Sanskrit. It was not within reach of the common man and it was revered as the tongue of the gods. So whatever nonsense had been uttered in that language had been accepted as authority and that meant for salvation. But even meaningful discourses when put in Malayalam went unheeded. This trend was criticised⁵⁰ by Sivayogi who was very proficient in Sanskrit, because a discourse will be meaningful only when it is consumed by the recipients on the cards and he was discoursing for the masses in their own language for the cause of general good. He was not a linguistic fanatic but was of the opinion that any meaningful discourse should be in a language that the people can understand.

In his opposition to institutionalised religion, strengthened by the concept of personal god, Sivayogi was uncompromising. Infatuated by religion and its dictates believers fail to grasp the truth that light and happiness are within one's own self⁵¹. That the institutionalised religion is always reactionary in nature as it mars the moral and mental progress of the individual and the society, is exposed by him. For example, the practice of asceticism and living upon alms in the name of religion does only harm to oneself and the society. It encourages idleness which is not

49. Ibid., pp. 113 - 15.

50. Ibid., p. 331.

51. -----, *Anandadarsamsam*, Alathur, 1992, p. 48.

a virtue. Ascetics are parasites living upon the blood of the society without contributing anything to the general welfare. They are reactionaries who sustain the miseries of social life for their own fame and honour⁵². Man is a social being and he has a duty towards society. That point was emphasised by him. Idol worship and temple going were also criticised⁵³.

The concept of God he negated is the same as that of *karmakanda* and Christianity. God, conceived as the creator, destroyer and supreme judge awarding rewards and punishments, as the founder of religion and as incarnating on earth or sending the Son or the messiahs to the world is an illogical and absurd notion. Even the concept of an unqualified God capable of promoting happiness is questioned. An unqualified God cannot be and need not be worshiped. Worshipping God as a reed of reliance leads to ceremonialism that causes misery⁵⁴. To convince the inefficacy of worship to a personal god he offered a satirical prayer asking God to stop with the joke of creating and blessing with perennial suffering, and killing his own children and enjoying it. If at all God wants to continue the job of creation create all beings as the moon which cools every thing and let the creations be joyous and peaceful⁵⁵. If God and prayer are meaningless what is advisable is to accept a faith that is natural and non-controversial⁵⁶.

52. Ibid., pp. 61 - 63.

53. Ibid., p. 66.

54. Ibid., p. 40.

55. Ibid., pp. 27 - 28.

56. Ibid., p. 40.

Religion and god are sources of sorrow and sufferings and man is enslaved by them. Emancipation is thus possible only by discarding them. Man has to realise that his friend or foe is his own mind. Neither god nor devil is responsible for the actions that spring from the mind which bring good or evil to man⁵⁷. So one has to rely on one's own mind for mind is a creation of mind. Mind is thought and thought creates man. What one thinks that he is or he becomes. To lead mind then in the right direction it requires conditioning or discipline. It means acquisition of knowledge or wisdom and for the preservation of acquired knowledge and the purity of mind yoga was advocated⁵⁸.

Sivayogi was a rationalist intellectual of his time. He repeatedly exhorted that man should accept as real only what is rational. 'Even when uttered by a child what is rational should be accepted and even when uttered by God what is irrational should be spurned'⁵⁹. This dictum is quoted by Sivayogi to stress reason as the guide to human progress. Off and on he decried authorities, for authorities are available in Hindu religious literature in justification of even theft, killing, human sacrifice and many such evil practices and crimes⁶⁰. And it is equally non-sense to negate rational ideas and established facts for the reason that they have not been sanctioned by tradition and ancient seers⁶¹. Being intellectually

57. Ibid., p. 44.

58. -----, *Pradeepam*, pp. 45-47.

59. Ibid., p. 39.

60. Ibid., p. X.

61. Ibid., p. 63.

superior to all other animals man has to improve his capabilities by acquiring knowledge to lead a rational and happy life, and rise above the level of animals⁶². Human reason alone brings prosperity and happiness to man⁶³. He substantiated the point by giving the example of the western people. The British king could become the emperor of India by such qualities. The Indian rulers who were taught that by consecrating and worshipping gods they could attain imperial power, lost their possessions. The Westerners could make great scientific advancements and invent a number of technological devices to improve their material life which the religious leaders could never do, only by relying on reason⁶⁴.

It is through the process of rationalisation of the subjective impressions acquired through sensual experiences that man characterises anything in this world. So by using reason man can become wise and understand and accept the essence as distinguished from the form. A conscious discrimination thus leads to bliss⁶⁵. This is the essence of Sivayogi's rationalism. As a rationalist he was willing to correct what later seemed to be flaws in the standpoint he took earlier with clarifications⁶⁶. He did not claim divinity and to be divine is humanly impossible in his opinion⁶⁷.

62. Ibid., p. 288.

63. -----, *Vimanam*, p. 37.

64. -----, *Darsamsam*, p. 30.

65. -----, *Sutram*, pp. 90 - 91.

66. -----, *Vimanam*, p. 37.

67. Ibid., p. 72.

The Hindu concept of qualitatively changing yugas conforming to the interests of the *karmakanda* champions was held as irrational by Sivayogi. To call the present age as *Kaliyuga* is a misnomer. In his own time, he believed, the Indians were enjoying a good time as the rule of law was practised. To a certain extent the benefits of individual liberty and equality before law and material progress had been conferred upon the Indians under the British rule which they could never enjoy under the native rulers in the past⁶⁸. Under the theocratic regimes governance was meant for the good of the privileged classes. The dharma that was upheld was that of the priestly class. Such regimes have gone down into history for the good of the people and the British rule seemed to be a blessing. Such an age could not be described as the Age of *Kali* ⁶⁹. To get personal benefits Brahmana poets might have praised the rule of some monarchs as egalitarian. Otherwise there was no egalitarian rule in the past according to Sivayogi. He cited the instance of the king providing free meals⁷⁰ and golden gifts to the Brahmanas⁷¹. When the Brahmanas lost their position of privilege under the existing regime and the underlings began to rise to a position of equality with them the new epoch seemed to be the *Kaliyuga* for them⁷².

The approach of all praise for the bygone ages and contempt for the present was treated as irrational. What is rational in the past is to be

68. -----, *Pradeepam*, pp. 200 - 14.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

70. Cited in E.M. Poulouse, *The protestant Missionaries and Social Reform in Travancore*, M. Phil. Thesis, Calicut University, 1980, pp. 19 - 20.

71. Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance*, New Delhi, 1976, p. 4.

72. Sivayogi, *Pradeepam*, p. 214.

accepted. Nothing is to be accepted or rejected for being of the past as time or space is not the criterion of acceptability. The concept of millennium in the past and only miseries in the present was rejected⁷³. Those who have to lose tend to believe in a millennium in the past while those who have to gain millennium remains in the future. Sivayogi took the stand that the progress of mankind depends on the intelligence and efforts of man. His rational approach to time in relation to change and progress is an objective and progressive one. That the backward looking nature of the Indians has done much havoc to the country is a commonplace and a progressive thinker like Sivayogi could not but condemn it.

As an advocate of individualism Sivayogi denounced the traditional attitude towards self-assertion as undesirable and justified self-assertion as a requirement for the development of the individual and the society. An enlightened and altruistic self as an alter ego of the *Brahman* (*ayamatma brahma*) or the individual self identified with the self of the society only merits justification and not the self of the greedy⁷⁴. In the absence of self-assertion nobility of character and self respect would be lacking. It would not help the cultivation of self help among the people.

Sivayogi was not interested in political issues but had a concept about the purpose of the state. State was conceived as an institution to promote the well-being of the society. He demanded the State to ban

73. Ibid., pp. 223 - 24.

74. Ibid., pp. 216 - 18.

superstitious practices and refraining from it was considered as equal to letting the subjects fall into miseries⁷⁵. Unity is a prerequisite for social well-being and therefore forces whether religious or caste that obstruct the unity should be sternly dealt with by the state. Religious practices that plug the social progress are to be considered as criminal offences and have to be punished. Punishments for such crimes are not against the practice of non-violence, since any desire or action that causes misery to one's own self or the self of others is violence. Violence has to be tackled with force when it is for the good of the society as a whole. Religious exhortations and belief in God would not help to curb crimes. That responsibility rests on the state⁷⁶. It seems that the secular state under the British rule in India taking measures like the ban on *sati* aimed at social progress in contrast to the theocratic state that aimed at the sectarian progress and maintained the theocratic social order by perpetuating practices of *karmakanda* prompted him to demand state intervention to stop religious practices of a divisive and reactionary nature. In fact, being no political theoretician but a secular minded reformer, he was advocating the cause of a secular state aiming at social harmony and well-being.

Being aware of the qualitative difference between the pre-colonial native theocratic state and the secular state under the British he had much appreciation for the latter which he described as just⁷⁷. He justly

75. -----, *Darsamsam*, p. 55.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 57 - 59.

77. -----, *Sutram*, p. 76.

felt the need of British rule continuing in India as it provided the opportunity for all to work according to his own intelligence and initiative to acquire material benefits and to enjoy equality⁷⁸. In short, individual liberty for all, irrespective of caste and creed, was a gift of the British rule in his opinion.

Sivayogi was a vehement critic of caste. Human soul has no caste or religion. It is neither Hindu nor Christian nor Buddhist. It is an entity. Body also has no mark of caste or religious distinction by nature. It is mere matter⁷⁹. What man inherits by birth is bliss. That is a clean mind. Ideas of identity like nobility of birth, caste, family, nativity, religion etc. are all imbibed in childhood by association with group. They are socially acquired. They are man's own creations and it is a pity that man quarrels over man-made distinctions⁸⁰.

Caste and the associated evils like inequality are the creations of mind. Ignorance is responsible for it. Ignorance is cultivated by *karmakanda*. When man turns to *jnanakanda* he may realise this. Varna Dharma concept with stress on *karmakanda* is discriminative in nature. Its injunction that Sudras should not learn Vedas is questioned by him⁸¹. According to Sivayogi all are Brahmanas as all are born of *Brahman*, all are saved by *Brahman* and all are finally dissolved in *Brahman*⁸².

78. Ibid., pp. 76, 107.

79. -----, *Sivayogarahasyam*, Alathur, 1986, p. 13.

80. -----, *Darsamsam*, p. 34.

81. -----, *Pradeepam*, pp. 187 - 89.

82. Ibid., p. 196.

Anybody, a Hindu or non-Hindu, can be of any varna by his calling and that status is not determined by birth or qualities inherited as by species⁸³.

The assertion of supremacy by Brahmanas and discrimination based on caste are baseless and meaningless. Such assertions only made the Hindu religion ridiculous⁸⁴. Caste division is against reason, *Sruti* and facts⁸⁵. Sri Krishna and Sri Rama were not spared from attack for justifying caste consciousness. The mode of justifying caste on the authority of the *Gita* and the words of Sankara, Sri Ramakrishna and others was denounced by him⁸⁶. He condemned the caste organisations as they would help only to preserve sectarianism, inequality and division into high and low with caste identity⁸⁷.

Sivayogi had much admiration for the Buddha and his teachings. The Buddha was considered as a great learned man who fought against Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* Ideology and had the realisation that God is nonexistent as distinct from the self⁸⁸. Sivayogi seems to have been inspired by Buddhist teachings and the basic tenets of his *Ananda Mata* very much resemble those of Buddhism. Sivayogi also considered non-injury to others as the greatest of virtues. The very thought of doing harm to others is an act of injury. It brings pain to himself and taints the light of the self and the development of personality is impaired by pain.

83. Ibid., p. 183 ff.

84. -----, *Vimanam*, p. 18.

85. -----, *Pradeepam*, p. 197.

86. -----, *Vimanam*, pp. 81-82.

87. -----, *Darsamsam*, p. 52.

88. -----, *Vimanam*, p. 129.

Not to do any harm to oneself and others by thought, word, and deed is the foundation of all virtues. Fasting and starving are a kind of injury⁸⁹.

Moral consciousness is to be developed by internal urge and not by fear of God or state. One who abstains from criminal offences even when he is certain that he is not going to be punished for it is the pure hearted man. Man must be mentally equipped to avoid the tendency to hurt others⁹⁰. Nobility of mind is a great virtue and to cultivate that the emotive aspect of mind has to be put under the control of reason⁹¹.

Sivayogi was an exponent of gender equality. Oppression of women was ridiculed. Gender distinction does not mean any difference in the self which is only the part of the whole. Therefore there is no meaning in gender inequality. It is knowledge that gives happiness to man. To deny knowledge to women by making education a taboo for them means keeping them at animal's level. It means great loss to man himself and the child. An educated woman only increases the happiness of her husband while she herself can attain happiness. Only educated women can inculcate social values in the child's mind. Uneducated women would be wasting their lives like the parrots in the cage uttering useless words. It is the jealousy, fear and selfishness of man that lies behind the taboo on woman's education. When women are educated man cannot lead a licentious life. If at all educated woman deviates to the path of evil, education is not the reason but the perversion of mind as in the case of man. If society is to

89. -----, *Pradeepam*, pp. 159 - 67.

90. -----, *Vimanam*, pp. 53-54.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

gain women should be given education⁹². The argument runs like this in favour of gender equality and women's liberation.

The social and cultural environment of Kerala in the days of Sivayogi was not very congenial to the spread of his ideas. But before long they began to take roots in the social mind. At least a few of his contemporaries came forward to give up superstitious beliefs and practices⁹³. The bloody religious ceremony of *kuruti*⁹⁴ in a number of Hindu temples was stopped⁹⁵. In due course some were ready to part with the age old ritual practices connected with death and burial⁹⁶. Some of the personalities who rose to prominence in politics had been influenced by the works of Sivayogi⁹⁷. Unfortunately, the real meaning of the *yoga* as expounded by him, could not be grasped by many of his followers and critics⁹⁸.

Sivayogi was an intellectual of modern type who advocated free thinking and rationalism. The society of his time was not ripe to accept such a thinker as an authority to be heard. He was well aware of this fact. So he adopted the name and dress of a recluse⁹⁹. He was

92. -----, *Streevidyaposhini*, Palakkad, 1988, pp. 2-15.

93. *Saragrahi*, Alathur, July, 1953, V. No. 8, pp. 192-211 September, 1952, V, No. 4, pp. 76 - 77.

94. A religious ritual of sacrificing fowls and goats, practised by the Hindus to propitiate gods.

95. *Saragrahi*, October, 1950, III, No. 5, p. 117.

96. -----, January, 1959, XI, No. 7-8, pp. 19, 21.

97. V.R. Krishnan Ezhuthachan, "Revolutionary Message of Sri. Brahmanadaswami Sivayogi" in *Saragrahi*, April, 1956, VII, No. 10-11, pp. 247-48.

98. *Saragrahi*, May, 1953, V. No. 2., pp. 269-74.

99. Sivayogi, *Pradeepam*, pp. 225 - 27.

discoursing on a thesis which was not his creation but a restatement of the findings of the pagan philosophers of ancient India¹⁰⁰. His relevance is that he had the subjective cognition of the ills of the society and tried to discover the original meaning of Hindu religion as an ideology to counterblast the ideology of the hegemonical Brahmana class. It was an attempt to change the focus of the Malayali social mind in general and the Hindus in particular from the outward appearance of religion institutionalised by rituals, ceremonies and duties in the name of God and dictated by religious and ethical codes, to the philosophical surmises exposed mainly in the Upanisads. The construction of that philosophy in a transitional stage of the society brought about by colonisation was aimed at conforming to the socio-economic requirements of the society in general. Restraints of the existing order that prevented the realisation and enjoyment of individual liberty, equality, social mobility and unity were to be removed. When the society was exposed to a civilization founded on values alien to the land and conducive to moral and material progress, Sivayogi was searching for an ideology indigenously developed and capable of comprehending the values of the new hegemonical class and striving to prepare the society to reconcile with the new situation for a healthy growth instead of internal disintegration. He was not a western educated man but his ideals - liberty, equality, free thinking, rationalism, gender equality, secularism - which have become commonplace in the Kerala society and been considered as western are modern in nature. Later they became the rallying points of the rationalist and radical

100.-----, *Sutram*, p. 63.

movements in Kerala. He figures prominently in the intellectual revolution that shaped modern Kerala. He may rightly be called the first great rationalist thinker of modern Kerala the essence of whose ideas was humanism. He stood above all sectarianism and that seems to be the reason for his name not being remembered with much enthusiasm today.

Life in contemporary Kerala appeared quite miserable to Sivayogi. He felt that unable to know the reality people were running helter-skelter in search of happiness. Some were practising the sacrificial rites and rituals. Some were wasting time in learning Vedas and *Sastras* without any use to attain happiness. Many were lamenting that they had no right to learning and worshipping. Still others were seeking refuge in temples or holy places or forests. A few were starving to attain salvation, while there were people lamenting that they had no sons to do funeral rites without which they would not get salvation¹⁰¹. In general the Hindus were seeking false ways prescribed by *karmakanda* which made life miserable. This prompted him to enlighten them on *Yoga* as a means to salvation or happiness. Hinduism had degenerated into Varna Dharma - *Karmakanda* ideology that perpetuated inequality and hatred for each other leading to disunity and evil practices. This was to be castigated and eliminated. Avowed with these two purposes Sivayogi assumed the role of a social critic and reformer.

His was an attempt at recasting the Malayali psyche moulded by *karmakanda*, Varna Dharma and feudal values. It was the changed

101. -----, *Pradeepam*, pp. I - II.

political situation and the influence of the reform movements like Brahma Samaj that chiefly inspired him as revealed from his life and works. He had no identity crisis or any personal experience of oppression from the hegemonical class. His native place was in Malabar which was under the direct rule of the British and this provided him an opportunity to compare the English ways and achievements with that of the natives and see that his society was far behind in achieving moral and material progress. It is the rational bent of his mind that detected the plight of the people. And it is more the fervour of an intellectual than the zeal of a reformer that induced him to dive deep into the vast ocean of Indian literature that contained philosophical, theological, mythological and ritualistic ideas all mixed-up. So naturally they were of a rational, romantic, superstitious and mythical character. He culled the gems out of them with the discerning mind of the rational and secular intellectual-cum-reformer. By substantiating them he could remove the misconception that Hinduism is a religion of Varna Dharma and *Karmakanda*. He was actually differentiating and upholding the Hinduism of the dynamic philosophical construct meant for the upgradation of man from the static and reactionary Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology that stood for the degradation of man. He was fulfilling the need of the progressive minded section of the Hindus in an atmosphere of evangelical activities of the Christian missionaries and new economic opportunities for material progress. His was an attempt to rationalise the people based on scriptural and philosophical literature. But the total disregard for the age old religious symbols and the emotive enjoyment derived from religious practices, grown

out of an uncompromising stand on the rationalism of an overzealous reformer, made him a stranger to the large majority of the people of Kerala. On and on he was negating the practice of idol worship, pilgrimage and such rituals and ceremonials like a doctrinaire. Because of this totally unromantic approach to an almost primitive and tradition-directed mind of the Keralites, Sivayogi failed to make a dent in the socio-religious life of the Hindus immediately.

The rationalism developed by Sivayogi from the indigenous sources was further nourished and widened in scope by the English educated intellectuals. They too had accepted tradition but were more inspired by the sources that came after the new colonisation which meant the change of masters and the ideology of hegemony. The ideology of the new masters was an embodiment of secular ideas and the state was organised on a secular character. But the new masters were keen to keep the process confined to serve the imperial interests and leave the social structure and practices undisturbed so long as they remained innocuous to their interests¹⁰². Yet the reorganisation of administration in both British India and native states had begun to seriously affect the economy and the material conditions in a way that would insinuate social changes¹⁰³. In that situation a plethoric flow of ideas opposed to the ideology of the former hegemonical class slowly infused into the minds of the formerly oppressed subjects through the means of press and western type of

102. P.N. Chopra, ed., *The Gazetteer of India, II, History and Culture*, New Delhi, 1973, p. 642.

103. M. Sahadevan, *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making - A Study of Sahodaran Ayyappan*, Trichur, 1993, pp. 18-20.

education. Equality of opportunity granted by the rule of law and subjection to laws made by secular authorities put both the former ruled and ruling classes on an equal footing and the ruled were now provoked to think for themselves.

The birthcry of an emerging social mind could now be heard in the literature. The non-conventional literary forms of novel and short story themselves speak for the turn of the native mind to western model. The novels *Indulekha* and *Kundalatha*¹⁰⁴ written by western-educated authors in the latter half of the 19th century are expressions of a rational mind eager to tread the ways of the master class. The stories are well woven on humanistic themes and the characters are down to earth human beings. The heroes and heroines are endowed with qualities inconsistent with values of the traditional society. They think humanly and humanism is idealised by the novelists.

The themes and characters of the short stories of Moorkothu Kumaran are also secular and humanisatic in nature¹⁰⁵. They were written during the first decades of the 20th century and reflect the simplicity of the rural life. The author who too got western education maintains a rational approach to the themes and characters. A direct attack on religion and God and their perpetuators is not the purpose of these literary works. The reason may be that these authors hailing from Malabar which was under the direct rule of the British must have been free from the tyrannical

104. O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, Trichur, 1989. Appu Nedungadi, *Kundalatha*, Calicut, 1987.

105. Moorkothu Mumaran, *Moorkothu Kumarante Kathakal*, Calicut, 1987.

oppression of the divines through a theocratic state. But they voiced a longing for social changes. Some of them disapproved the institutions like caste, and *marumakkatayam* the form of inheritance followed by the non-Brahmanas. The heroic characters are represented as self-motivated, rational and secular and lovers of liberty and equality. Individual initiative and self-reliance, freedom of women, and gender equality are ideas most favoured to the authors. Human life is portrayed as a creation of the rational and irrational elements in human thought. An emotional expression of disagreement with some of the traditional institutions and practices is characteristic of their literary works. It was not sufficient to sever the clutches of society from the ideology of the former masters. The scientific inventions and the developments in materialistic philosophies in the West had not yet caught the imagination of the litterateurs.

The imaginative mind and the poetic language of the litterateur had to come down to reality and a plain and vigorous refutation of the old theocratic regime in prose of the lucid mind was required. By the third decade of the 20th century that process had been ripened. The element of rationalism in the thought of the Keralites attained a distinct identity in the exclusive movement of the rationalists. To begin with the movement did not have an organisation. Some of those who felt the need of shedding the light of rationalism into the dark caverns of the Kerala mind as a step to eradicate many of the social evils rooted in superstitious beliefs of religious origin held a meeting at Calicut in 1928¹⁰⁶.

106. M.C. Joseph, "Ente Vazhikatti", in *Vivekodayam*, Irinjalakkuda, March, April, 1968, pp. 22-23.

The crucial decision taken at this meeting was to start a journal called *Yuktivadi*. It took about one year for the journal to come out and on 17th August 1929 its first issue appeared in day light¹⁰⁷. The nature of the journal was stated as follows :-

This is the magazine that would state things boldly, stimulate thinking and promote sciences without servitude to any religion and without partiality to caste or creed¹⁰⁸.

The meaning of rationalism and the purpose of the journal had been explained in the foreword written to the journal by Ayyappan as follows:

Rationalism is not a dogma. It is a mental attitude of accepting only knowledge based on reason. The attempt of the *Yuktivadi* will be to inculcate this attitude among the people. For that irrational beliefs have to be refuted and logical knowledge has to be diffused. A rationalist has no faith in perfect or irrefutable knowledge. So a rationalist has no objection to admit if anything that was once claimed to be right turns to be wrong in the light of new knowledge produced by further enquiry or vice versa¹⁰⁹.

A single line definition of rationalism as quoted frequently is :
“Rationalism is after all the weighing of evidence by clear thinking, and sifting truth from falsehood in all matters amenable to investigation”¹¹⁰.

107. See *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 1, Chingam, M.E. 1105.

108. C.K. Gangadharan, *Sahodaran Ayyappan* (biography), Ernakulam, 1984, p. 73.

109. *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 1, Chingam, M.E. 1105, p. 2.

110. -----, I, No. 8, Medam, 1105, p. Front Cover.

The theoretical aspects of the rationalist movement had been well explained by Sahodaran Ayyappan and P.P. Antony who was popularly known by the pseudonym "Kusumam". The movement was justified on two grounds. Firstly the priests were successful in popularising the notion that all knowledge for all time had already been revealed by God¹¹¹. This was to be rebutted and the rationalists were propagating that in the universal treasure of knowledge so far achieved, there is nothing more than that gained only by human intelligence with the help of reason¹¹². Secondly, for the successful functioning of democracy to which the country was being adapted, people who were divided on religious, linguistic and regional lines were to be led above them and united on a secular basis¹¹³.

Rationalism was not conceived as a movement for the conceptual confutation of God or religion. Among the rationalists there were theists and atheists, pantheists, materialists and agnostics¹¹⁴. It was conceived as an attitude of the mind. It was against believing anything without being put to the test of reason and on the authority of revelation, books or traditions. The aim of rationalism was to establish a science of ethics and philosophy that could be proved by experiences and experiments without depending on authority and speculation. Verification, comparison and criticism were the methods advocated by it¹¹⁵. Criticism of arts and literature, dissemination of knowledge, altruism, world peace and social

111. -----, I No. 1, p. 1.

112. -----, II, No. I, M.E., 1106, II, No. 1, p. Front cover.

113. -----, I, No. 1, p. 23 - 24.

114. P.P. Antony, "Yuktivadam", in *Kusumathinte Kritikal*, Kottayam, 1989, p. 164.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

reforms were taken as most urgent constructive programmes of the movement¹¹⁶.

Reason was not considered as infallible. Reasoning may go wrong due to wrong premises, inaccuracy in observation and ignorance of the dialectics¹¹⁷. For this reason faith cannot be considered as a substitute for reason as reason alone is the means to find out the flaws of reason. The fact that the exponents of religion too have to depend on reason to refute the efficacy of reason is a good foundation for the authority of reason¹¹⁸. Moreover the founders of important religions were rationalists and Jesus was a great rationalist¹¹⁹, the rationalists claimed.

The rationalists explained that man is endowed with a superior reasoning capacity compared to other animals. The centre of this reasoning power is amid the sensory organs which collect impressions from the external world and these impressions are transformed into ideas by reason¹²⁰. This is akin to the theory known as sensationalism systematised by John Locke¹²¹. The sensory organs are incomplete and they have not yet attained perfection in the evolutionary process and therefore human knowledge of the universal reality may remain limited. But man has no other means to acquire knowledge¹²².

116. Ibid., pp. 163 - 64.

117. Ibid., p. 165.

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid., p. 165. M.C. Joseph, "Nazrayekkaranya Yuktivadi", *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 2.

120. P.P. Antony, *Kritikal*, p. 167.

121. Bertrand Russel, *History of Western Philosophy*, London, 1999, p.589.

122. P.P. Antony, *Kritikal*, p. 168.

In their opinion it is a minority of the priestly class who live as the parasites on the blood of the society, that denounce reason and advocate faith to people who are always prone to the dictates of emotions. So the goal of rationalism was to enlighten the people on the need to turn to the path shown by reason to be emancipated from the mental bondage to the tricks of the priestly class which always prevents human progress¹²³.

An impediment to rational thinking is the wrong premises which usually are implanted in human minds in their childhood. This is a main cause of the division of mankind into factions based on creeds. So man has to start thinking from the correct premise¹²⁴. Mankind will have a good future only when man is willing to think humanly¹²⁵.

The rationalists were not wholly dependent on western thought for their ideas. Buddhism was a fountain of inspiration for them. Primarily Buddha's teachings were not based on belief in any god. Secondly Buddha denied the reliance on authority as the source of truth and at the same time upheld rational enquiry and experience as the means to find out truth, and human good as the standard of acceptance of the truth. This philosophy so fascinated Antony that he called it eternally radical which will never lose its novelty¹²⁶. Ayyappan was profusely articulating on the need of Buddhist Dharma. The challenge of Buddhism to the Vedic religion of the Brahmanas and its negation of casteism were tantalising to a

123. Ibid., p. 168.

124. Ibid., p. 172.

125. Ibid.

126. P.P. Antony, *Kritikal*, pp. 98 - 99.

rationalist. Moreover Buddhism was founded on the social ideals of non-violence, altruism and universal brotherhood cherished by the rationalist social reformer¹²⁷.

The rationalists were uncompromising critics of the belief in a personal god and refuted the theory that God created the universe. The first cause is unknowable is the stand taken by them¹²⁸. As almost all religions are founded on those beliefs the rationalists naturally became critics of religions. One way of attacking the concept of a personal god who created and maintains the universe was to satirize the whole theory¹²⁹. The problem of religion as a force inculcating morality was an interesting point of debate for the rationalists. They refuted the usual argument that faith is necessary to cultivate moral sense and to prevent crimes, and pointed out that if it is so there was no need of a government enacting criminal laws and prescribing punishments¹³⁰. On the other hand they claimed that enlightening the people on the need of morality in life for the good of the individual and the society as well is essential since man is a social being¹³¹. Cultivation of a social conscience is required for minimising crimes. Even if it is agreed that some superstitions, popularised by religion, helped fostering moral sense it cannot be accepted as a healthy and constructive way of eliminating the criminal instincts incidental in

127. K. Ayyappan, "Buddhastotram", in *Sahodrante Padyakritikal*, Kottayam, 1981, pp. 133 - 78.

128. M.P. Varkey, "Yuktivadikalute Nila", *Yuktivadi*, I No. 3, M.E. 1105 pp. 86 - 90.

129. C.V. Kunjuraman, "Ente Prarthana", *Yuktivadi*, No. I, No. 5, M.E. 1105, pp. 158 - 61. P.P. Antony, *Veroru Prarthana*, Ibid., pp. 200 - 02.

130. P.P. Antony, *Kritikal*, p. 175.

131. Ibid.

human nature¹³². In support of these arguments the rationalists pointed out that the number of criminals is more among the believers while it is less among the non-believers¹³³. They further explained that morals are not to be dictated by religion, but they are to be based on human knowledge and wisdom. Moral laws cannot remain static. They will and have to change according to changes in society and its material conditions¹³⁴. They welcomed the legislation raising the marriageable age for women to fourteen and for men to eighteen by the Imperial Legislative Council¹³⁵. The importance of the legislation would be clear only when we get the statistics of child marriage in India. What speaks for it is the specimen from Bombay where in 1921, 1660 girls below one year, 4378 girls between one and two, 7219 girls between three and four, 12834 girls between four and five, 193582 girls between five and ten and 498706 girls between ten and fifteen either got married or became widows¹³⁶. The number at all India level may be left to one's imagination. The mission of the rationalists was to enlighten the people on the need for such legislations and make them mentally prepared to welcome them. When we come to know that the conservative religious leaders were opposing such a legislation for jeopardizing their religion we can understand why religion and the priestly class were attacked by the rationalists.

132. P.P. Antony, "Nammute Chumatala", *Yuktivadi*, I No. 1, p. 22.

133. P.P. Antony, *Kritikal*, pp. 211 - 12.

134. *Yuktivadi*, IV, No. 9 Medam, M.E. 1108, p. 280.

135. *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 3, p. 73.

136. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

The rationalists expected a millennium to come in the future through the developments in modern science. Science that shows the way to truth and light, that conquers the universe for the good of man, that awakens the reason of man and leads to his freedom, that promotes agriculture, industry, commerce and statecraft and at the same time annihilates the system that enslaved humanity on the authority of tradition and revealed books, has to be worshipped¹³⁷ was the appeal of Ayyappan. To him man is capable of achieving the millennium. The collective efforts of man and the great saints namely the scientists and men of letters, and the process of natural evolution would surely bring about the millennium¹³⁸. The rationalists used to write articles giving scientific explanations for natural phenomena supposed to be the handiwork of spirits or metaphysically interpreted by religious exponents¹³⁹. Darwin's theory of evolution was a pet theme of the rationalists¹⁴⁰. Being educated in medical science, Antony could explain with much insight topics related to science¹⁴¹. This could in a better way make a strong impact on readers in chiselling away the accretions of superstitions than a direct attack on religion and God would do. Because of the scientific attitude, the rationalists zealously advocated the need of family planning in India¹⁴². It was again the scientific attitude and humanitarianism that prompted them to demand

137. *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 1 p. 8.

138. K. Ayyappan, "Bhaavi", *Padyakritikal*, p. 25.

139. See *Yuktivadi*, Volumes.

140. C.L. Joseph, "Parinamam", *Yuktivadi*, IX No. 6, M.E. 113, pp. 173 - 77. K. Ayyappan, *Padyakritikal*, pp. 127 - 30. P.P. Antony, *Kritikal*, pp. 128 - 33.

141. See P.P. Antony, *Kritikal*.

142. *Yuktivadi*, II, No. 5, M.E. 1106, p. 162. *Yuktivadi*, X, No.1, M.E. 1104, pp. 19 - 22.

the themes of literary works to be humanistic and rational and thought provoking and action inspiring so as to better human life in this world instead of writing on mythological and legendary themes or themes of emotional appeal intended for sensual pleasure only¹⁴³.

The rationalists deserve credit for disseminating socialistic ideas. Even before the Communist movement gaining ground in Kerala they propagated though in a liberal voice the ideas that labour is the source of wealth and the labourer is entitled to get a fair share of it¹⁴⁴. The concept of even distribution of wealth among the people was a social value they acclaimed. The unholy alliance of capital and religion was abhorred and the anti-religious policy of the Soviet regime was much appreciated¹⁴⁵. It was high time, they vigorously asserted, that the notion that God created the poor to serve the rich was to be given up¹⁴⁶. By way of contradicting Vivekananda the editor of the *Yuktivadi* noted that what the poverty stricken people require is not religion¹⁴⁷. Eradication of poverty was seen as a primary requirement but the violent means and totalitarian regime advocated by the Communists for the achievement of it were abominable to them¹⁴⁸.

143. *Yuktivadi*, II, No. 5, M.E. 1106, p. 155. P.P. Antony, *Kritikal*, p. 127.

144. P.P. Antony, "Dhanathinte Yatartha Rupam", *Kritikal*, p. 127.

145. Sudheendra Bose, "Daivamillatha Russia", *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 10, M.E. 1105, pp. 319 - 26. M.P. Varkey, "Russiayile Matam", *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 11, pp. 364 - 70. See other volumes also.

146. M. Rama Varma Thampan, "Yuktivadam", *Yuktivadi*, II, No. 5, M.E. 1106, p. 162.

147. M.C. Joseph, "Kurippukal", *Yuktivadi*, XI, No. 5, M.E. 1115, p. 129.

148. -----, "Kurippukal", *Yuktivadi*, XXV, No. 8, M.E. 1115, pp. 181 - 89.

The Muslim community was generally indifferent to the movement. Not a single Muslim contributed any article in the *Yuktivadi* or on rationalism. There was a complaint also that superstitious beliefs and practices associated with Islam were not expostulated by the rationalists. The reply was that the policy of their journal was to publish critical articles on religious superstitions written by a follower of the respective religion and such contributions were not available¹⁴⁹. Yet the journal in its beginning had one Muslim to congratulate the venture and willing to be a subscriber¹⁵⁰.

Rationalists took much care to avoid the movement becoming dogmatic without compromising its main ideals and the chief aspects of scientific approach and free thinking. Ayyappan in fact was an ardent advocate of free thinking and he pointed out how certain progressive ideas could become dogmatic beliefs. For example he called the following beliefs as mighty superstitions¹⁵¹.

1. Party system is unavoidable for Parliamentary democracy.
2. Poverty cannot be eradicated without Communism.
3. Rationalist should have no religion and belief in God.
4. Man will not become good without religion.
5. Man will become good only when religion is no more.

Though he was a sincere disciple of Sri Narayana, he cautioned his followers not to put blind faith in him¹⁵². For there is no final conclusion

149. *Yuktivadi*, II, No. 2, M.E. 1106, p. 63.

150. -----, I, No. 1, p. 63.

151. *Sahodaran*, May 30, 1953, p. 8.

152. K.A. Subramanian, *Sahodaran Ayyappan*, (biography), Emakulam 1973, p. 414.

in the evolution of man's thought as a panacea for all problems and for all times. To have dogmatic faith means the arrest of progress. Free thinking and acceptance or rejection of ideas conducive to the betterment of human life is the sign of progressive thinking and that might be the ideal of a rationalist¹⁵³.

The journal *Yuktivadi* as the mouth-piece of the rationalists in Kerala was started in 1930 and Sahodaran Ayyappan was its editor. Besides Ayyappan, Rama Varma Thampan, C. Krishnan, M.C. Joseph and C.V. Kunjuraman were on the editorial board¹⁵⁴. In 1932 the journal began to be published by M.C. Joseph as the chief editor. He was a Syrian Christian and a lawyer by profession. The journal was published without break till its last issue in July 1960. A special feature of it was the *kurippukal*¹⁵⁵ of the chief editor. His sharp intellect subjected events reported as miracles or feats of spiritualists, and speeches and opinions justifying spiritualism to dissection and analysis leading to rationalistic and logical conclusions. Some of the *kurippukal* were informative on science subjects. They are the most interesting part of the journal. The journal's main purpose¹⁵⁶ was to expose the oracles, sorcerers, witchdoctors, divines, necromancers, palmists, astrologers, spiritualists and so on. Rationalists who were formerly enchanters or believers in spirits, black magic etc. used to narrate their experiences with an intention to explain the inefficacy of such

153. P.P. Antony, "Buddhante Upadesam", in *Kritikal*, pp. 100 - 101.

154. *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 1, M.E. 1105, p. Front Cover.

155. See *Yuktivadi* Volumes from 1932 onwards.

156. *Ibid.*

practices and how they turned to be rationalists. These were meant for ordinary readers. Articles on science topics followed in almost all issues which were helpful in cultivating a scientific attitude. The nature of the journal has been well assessed by a regular reader who was hailing from the upper caste and renowned as a public personage. In his opinion no other journal was so interesting as the *Yuktivadi* and it gave an experience of happily spending a few hours with close friends who are broad-minded, witty, intelligent and wise¹⁵⁷. It can be well remarked that it was an intellectual companion for the progressive-minded.

The journal invited the wrath of orthodoxy. It was an enemy of the religious leaders especially of Christianity. One would only wonder if it was not so. For, the journal was very particular in attacking the mythological and theological beliefs of the Bible. Cruelties and persecutions in the name of faith were often enumerated in its columns. Many an evil in the Catholic church of the medieval period relying on the source of Catholic Encyclopaedia were favourite themes of M.P. Varkey a regular contributor of the journal¹⁵⁸. Organised religion happened to be a special target of its attack since it had only a reactionary role in the existing society. Sometimes the reader may find it difficult to resist the conclusion that the journal was making a one sided criticism while deliberately keeping silent on the constructive role religions played in human history. The journal and the movement it represented were considered by its enemies as an attempt to inculcate atheism. Moorkothu

157. *Yuktivadi*, XXX, No.5, M.E. 1134, p. 144. Probably E.M. Sankaran Namboothiripad.

158. See *Yuktivadi* Volumes from M.E. 1105 to 1119.

Kumaran, a noted writer and social reformer, once made an appeal to his Muslim and Christian fellowmen to start an organised resistance against rationalist movement¹⁵⁹. *Sathyasadam* a Christian organ accused the *Yuktivadi* of fomenting rebellion against the established order¹⁶⁰ and dubbed it as an instrument that corrupts the youth¹⁶¹. While orthodoxy burst out, reformers cordially welcomed it. *Unninambudiri* the voice of the Namboothiri social reform movement acclaimed it as a good social reformer¹⁶². That only the radical elements in the society could appreciate the work of the rationalist movement is a fact. At this point it has to be remembered that attempts to cultivate a rationalist approach to the problems of the day were going on outside the rationalist movement and articles attacking orthodoxy had been appearing in other journals also¹⁶³. The general tone of them was secularism. V.T. Bhattathiripad, a well known social reformer from the Namboothiri Brahmana community even made a cry to burn the temples¹⁶⁴. It was nothing but the Brahmanical orthodoxy that provoked him to make such a cry. In 1936 in a school text book written by one Parameswara Iyer the caste supremacy of the Brahmanas and the concept of pollution by touch or approach were justified and it was argued that non-Hindus are animals¹⁶⁵. This alone sufficiently speaks for the cause of rationalist movement in Kerala.

159. *Yuktivadi*, V, No. 8, M.E. 1109, pp. 235 - 36.

160. -----, I No. 2, M.E. 1106, p. 142.

161. -----, II, No. 2, M.E. 1106, p. 142.

162. -----, I No. 2, M.E. 1105, pp. 67 - 68.

163. -----, IV, No. 7, M.E. 1108, p. 216. See other Volumes also for articles of rational outlook republished.

164. *Yuktivadi*, IV, No. 10, M.E. 1108, p. 316.

165. -----, VII, No. 9, M.E. 1111, pp. 311-13.

In the name of spirituality man was kept in bondage to the dictates of the priestly class of Brahmanas in Kerala. The Rationalist Movement was making a small stride of great importance in the history of modern Kerala by its continuous efforts to emancipate man from his bondage and teach him to live consciously unlike other beings on earth and achieve his rational and moral freedom. They were incessantly advocating that man should not be satisfied merely with food and procreation. They were not engaged in a fruitless work of preaching rationalism for its own sake but to uplift a people who had fallen to the depth of degeneration living on a par with animals to the level of thinking man.

They were not attempting a philosophical enquiry into the working of human reason, its development and limitations or the irrational nature of man. As such they were not giving shape to a philosophical system. An emotional enjoyment of life instead of a rational enjoyment was the tendency that prevailed among the Keralites. The erotic theme of the literary works of the entire medieval period attests this assertion. The intellectuals who were disappointed with such an attitude could only provide a philosophy of devotion to God which too is a philosophy of emotional enjoyment at a higher level. The essential elements of that philosophy were escapism and defeatism which could not mark out a way to human progress of any kind in this world. It happened to be a philosophy of individual deliverance alone and not one infusing confidence and optimism about the capabilities of man to achieve a better life on this earth for the individual and the society as well. The rationalists were filling this gap by dredging the superstitions accrued on the social mind

of Kerala. They were leading an intellectual struggle to replace religion the ideology upon which was embedded the entire social life of Kerala, by secular and rational ideas derived from the Western masters. Religion seemed to be a hydra-headed monster impeding the development of man and society. Ideas like democracy, social and economic equality, universal brotherhood and individual liberty of a civilized society were accepted as the values which they deemed to be the base of the modern Western world. In Buddhist teachings they saw a supplement to these imported ideas. They were struggling to cast a new social mind letting out the old ideas and infusing it with these new ideas to achieve a morally and materially advanced secular society. With the message that man is the maker of his own destiny to free the primitive mind of Keralites from its dependence on supernatural forces to self dependence, the rationalists were playing an effective role in the modernisation of Kerala.

CHAPTER IV

REFLECTIONS IN LITERATURE

The treasures of English literature were opened up to the native mind thanks to the missionaries through the spread of English education by the second half of the 19th century. Both in the spheres of ideas and literary forms the native mind gained a lot as a result of it. The literary forms of the short story and the novel were now proved to be very convenient to convey the new ideas in society at the time of transition so as to accelerate that process in the early stage. Literature became the media for self expression of man the social being, instead of eroticism reflecting animal man friendly with nature and *bhakti* reflecting the primitive man, the helpless child of the awful nature in which state man was only a slave of nature and 'god'. Now the problems of ordinary human beings in their earthly life embracing all its aspects became the theme of literature. Two early novels in Malayalam, typical of this characteristic, were written by Oyyarath Chandu Menon and Potheri Kunjambu.

Oyyarath Chandu Menon (hereafter Chandu Menon) was a judge in British Government service. Inspired by English novel literature and by the motive of entertaining his fellowmen he produced his first novel¹ in pure Malayalam with an eye on ordinary readers and with much doubt about its reception. It was well received by the Malayalis and even today it enjoys the undiminished popularity it evoked in 1889 when it was first

1. O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, Trichur, 1989 (1st ed., 1889).

published². In this novel we get the view of an English educated native on contemporary Malabar Hindu society and his visions of an ideal society.

It was not the ritual status sanctioned by the Varna Dharma ideology or the economic status of subordination of the Nair community of lesser lords to the Brahmana *jenmis* that really brought humiliation to them. The sexual exploitation of the Nairs by the Brahmanas through the *sambandham* system of marriage in which the Nair women were made concubines by the younger male members of the Namboothiri families was the really humiliating factor that effected their psychic surrender. Yet the *sambandham* relation was considered prestigious by aristocratic Nair families as pointed out by Chattampi Swamikal³. Chandu Menon seems to be so keen to get rid of this system that he had woven the story of his novel around the heroine Indulekha a product of modern education. Indulekha is expected to liberate her community from the sexual and psychic bondage to the Brahmanas by rejecting the Varna Dharma. The eighteen year-old Indulekha, the ideal woman, humiliates the forty-five year old Suri Namboothiri by rejecting his proposal of marriage, in violation of caste rules. Determined to marry her cousin Madhavan who has an English education and who is well-mannered, Indulekha is in no mood to be taken in by the show of pomp by the simpleton Suri Namboothiri, a typical representative of his community, while the thirteen

2. Ibid., pp. 9-19.

3. Chattampi Swamikal, "Prachinamalayalam", in Maheswaran Nair, ed., *Chattampi Swamikal : Jeevithavum Kritikalum*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp. 361-62.

year old Kallianikutty who has no English education is taken away by him without seeking her consent but with the consent of the elders. Indulekha desires a stable bond of marital relation. The ideal position of Indulekha is derived from her English education, which made her rational, freedom loving and freethinking, and emboldened her to assert her individuality and rights. The ordinary fate of a Nair woman in those days would be that of Kallianikutty still languishing in the bondage of the community. Besides having English education, Indulekha has been trained in western music and western styles in certain aspects of life. Similarly the hero Madhavan also is English educated and has imbibed some western habits as a mark of refinement. Through them the author envisages a consciously cultivated, disciplined and systematic life for the upcoming male and female members of his community. In such a life the Nair woman would not be similar to an animal, like an uneducated and isolated Namboothiri woman. She would not be leading a licentious life of a Nair woman with several husbands at will. She would retain the right to choose a husband with a sense of discrimination. This right would help her to escape from the loosely knit conjugal bond which would have her adulterous in the changing value consciousness of the colonial context, and to adhere strictly to a stable monogamous marital life. He wants English education to lead for a partial break with tradition. Traditional values of family life like respect for elders, mutual trust, preservation of family bonds, theism etc., which the author does not like to be eroded, should be retained by the English educated Nair women as well as men. Only some manners in social life should be emulated from the English.

So a synthesis of Western ideas like rationalism, individualism, love of liberty, simplicity in dress and the adornment of body person etc. and the above stated traditional values is suggested by the author for a liberal society through the heroine and the hero. The main concern of the author was confined to be liberation of the Nair community. His vision of social change was limited by his position in a sectarian society. Moreover he was not writing the novel to advocate social reform.

Under the influence of the thoroughgoing materialism and atheism of Western philosophers through English education there was a trend among the Hindus to denounce religion and faith in God. But those who could not completely break with tradition and faith were in a muddle. What repulsed them were the ceremonialism and Varna Dharma preached by Brahmanical religion and the claim of divinity by certain persons in the name of spirituality. Chandu Menon avoided their fate by a compromise. He suggested a rational reading of religion and belief in God while denouncing ceremonialism and pseudo spiritualism.

A lengthy discourse on faith and Indian politics is given in the eighteenth chapter⁴ of the novel as follows. Faith is man-made and it need not be accepted blindly. Faith and tradition are to be evaluated from a moral and rational standpoint. Faith in God and temple-worship are seemed to be incongruous for the wise. Temples are the products of the clever to exploit the ignorant. The argument that temples are not required for the divine people is a fraud. Nobody is a divine person. All

4. O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, pp. 259-90.

are having the basic natural instincts though variations in learning and wisdom are possible. None is required to be a temple worshipper since God is not in the temple. God has to be conceived as the all pervading supreme being capable of creation, preservation and destruction. The worship of the idol is an unnecessary foolish practice. At the same time, the author rejects atheism, materialism and the theory of evolution about the origin and the development of the universe and the species as formulated by the Western thinkers like Charles Bradlaugh, Irvin Wallace, and Charles Darwin. Belief in personal gods, as in the Bible and the Hindu *Puranas* and other religious literatures, is denounced. Philosophical arguments for and against God are available in abundance. So one has to content like Huxely that all literatures about God and against God are equally foolish and absurd. No final word on the existence of God is possible. The philosophical tracts of Hindus define God as incomprehensible and inexplicable. So a practical standpoint based on its utility alone is desirable. Atheism may do more harm to humanity than theism. It is humanly impossible to reach a final conclusion about the first cause or the existence of God. Then it is better to cultivate faith in God as a means to promote moral sense conducive to a peaceful and happy social life. The development of science is useful to better the worldly life of man but is not capable of providing emotive palliation. The truth about God does not worry the author. He is a sceptic in this regard. To him the invisible force behind the process of creation, preservation and destination, that gives more happiness than sorrow seems to be God. The justification for belief in God lies in its utilitarian value

as an ethical means and a haven for the lonely and helpless man as reason is not always reliable as a source of consolation and social morality. A need based rational concept of God without useless rituals and ceremonies and a religion emancipated from the oppressive priestly class is the ideal of the author. He felt it necessary to make religion humanistic and rational.

The author represents the views of the educated members of the elite class on contemporary Indian politics through the hero Madhavan as follows⁵. India is fortunate to have come under the British rule. Indians are enjoying a benevolent rule under them unlike the unjust and oppressive governance of the past native rulers. British government enjoys a high level of popularity among the people for this reason. The British are a race superior to all other for their qualities of sense of justice, impartiality, compassion, courage and patience. They are the marks of a good civilization and requirements of success. When the Indians become able to display these qualities fully which they gradually acquire under the British rule through English education, India should be ruled by the Indians. Since the number of persons possessing these qualities is on the increase the Indians have a right to claim participation in the governance of the country with the British. There is nothing wrong in the Indian National Congress asking for it. The British are well known for their love of liberty and India is becoming a liberal state under their rule. They will leave the country when India is politically ripe for self government, and

5. Ibid., pp. 291-308.

their rule for the last hundred years is a clear testimony to their intention of making Indians capable of running a liberal state as their governance is aimed at the well-being and liberty of the people. Under the British rule the common people are becoming more and more conscious of the value of freedom. Communal antagonism and social justice are not the primary problems of the day and efforts to find solutions to them would only aggravate it. The primary issues therefore are political development and good governance of the country. So issues like the backwardness of women and squabbles over communal problems need not be raised at this time as an obstruction to the primary issues. People are to be educated on political aspects of British rule and propaganda in Britain to muster support for the achievement of a liberal government with Indian participation that will ultimately lead to an independent Indian state must be carried on. The mendacious criticism of the British governance would do harm only to the country. It would lead to unjustifiable events like the happening of 1857 caused by the lack of education. Fortunately Indians are educated by the British and that is a big advantage to the government.

A politically enlightened people is the strength of the government. The moderate stand of the Indian National Congress is acclaimed for pursuing the line of thought upheld by the author. Progress in the fields of transportation and communication and industry is highly appreciated by him. Tantalized by the loaves of employment, industrial prosperity and a share in governance typical of the intermediary communities the author is all praise for the British rule. He fails to comprehend the awesome situation that arose from the disastrous results of the British

rule in the economic realm and the plight of the lower sections of the society whose burning issues were social justice, civic rights and liberation from the oppression of Varna Dharma. He could not understand how the internal contradictions in Indian society marred the progress of the national formation of the Indians. The author shows impatience with the drain theory and the criticism levelled against the failure of British government on various parts of governance by some of the Congressmen. Unbounded faith in the British sense of justice and the great expectation of an emerging politically liberal and democratic India blinded the author to the internal realities of the Indian situation. For instance he does not grasp the wider dimension the rift between the Hindus and the Muslims as a communal problem could have assumed in future on the body politics of India. In fact, the author reveals his prejudice against the Muslims by representing one of them as an unscrupulous and dishonest criminal. The masses have no place in his political thought. He is hopeful that India would have her deliverance under the tutelage of British rule with the participation of a few English educated Indians and that ultimately power would be transferred to the Indians with the rise of a politically educated group capable of managing self government. He takes an extremely moderate view of Indian politics of his time like most of the English educated Indians.

The author seems to be scornful of the masses and unconcerned with the socially backward classes. In fact the latter formed the masses. It cannot but be stated that he was representing the sectarian view of the elite class of India belonging to the socially intermediary class below the

Brahmanas who were fortunate to have considerable means to afford English education. Yet he envisaged a liberal, secular and democratic polity as against one of Varna Dharma for the future India.

The sectarian approach of Chandu Menon to the cause of social liberation limiting its scope to the particular community of Nairs is substituted by a universal approach in not so well-known a novel⁶ that came in 1892. It advocates the case of complete transformation of the social order of the Hindu population from Brahmanas at the top to the Chandalas at the bottom by destroying its foundation of Brahmanical ideology of Varna Dharma and the hierarchical structure. Its author Potheri Kunjambu also came from the legal profession. He was an advocate and a known social reformer. Strictly speaking Kunjambu, a Thiyya by caste, came from the category of outcastes.

He had a purpose in producing this novel. It was written with the objective of enlightening and not of entertaining the readers, on the need of spreading education among the servile classes for their upliftment⁷. To him, of all the wealth learning is the most important. According to the author the Indians of ancient times had this realisation and they were able to build up a glorious civilization which was renowned for its highest achievement in the realms of thought. Quoting the historian Ramesh Chandra Dutt the author argues that Indian civilization was ruined and India reduced to a pathetic condition under the existing foreign domination

6. Potheri Kunjambu, *Saraswathivijayam*, in George Irumpayam, ed., *Nalu Novalukal*, Trichur, 1985, pp. 49-124.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

due to the wretched caste system which condemned servile classes to a life of misery and degradation. So enlightenment was the best way to lead them to light. It is on this platform that the author introduces his case through a story in the new literary form in which he presents numerous social problems associated with the economic and political factors of his day⁸. The lofty ideal of service to man, as enshrined in the teaching of Sri Narayana that "What one does for this own happiness should be for the happiness of the other too" was the motivating force behind this attempt of Kunjambu^{8a}. He believed that man makes his own destiny and the fruits of the great works of great men survive them through the society.

The story of the novel develops from an act of oppression. Marathan, a Pulaya boy is beaten up by Darutty the Nambiar steward of a Namboothiri *jenmi* named Kuberan for singing a song. The boy leaves the place for fear of further harassment and coincidentally a dead body appears in the nearby river. The enemies of the Namboothiri, some Mopilahs, take up the incident to involve the Namboothiri in a murder case alleging that the deadbody is of the Pulaya boy. The Pulaya boy in the meantime has taken refuge with the Christian missionaries and converted to Christianity. He receives English education, secures employment in the judicial service and finally becomes a judge. Other developments take place with the incident and the Namboothiri and his steward are brought to trial afterwards, allegedly for the murder of Marathan. Incidentally Marathan, whose name has been changed to

8. Ibid.

8a. Ibid.

Yesudasan, himself as the judge, happens to preside over the trial and the culprits are acquitted. Meanwhile Kuberan Namboothiri's daughter Subhadra is subjected to *smarthavicharam* by the manipulations of his enemies in his own community. Subhadra is excommunicated and abandoned by all. She also finds asylum with the Christian missionaries along with her children. She gets some job and her children are educated. Her elder daughter is married to Yesudasan. Marathan's success in life is brought about by two factors, namely English education, and his conversion to Christianity. According to the author Christianity as distinct from Varna Dharma ideology, stands for the values of individual liberty, equality, dignity of labour and compassion and service to man. These values helped not only Marathan, the Pulaya boy, but also Subhadra the Namboothiri woman. Her children get English education and their minds are completely liberated from caste prejudices.

The conversion of the two characters Marathan and Subhadra who belong to the lowest and highest castes respectively, is not an intellectual one. Nor is it for material benefit. The oppressive and reactionary nature of the ideology of Varna Dharma is responsible for the incidents that led to it. Christianity and English education help them to become human beings by imbibing certain human values which were not inculcated by Varna Dharma ideology. The focus is not on conversion but English education which opens the native mind to certain values essential for making men real human beings and for the social and material progress. It also conveys the message that if the Hindus are not mending their ways by bidding farewell to the outdated traditions and laws developed

by Varna Dharma ideology conversion to Christianity and the extinction of Hindu population would be the results.

Kuberan Namboothiri is represented as a man of superficial learning in traditional scriptures and epics, and a simple-minded ignoramus typical of his class. He is a rich *jenmi* also. Blinded with the Varna Dharma concept he is oppressive to his tenants and workers. He sincerely believes that a Pulaya boy taking to education would change the climate, and cause the destruction of crops which would result in poverty. Violation of Varna Dharma would bring about all kinds of miseries and he comments that that is what is happening under British rule. Though the Namboothiri's is a superstitious belief, it has a factual basis. If all were taking to education and learning that would lead to their engagement in different callings and the emergence of a free society. That would cause the disruption of the kind of command economy, stagnant in nature and based on agriculture, with shortage in supply of labour from particular castes, and the rigid structure of society to the effect of the Namboothiri's loss of the privileged social rank and the economic stability he enjoyed as superior by caste and *jenmi*. Certainly it would be a calamity to his class. That is why the Varna System was developed and preserved by them and denied learning to the lower classes. Lacking the knowledge of social dynamics of the new circumstance surcharged with the evangelical activities, developments in industry and business and the rule of a new hegemonical class of alien culture having vested political and economic interests, Kuberan Namboothiri fails to understand the demand of his time. The

novel is intended for making his class aware of the requirements of the time for their own good and the good of others suffering under their ideology.

The setback of the Brahmanas began with the change of governance. Rule of law, equality before law and no protection of sectarian interests by the government were all against the traditional Varna Dharma ideology. Kuberan Namboothiri regrets that there is no ruler like the ideal ruler Lord Rama who killed the Sudra who did penance and caused the death of a Brahmana child, and protected the interests of the Brahmana. He is so simple-minded to complain that, inspite of his observance of the scriptural rites and rituals, he is not capable of securing sacredness. He is at once jealous of the lower castes getting education and is obstinate in observing the caste rules like untouchability and unapproachability. He still believes that the magical power of the Namboothiris would protect them from all sins. The author holds that their closed life without any interaction with the outside world is responsible for their prejudices and cruelties. They deceive the people by unjust rules written down in Sanskrit, the language of the Brahmanas, which is not known to the common people. They interpret them according to their interests like the gem merchants who deceive customers by selling fake gems. The author hints at the superimposition of the accretions of Brahmanical literature on the lofty philosophical concepts of the ancient Indians. This they do to keep others ignorant for their fame and earnings. To ensure that the people do not abandon their ignorant ways, the Brahmanas themselves observe superstitious practices and become victims of self deception and remain ignorant and insensible. They remain apathetic to the sufferings of their

fellows also. They are the trustees of temples and they get huge amount from the people irrespective of castes. But nothing is spent for the welfare of the lower classes by giving education and wealth to them. The Namboothiri believes that it is against the *Smriti*. He reiterates his belief that varnas are the creation of Lord Brahma, on the authority of *Manu Smriti*. The Namboothiri is of the opinion that conversion of the so called Hindus of the lower rung is not because of their ignorance of their faith but due to their sins in the previous life. The Namboothiri does not realise that man's fate is determined by man himself.

The author makes the Namboothiri quote freely from the *Manu Smriti*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* to show how the Brahmanas perpetuate their hegemony on the authority of these works. While the Namboothiri has a shallow knowledge of the scriptures the Tamil Brahmana character is ignorant of even the epics and the *Puranas*. He is extremely cunning and always motivated by monetary profit as he has been depicted by Kunchan Nambiar. He is most selfish and has no compassion at all.

The author draws a pathetic picture of the hegemonical class. By nature the Brahmanas, both Malayali and Tamil, are cowards and they grow up as good for nothing because of their dependence on others for every thing. For this reason they are exploited also. Most of them depend on the *uttupuras* run by Nairs, or temples for their meals. To hide the humiliation their argument is that it is to secure the grace of God to the persons who run the *uttupuras* and the members of their families that

they are taking food from these *uttupuras*. They fail to see the loss of self respect by what they are doing.

As *jenmis* the Brahmanas and the Nairs have no sympathy for the sufferings of the working class who produce their wealth. In spite of the legal abolition of slavery the Brahmana treats the Pulayas as slaves. Though the author has no prejudice against the Muslims, the Brahmanas are described as having prejudice against them as the enemies of Varna Dharma. But the economic interests are more important as a factor of their enmity because the Muslims are the tenants of the Brahmanas without ritual dominance. It is interesting to note how the author of the servile class is trying to read the social relations from the stand point of economic and class interests. Internal feuds over temple properties and jealousy among the Brahmanas are not rare. Kuberan Namboothiri has earned the enmity of one Bhavasarmen Namboothiri and he does not hesitate to take vengeance against Kuberan Namboothiri when he got an opportunity. By manipulation he secures the royal permission for the *smarthavicharam* of Subhadra the daughter of Kuberan Namboothiri. The influence of money and the injustice in denying cross examination involved in *smarthavicharam* and its meaninglessness are effectively highlighted by the author. Wrong notions and false prestige made the Brahmanas parasites on the society. They are not able to understand that in changing situation their beliefs and practices brought only humiliation to them. As Varna Dharma attached stigma to all the callings except scriptural duties the Brahmanas were not engaging in agricultural or commercial or industrial pursuits. By presenting a Namboothiri

character as a hard working agriculturist having individuality and self respect and who is capable of quoting authorities to justify his action the author conveys the idea that no stigma should be attached to any useful work and anybody can do any useful work he likes that would add to the prosperity and well-being of the individual and the whole society. He is actually exhorting the Namboothiris to come down from the dream world to the realities of life and take up useful jobs for their own benefits.

Kuberan Namboothiri is actually innocent and he has undergone sufficient sufferings for his ignorance and naivety and the author absolves him of guilt. The author has no prejudice against the Brahmanas but has only sympathy for them. By the time of his acquittance a catharsis has taken place in Kuberan Namboothiri who is enlightened by his acquaintance with the outside world and the miserable experiences of his family and himself. Through the character Kuberan Namboothiri the author is urging his class to open their eyes to the realities of the changing world around them and to become self aware.

The actual name of the Namboothiri's steward is Ramankutty. Being a Sudra he has no right to be called by that good name. So he is called Darutty. Darutty as the servant of the Namboothiri suffers much for his ignorant act of beating up the Pulaya boy in his enthusiasm for implementing the Varna Dharma though he has no elementary knowledge of Hindu scriptures. He used to read the epics of *Mahabharata* and *Adhyatma Ramayana* without knowing their meaning. The subjection of the well-to-do families of his community to Brahmanical supremacy by

faith and the matrilineal system of inheritance they follow are explained as the causes of their financial crisis and bankruptcy.

The novel is an effective and most realistic exposition of the working of the Varna Dharma ideology in social life with all its allied evils and injustices when society was in a transitional stage in the wake of the colonial governance and the missionary activities. The author often quotes from the epics *Mahabharata* and *Adhyatma Ramayana* and the *Panchatantram* in justification of values superimposed by Brahmanical constructs. The author, like Chattampi Swamikal and Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi, takes the stand that Indian thought and religion were rationalistic and humanistic and it was the Varna Dharma - *Karmakanda* ideology that defiled them. It is suggestive of a revival of the real values taught by Indian philosophical tradition, and not the theological tradition, and what is rational and just in the Indian religious literature. The novel does not suggest conversion to Christianity as a solution for the ills of the society. He tries to show that certain values of Christianity required for a just and free society are actually available in Indian tradition, and advocates enlightenment through learning as the title of the work indicates. Ignorance and wrong constructs are responsible for the evils of the day and modern education would help to bring victory over them, the author suggests.

Moreover the author is under no illusion of the perfectness of the new system. References to the concoction of evidences and corruption among the officers are proof to his belief that administration of justice

under the British is not foolproof. The inhuman methods used by the police to extort evidence also is criticised. A context has been created to enlighten the readers on the horrid consequences of intemperance. Aside from the literary merit of the novel it may rightly be said that the reader can hear the heartbeats of a humanistic social critic in the novel. It is a plea for the total transformation of the society, devoid of class consciousness or self consciousness but having only false consciousness and sectarianism, into a free and egalitarian set up. The need of making and mastering changes for the betterment of life through a realistic and rational effort is repeatedly stressed. The novel is written with the specific purpose of advocating social reform with more insight into the social problems the Malayalis were facing than that displayed by the one of Chandu Menon though in literary merit it is inferior to the latter. Liberty, equality, fraternity, rationalism, free thinking and humanism are the ideals the author, who was a social activist, stands for.

The sober reaction to the ideology of Varna Dharma in these two novels turns to a bitter one in a novel⁹ written by K.M. Panikkar, the historian, and published in 1932. In this novel the hero is led to kill the Brahmana and uproot the deity consecrated in the temple, the source and symbol of Brahminical hegemony. They are the acts of vengeance of a Nair youth for the cruel oppression he and his family suffered at the hands of a Brahmana lord. The novel is written with the purpose of explaining the social customs of the day in the sixteenth century. The

9. K.M. Panikkar, *Parankipatayali*, Calicut, 1989 (1st ed. 1932).

story is imaginative but it revolves around certain historical events and the hero of the novel is a replica of a real character¹⁰. Anyhow the author's indignation against the Varna Dharma ideology and the evils and injustices associated with its practice are well represented in this novel. The use of violence in a vengeful action against the oppressor by the oppressed is reflective of the impatience with the slow progress in the destruction of the old regime of Varna Dharma to bring about social change since the novel is written in the post-Russian Revolutionary period.

The story of the novel goes like this. The young Narayanan Nair incurs the wrath of a Brahmana lord of his village by unknowingly and unintentionally polluting him. Already the Brahmana has a spite against his family for not giving Narayanan Nair's sister in *sambandham* to the brother of the Brahmana. For these reasons the Brahmana lord uproots the *tarwad* of Narayanan Nair and murders all the members of his family except himself who manages to escape and his sister sought for *sambandham* alliance. Narayanan Nair embraces Christianity and joins the naval force of the Portuguese. By dint of merit, honesty, integrity, diligence, daring and similar qualities he rose to the enviable position of a Dom i.e. a hidalgo or lord of ability. Such promotion to a higher position by qualities of initiative, integrity and enterprise was unimaginable in the Varna set up of Kerala. Towards the end of the story the hero alongwith some Portuguese soldiers, taking an opportunity, plunders the rich temple of his native village after razing the deity to the ground by his

10. Ibid., Introduction, pp. 7-8.

foot with utmost contempt and then goes to the house of the old Brahmana lord and kills him. In this attempt he himself succumbs to fatal injury and dies. When the Brahmana lord comes into his hands the hero's sorrow at the razing of his *tarwad* and the departure from his community completely disappears. To quote the words of the author, "He had never felt any sorrow for conversion. But he forgot at this moment the humiliation and the bitter agony he felt for becoming a dependent of the foreigners and for polluting the grace of the motherland by fighting against his own fellowmen"¹¹. The author feels that the natives' conversion to Christianity and their service under the foreigners are the results of the Varna Dharma ideology and the system and practices perpetuated by it. At the moment the hero comes to know about the death of the woman whom he protected incidentally when she was sent out of the family for adultery without having evidence - a practice common in those days - Narayanan Nair feels that his oath to take revenge against the society in which he is born as his irrefutable duty. As the author remarks, "He has no doubt that the faith and the social relation that preserves these barbarian practices are born in the brain of the devil"¹². The author who remained a Hindu till his last breath feels that the Varna Dharma set up of the Hindus is intolerable, irrational and unjustifiable and it has to be destroyed. When the hero is on his mission to loot the temple, he tells his followers, "Dear friends, the purpose of our mission today is to pillage one of the important dwelling places of the devil in the land. No doubt

11. Ibid., p. 203.

12. Ibid., p. 182.

we will have the blessings of God in that attempt"¹³. Even to God the Varna Dharma set up is intolerable in the opinion of the author. His concept of God and the belief in personal gods and their worship are contradictory. He takes the personal gods of *karmakanda* ideology as devils. The presence of the foreigners, the invaders and the missionaries, is held as a blessing for the oppressed to escape the horrors of the establishment. In this novel also the liberation of the Nair community of the lesser lords is the cause of the author. But Panikkar has very effectively depicted the horrors and injustice of the Varna Dharma regime with a factual basis. Like Kunjambu, the present author also points at the worthlessness of the accumulation of wealth in Hindu temples in the form of gold, silver and money that would ultimately be plundered. The Western educated author argues for the rewarding of individual initiative, enterprise and capability as against the feudal and Varna Dharma values that lead to stagnation.

Panikkar cannot be depicted as unpatriotic for writing a novel like this for he has proved to be an untainted patriot and nationalist by euologising Pazhacci Raja as a great patriot for his heroic fights against Tipu¹⁴. He could not justify or tolerate a set up that promoted only irrational and harmful practices that hindered the free and fair development of the society. He found the ways of the Christians very useful in this respect. For instance a Christian follower has the chance of consoling his mind by confession for amoral or immoral acts committed for

13. Ibid., p. 192.

14. -----, *Kerala Simham*, Trichur, 1957 (1st ed. 1941).

professional reasons and thereby the religion of Christianity provides utility to the individual. But the Nairs, the author feels, do not realise the reality and are being haunted by the devil in the form of their irrational faith that has no utility value at all.

In all the three novels women are described as an object of oppression by men in the Varna Dharma social set up. In *Indulekha* Kallianikutty is almost subjected to a rape while in *Saraswathi Vijayam* and *Parankipatayali* innocent women are vilified and made outcastes through manipulation. The wrath and spite of menfolk are the reason for these cruelties. While Chandu Menon is not eloquent on the fate of Kallianikutty the other two authors are indignant at the injustice meted out to the women and the set up responsible for it. They wanted it to be changed.

In the State of Travancore which had come under the overlordship of the British the earliest novelist of reputation was C.V. Raman Pillai. The novels that earned him fame were historical novels. Kingship, the relationship between the state and the subjects, administration etc., that is polity and its aspects, are the issues that interested the novelist. He is an advocate of monarchical rule. The monarch is seen as the god on earth¹⁵. King is not to rule as the servant of the priestly class namely the Brahmanas as conceived in *Keralolpathy*. He is to assert himself and be aggressive without looking for help from gods. Tipu earned the title of 'Tiger' for these qualities, the author points out¹⁶. The novelist laments

15. C.V. Raman Pillai, *Ramarajabahadur*, Kottayam, 1985, p. 117.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

the loss of feudalist values like the caste pride and greatness of birth which are to be followed in action by the Nair community of lesserlords but denounces the type of marital relations the royal family has with Brahmanas that impose unnecessary restrictions on the king¹⁷. A native state with a secular and absolute ruler is the ideal polity for Travancore that the author cherishes in his mind. The spiritual deliverer need not bother about the state and its affairs. They should be left to the secular authorities. A united and patriotic people with an absolute ruler form an ideal state that does not suffer from the feudal elements of discordance¹⁸. The ruler is to rule and not to seek salvation, the author asserts¹⁹. He reminds the king who laments the destruction of the temples that 'It is better for the gods, who are powerless to protect themselves, to stay in the heaven'²⁰. The primary duty of the king is not expected to be the protection of temples. The novelist who champions the cause of Marthanda Varma against Sri Padmanabhan Tampi who is determined to rule the kingdom on the traditional ideological line of Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology is actually seeking the liberation of the state from theological dictates. He dishonours the Brahmanical injunctions on statecraft by making an evil character in Dharma Raja justify human sufferings in terms of Varna Dharma ideology to absolve the ruler of moral responsibility for good governance²¹. Yet he does not negate the scriptural

17. Ibid., p. 261.

18. -----, *Dharmaraja*, Trivandrum, 1956, p. 348.

19. -----, *Ramaraja*, p. 225.

20. Ibid., p. 564.

21. -----, *Dharmaraja*, p. 439.

tradition of the country in toto. The author's endeavour is for a reading of the scriptural literature to orientate the readers towards new political ideas and ideals when he describes Ravana as the hero of heroes without disgracing Rama²². Ravana is an ideal absolute ruler for he fights to the last with conviction, and undaunted spirit and indefatigable energy. At the same time the author describes the upholders of the establishment in the name of *Vedas* and *Sastras* as untrustworthy people who make use of the state as an instrument of oppression²³. Liberation of the state from them is an ideal of the novelist. He earnestly desires the emancipation of Kerala from the unfounded disrepute earned under Brahmanical hegemony that 'Kerala is the land of womenfolk and her menfolk are sorcerers' through a secular and absolute rule of a monarch.

The society, the author idealises in his novels, is one which is constituted on the basis of equality and concord. He does not take caste as the determining factor of quality. Anybody of any community could become great by his personal merits and serve the state in that capacity is demonstrated through his characters who belong to different communities²⁴. In his own community he seeks the synthesis of the heritage of manliness and the sobriety cultivated by modern education as the demand of the time²⁵. He is for a sophisticated and morally regenerated Nair community endowed with a fighting spirit against obsolete

22. Ibid., p. 369.

23. -----, *Marthanda Varma*, Calicut, 1990, pp. 221-22.

24. Ibid., p. 98.

25. -----, *Dharmaraja*, p. 121.

values and institutions obstructive to moral, intellectual and material progress. Oppression in the name of caste would lead to violent upheavals in the society when it becomes unbearable, he warns²⁶. Caste discriminations are denounced and the right to equality for all is upheld when he reminds that life is there in the body of lower castes also and they too are the subjects of the state. He conceives the state as a collective institution of the people and the removal of caste discriminations is seen as an essential prerequisite of a secular and homogeneous society to create such a state. Religious equality also is seen as an essential factor for it. His Muslim characters are described as the trusted and dedicated soldiers of the cause of his hero Marthanda Varma²⁷. The Quran is considered as a great text that contains lofty and highly esteemable teachings. Aberrations of individual followers of Islam is not taken to generalise the character of the Muslim community²⁸.

The novelist appears as an advocate of rationalism and worldliness. He condemns the superstitious beliefs of the people but only with a sympathetic understanding of human nature²⁹. Being a shrewd observer of human nature the novelist takes man with all his merits and shortcomings. Man is not perfect. He is passionate, ambitious and has desires. At one place one of this characters makes a witty remark, "The Creator of desires and wrath should have known the consequences"³⁰.

26. -----, *Marthanda Varma*, p. 108.

27. -----, *Marthanda Varma*, Kottayam, 1973, pp. 325-27.

28. -----, *Ramaraja*, p. 361, *Marthanda Varma* (1990) p. 170.

29. -----, *Marthanda Varma*, p. 159.

30. -----, *Ramaraja*, p. 564.

He is not cynical or pessimistic about human nature. Being an imperfect creation of God what man can do is only to serve the cause of humanity³¹. Discarding the idea of personal god, God is conceived as a force immanent in this universe³². Just as the big fig tree comes from a seed left out by a small bird, comes the goal of human action without man knowing it. Like a historian of insight he is often aware of the great consequences of man's little actions. Such being the nature of life, nobody can boast of being omniscient³³. Whether God exists or not is a mute question. Man is incapable of knowing the ultimate truth. But being a social animal, man has to follow certain ethical values though the consequences of his actions may sometimes elude his purposes³⁴. The stress of the author is neither on the momentariness of life nor on the fate foreordained. Human fate comes from his actions the ultimate source of which is unknowable to man and the ultimate course of events to come remains beyond the foresight of man. What he can do is only to enrich his present life by consciously guided useful deeds. Human life is a creation of human actions and therefore those actions are to be guided by some secular, ethical values / beliefs without surrendering to a faith that perpetuates belief in personal gods and rites and rituals to propitiate such gods, is the rational stand taken by the author as against *karmakanda* theory. He considers the Indian philosophical tradition as a source of eternal and universal values which enjoins that the means should be equally good as

31. Ibid.

32. -----, *Dharmaraja*, p. 325.

33. Ibid., p. 235.

34. Ibid., p. 287.

the end³⁵. The morals of the *Puranas* which sometimes idealise tactical maneuvers resulting from cowardice are unjustifiable and unacceptable to him³⁶.

In all the three novels the author appears as a champion of freedom and equality of women. Taking the example of the *Puranas*, he shows that literature has not done justice to the womenfolk³⁷ as they always depicted the masculine world in which women are under-represented or misrepresented. He laments the negation of freedom for women to divorce the husband or to disapprove a marriage proposal. He appreciates the greatness of pure love of a woman for a man³⁸ and scorns at the pettiness of male love as the menfolk is pretentious of high intellectual calibre and discrimination³⁹. Probably it may be due to his respect and regard for the womenfolk that he staunchly supported the matrilineal system of inheritance, a legacy of the theocratic and feudal regime of Kerala. He sees maternity as a matter of certainty and paternity as a matter of opinion without being conscious of the insult to women latent in such a statement⁴⁰.

A rational and secular society based on equality and fraternity without serious concern for individual liberty united under the enlightened rule of an absolute monarch is envisaged as the ideal substitute in place

35. Ibid., p. 445.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 413.

38. -----, *Marthanda Varma*, p. 129.

39. Ibid., p. 218.

40. Ibid., p. 148.

of a segmented feudal social set up resting on a theological ideology by C.V. Raman Pillai.

Kundalatha is supposed to be the first novel in Malayalam. It was written by Appu Nedungadi (hereafter Nedungadi) who appears to be one of the earliest modernists among the writers in Kerala. He has stated in the preface of the book that the purpose of the novel is not to enlighten but to entertain the common people especially the womenfolk⁴¹. He is scornful of the Malayalis who waste time repeatedly reading the epics and the *Puranas* and other mythical works⁴². The pan-Indian outlook and the suggestive nature of his narration of the story that takes place out-side Kerala⁴³ where customs and usages are different, point to the author's dislike for some traditions of the land and the reluctance to attack them directly. At the same time he exhorts his fellowmen to open their mind to new mores and values for worldly success. The idea of the novelist to bringforth a mental revolution in the society through the womenfolk is attested by his attempt in real life to spread English education among them by founding the society for the promotion of English medium school under its auspices⁴⁴. Since the novel demonstrates the influence of the English novels and dramas on the writer⁴⁵, it is not difficult to see one of the ways through which modernity made its entry into the

41. Appu Nedungadi, *Kundalatha*, Calicut, 1987, (1st ed., 1887) p. Introduction.

42. Ibid., p. V.

43. Ibid.

44. Ulloor. S. Parameswara Iyer, *Kerala Sahitya Charitram*, University of Kerala, 1975 (3rd ed.,) p. 278.

45. Appu Nedungadi, *Kundalatha*, p. XXX.

native mind. English education was one of the ways for it. The author desired English education for the womenfolk to cultivate in them the qualities of kindness, integrity and fortitude⁴⁶.

The rationally cast mind of the author cannot tolerate the irrationality of his fellowmen in attributing the miseries of human life to the influence of planets believing in divination. He does not hide his contempt for it. The pseudo-science of astrology which is supposed to reveal all the events of past, present and future had always been a pet subject of the Malayalis. Nedungadi is for a causal explanation for the joys and sufferings as well of human life. Human life is seen as the creation of human beings. Most of the tragedies of human life are rooted in human actions. So to seek the cause for them in distantly situated innocent planets is quite absurd and it shows the ignorance of causal relations of human actions and their results⁴⁷, in his opinion.

Life has to be lived in this world. Wealth is required for it. It is not meant for hoarding or for unused accumulation. Never is it wasted when a part of it is spent for enjoyment without losing moderation is the motto of the author. He is against the negation of worldly life⁴⁸. This is a radical change of attitude towards life in contrast to medieval period.

A rational assessment of human character is a distinct quality of the author. He has an acumen to penetrate into the working of human mind. The observation of one of his characters on the nature of mind

46. Ibid., p. XXVI.

47. Ibid., p. 59.

48. Ibid., p. 61.

that it is not uncommon that the human mind loses its control of certain feelings, so well guarded from expression on ordinary occasions, and expresses them unconsciously in adverse circumstances⁴⁹ is a testimony for it.

The feudal legacy of the medieval period is vehemently denounced by the author in a positive manner when he puts the following words into the mouth of the same character. "What is impossible to be imbibed for intelligent individuals on enthusiastic determination!"⁵⁰. He is doubtful of the belief that talent is acquired over the ages⁵¹. He is not an atheist and he believes that the reality is known to God alone and certain things are not conceivable to human reason⁵². But human reason is taken as the guide to human action. Those who act without proper thinking on the consequences are considered as imbeciles⁵³. For, reason provides the sense of discrimination. Qualities like intelligence, brilliance, daring etc. are considered as the essentials for worldly success. As they are not inherited by birth, a status-oriented and caste based feudal society is denounced by him. Talents and qualities required for commercial and economic ventures are highly valued by the author. That he was the pioneer among the bankers of Kerala is a contextually important fact.

Vengayil Kunhیرaman Nayanar (1860 - 1914) was a known satirist of his times. Only a few stories we get from his pen. They are not

49. Ibid., p. 64.

50. Ibid., p. 65.

51. Ibid., p. 66.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., pp. 93-94.

praiseworthy for literary merit. But these few stories are exclusively humanistic in content. The author is not very successful in using his pen in conveying the values demanded by his times. Philosophical or social problems are not adopted as the theme. Some aspects of contemporary life like the aping of English manners, inefficiency and follies of the police officials, robbery, pickpocketing etc. are satirically depicted in some of his stories⁵⁴. In one of them the institution of *marumakkathayam* is described as an unjust one⁵⁵. In another story the cruelty of dispossessing and reducing one's family to the status of orphans by the practice of the same institution is well represented showing how the hard-earned property of a deceased man who has never been helped by any relatives is robbed from his wife and children by a man pretending to be a nephew⁵⁶. Taking reason as the guide in human life this author also represents the idea that man is the maker of his destiny⁵⁷.

Though the author does not seem successful in conveying his progressive ideas through story telling, the deficiency is compensated by his prose works. Male oppression of women is discussed in one of his articles. He sees throughout history male chauvinism dominating society on the principle that might is right. The selfishness of male-folk still continues this oppressive practice and prevents the female from obtaining her due share of social respect. She is not granted equality which is

54. Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, *Kesari Nayanarute Kritikal*, K. Gopalakrishnan, ed., Kozhikode, 1987.

55. -----, "Ente Anubhavam", *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

56. -----, "Oru Pota Bhagyam", *Ibid.*, pp. 27-31.

57. -----, "Vasanavikriti", *Ibid.*, pp. 2-6.

actually required to make man perfect because of man's selfishness. Man was always put in an advantageous position as he got education and opportunities which were denied to woman. All the law codes, epics and the *Puranas* were so produced by man as to serve only male interests. This brought about the pathetic condition of women⁵⁸. In Kerala chastity is prescribed for women while man is allowed licentiousness. In Europe Christianity has prescribed chastity for man also. He is to practise monogamy. Such customs and values are responsible for the wonderful prosperity and wealth of the Europeans. Here the dumbness and degeneration are largely caused by the immoral practices like polygamy, most suitable to birds and animals, and innumerable caste divisions⁵⁹. Here the hegemonical class of Brahmanas, the so called gods on earth, who are to set an example for others are leading an immoral life. The notorious practice of having unlimited and unregulated open and secret marital alliances of these people is not considered as a sin by them or the society. In contrast to this, morality is strictly enforced among the Christian priests⁶⁰. So for the moral and material regeneration of the Malayali society the author feels that the eradication of the outdated mores and customs perpetuated by the ideology of Varna Dharma is very essential. Attainment of social equality and the removal of uncivilized practices are considered by him as a prerequisite for political independence. He also believes that rational and scientific methods of

58. -----, "Acharaparishkaram", *Ibid.*, p. 92.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

cultivation are required in place of superstitions to increase the prosperity of the country⁶¹.

He attacks the categorisation of time into *yugas* and suggests that the argument that early mortality is a characteristic feature of *Kaliyuga* is an excuse for their inertia and laziness in starting new ventures, for a part of the earth instead of the whole would not be affected by the evil nature of the time⁶². He observed that this is not the age of physical might for success. Education and enlightenment are the requirements of the present age for worldly success⁶³ the author reminds.

The author is well aware of the adverse effect the caste system could bring on the Kerala society and economy. The practices of untouchability and unapproachability are considered as morally sinful and materially horribly injurious. At a time when there was nobody to call them aside the so called low caste people complied with such customs. But in the changed circumstances there are people, the missionaries, to give them shelter. Large scale conversion to Christianity, an ideology of equality and fraternity, would have brought about an alarmingly perilous situation in the country. So he warns and suggests that the so called low castes, the working class, are to be uplifted morally and mentally to attain a homogeneous casteless society. He reminds the higher castes that it is their moral responsibility⁶⁴.

61. -----, "Krishiparishkaram", Ibid., p. 100.

62. -----, "Kerala Jenmi Sabha", Ibid., p. 108.

63. Ibid., p. 108.

64. Ibid., pp. 112-13.

The rational sense of the author, reflective and symbolic of the transition due to colonial presence from traditional to modern mind, finds expression in his longing for self awareness. He laments that the native mind neglects its own past while it shows an enthusiasm for the past of the west. He complains that the native mind is pitiably ignorant of the great contemporary poets, writers and scientists and the condition of the ancestors of the mother country⁶⁵. At the same time he is against any kind of fetishism for the native heritage, claiming superiority over the conquerors and for the manners and customs of the Westerners as well⁶⁶. He is for assimilation and reform but without the loss of identity. Scorn for tradition and utility oriented western education without seeking enlightenment are criticised by him⁶⁷. The observations of the critical faculty of the author are pointers to the demands of the transitional period. He wants universal education and literary activities to be encouraged so as to bring about a mental revolution leading to value changes. The growing self awareness of the author, typical of the time, exhorts self evaluation in comparison to the whiteman and non-Keralites. The longing of the author for all-round progress of the society, is so compelling that he advocates the opening of the closed social mind of the traditionally exclusive society to the outer world to be inclusive and eclectic⁶⁸.

N. Kumaran Asan (1873-1924) popularly known in Kerala as Asan (hereafter Asan) was a poet of genius produced by the class of outcastes.

65. -----, "Mahakavikalute Jeevakalam", Ibid., p. 57.

66. -----, "Bramam", Ibid., pp. 54-56.

67. -----, "Swabhasha", Ibid., pp. 52-54.

68. -----, "Kerala Jenmi Sabha", Ibid., pp. 107-15.

The most poignant representation of the social aspirations and the painful experiences of his and of the less fortunate classes was achieved by his pen. Hailing from the Travancore state notorious for the oppressive social set up well guarded by the Hindu rulers as the agents of the Brahmanical dharma, Asan was an intellectual protege of Sri Narayana. His association with Sri Narayana helped the philosophical foundation of his poems. In almost all his poems the illusory nature of the universe and the ephemeral character of life are emphatically depicted as the foundation of a new ideology that galvanised the social aspirations of the down-trodden communities. Sympathy for all the creations in this world is the basic passion of the poet. The poet tells us that the universe is in a flux where change is the law. Only becoming is the nature of the universe. The secret of creation remains a mystery. According to the *Sastras* the content of the creation disappears and reappears in a continuous process while the form remains constant. In such a world all are the creations of the same hand and so all are brothers. Shedding tears over the pathetic condition of the fallen flower will not do anything. This is the general rule for all that lives in this universe. Yet the world is ruled by illusion⁶⁹. Universal love and brotherhood are the values the poet arrives at when he reflects the transient nature of the world. The impermanence of the universe is not to disappoint man. The wise man must be aware of this fact and be prepared to keep up the integrity of the self⁷⁰. The wise men

69. N. Kumaran Asan, "Veenapoovu", in *Kumaranasante Padyakritikal*, Trivandrum, 1933, I, pp. 59-65.

70. -----, "Oru Simha Prasavam", *Ibid.*, pp. 69-75.

always make their life meaningful by serving others. Indulgence in worldly pleasure is selfishness. Selfishness is to be transcended by identifying the self with the whole through devotion to the well-being of others, as the essence of the universe is love and that alone is the one truth. In the changing world of life what remains permanent is the universal love that transcends all creeds and sectarian practices and worldly riches. Love of human beings is to be realised in this world itself and not in the other world⁷¹.

An in depth thought about human life makes the poet gloomy and cynical. Human life is seen as utterly contemptible because of man's limitations. He fails to do what he desires; when he gets a chance to do what he desires, the desire itself changes; he can't understand the feelings of others; and his life is short and full of uncertainties⁷². Human life is meaningless like the wind that blows aimlessly. Nobody knows why he is born, from where he is born, and whither he moves. Everything appears to be a mystery⁷³. Yet he seizes on this world so passionately without knowing that it is an illusion. Pitiably though human life, ridiculous is his ceaseless ignorance⁷⁴.

The cynical view of the poet about human life makes him think constructively and forms the strong foundation of his compassion for human beings. The result is a balanced view of life realising the reality

71. -----, "Nalini", in *Asante Padyakritikal*, Kottayam, 1998, pp. 53-90.

72. -----, "Leela", in *Kumaranasante*, I, p. 166.

73. -----, "Sri Buddhacharitam", *Ibid.*, p.. 258.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

about it. By nature man loves the life on this earth. Ultimately that inexplicable love succeeds. The world is a mixture of pain and pleasure. The world is better for man than the heaven above and the hell below⁷⁵. The poet does not exhort us to seek salvation in life after death and he survives the medievalism of life negation. While the mystery of the world remains incomprehensible and man strives for the unknown in the fleeting world and man is caught in the web of ceaseless sorrow, chances of happiness are there in human life like the shining stars are there in the extreme darkness, and the tiny islands are there in the vast ocean. It is the nature of nature to blow with one hand and to pat with the other⁷⁶. Ultimately the poet recognises the dialectical nature of the world where the unending struggle between good and evil⁷⁷ is going on. He expresses unconditional gratitude to God for being fortunate to have been born in this lovable world to enjoy it⁷⁸. His God is not a personal god. He is the effulgence that burns in everything⁷⁹. That animates this universe and that is the incarnation of love⁸⁰.

Asan was a well known social reformer of Kerala. The direct attack on the social evils emanating from the ideology of Varna Dharma is the theme of one of his poems. In its introduction the poet states "Even though the Hindu society can be proud of the heritage of a great civilization

75. -----, "Prarodanam", in *Asante*, p. 380.

76. -----, "Chintavishtayaya Sita", in *Kumaranasante*, I. pp. 509-13.

77. -----, "Nishkapatatayotu", *Kumaranasante Padyakritikal*, Trivandrum, 1969, II, p. 97.

78. -----, "Iswaran", *Ibid.*, I, p. 93.

79. -----, "Iswaran", in *Asante*, p. 461.

80. -----, "Atmarpanam", in *Kumaranasante*, II. p. 259.

of ancient times, viewed in the light of modern ideals, it is to be admitted that that society still remains in the infant stage"⁸¹. The poet also states that the purpose of the poem is to keep alive the memory of the great calamity (The Malabar Rebellion) and the lessons it holds in such a way as to inspire reorganisation of the Hindu Social order⁸². The poet could not see any difference between the people who occupy the *aramana* and the hut, that is, the Brahmanas and Pariahs respectively, as they are created by the same hands, and states that it is the Varna Dharma ideology that destroyed the physical and mental capabilities of man and caused the fountain of love in the hearts of people to dry up. His bitterest criticism against it is that it suffocated the great philosophers, litterateurs and rulers of genius in the womb whom the Kerala society might have otherwise delivered, by suppressing the right to know and burgeon. Still crores are there among the down-trodden whose creative power is lost in the darkness, like the gems that could not see the whetstone⁸³. Bearing such a rich treasure in her womb India is not poor and helpless. If caste is eradicated from this country India will be able to attain whatever she desires, he opines⁸⁴.

The four Vedas hail the *Brahman* as the absolute without duality and as the essence of this universe. But the Brahmanas, the masters of the Vedas, command division and subdivision among human beings. This perverted interpretation of the Vedas kept the Hindus untouchable and

81. -----, "Duravasta", *Ibid.*, p. 105.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

83. *Ibid.*, pp 111-12.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

unapproachable to each other. "Lo, the condition of the lowest of the caste category at the bottom of the Hindu society is worse than that of cattle". So whines the poet. He wrote,

Of all creations, the Cherumans are considered so mean that even the grass does not make way for them. These two legged beings are good only to work in the field, to plough, to reap and to thresh for others. In a sense, the cattle would revolt if the cherumans are put with them, for the cows are holy things while these poor creatures are heinous and defiling at sight⁸⁵.

The caste oriented Hindu Society is a prison from which the unapproachables and untouchables seek freedom. It is a paradox that conversion to Islam brings overnight freedom, dignity and equality to the depressed classes. It is all due to the degeneration of Hinduism into *Namboothirimatham* as he calls the Brahmanical theology⁸⁶, the ideology of fascism. The poet is not for the conversion of the depressed classes to any other religion. He does not see conversion as a solution for their sufferings. Moreover to him it is not an easy task to uproot the tree of faith that has been deeply rooted in the mind even though it is true that there is no caste in other religions. Faith is light to man, and it is everything in life. If it is lost everything is lost and life will be like a ship without rudder⁸⁷. Being well versed in Indian philosophical tradition and the disciple of Sri Narayana, Asan was an ardent advocate of reformation

85. Ibid., pp. 112-13.

86. Ibid., pp. 128-29.

87. -----, "Duravasta", in *Asante*, p. 492.

of Hinduism as he has stated in the introduction to this poem. This attitude is consistent with the general rule of Sri Narayana that whatever may be one's religion man has to be good. And he was confident that the coming age would be of the down-trodden⁸⁸.

With utmost humility but in strong words the poet warns the hegemonical class, the exponents of the Vedas, that the feeble threads of traditions will not bind the people together forever. The time has changed. So the rules are also to be changed. Otherwise they would change them. The atmosphere of Kerala was being surcharged with the echo of these words. The poet was constrained to utter this much out of his solemn faith in the well-being of the country, and for the future of the Hindu religion and the good of the respectable class of Brahmanas⁸⁹. The poet is not for an absolute break with the past but is for the revival of the original and rational ideas of Hinduism as represented in the Upanisadic philosophy of Advaita which does not tolerate inequalities and oppression perpetuated by Brahmanical theology.

In another poem the poet presents his observations on caste and suggests how the state is to tackle the problem of caste. The poet is no advocate of any particular political ideology but wants the state to be an institution aimed at the goal of a homogeneous society based on love. The implied political ideals behind the demand are liberty, equality and fraternity of all the subjects. The great Buddha and his teachings are

88. Ibid., p. 468.

89. Ibid., p. 523.

source of the poet's social concepts. Humanism is the spirit of it. He explains caste as a false pretense of man. As an angry animal fights against the echo of its own voice, man fights himself in the name of caste. Is the Brahmana, who claims superiority over all, born from the plant, or the cloud or the sacrificial fire? Can his caste be identified from his blood or bone or marrow? Is the sperm of the *dvija* unconsumable to the womb of a Chandala woman? Are the sectarian caste marks of sandal paste on body, the holy thread, and tuft inherited by birth? Are the Brahmanas born with *Brahmajnana*? No. All the beings in the universe are the manifestations of the One, the Absolute. Through the chain of births and deaths the same essence takes different shapes. What then is the difference between man and man?⁹⁰ The poet asks, and then says,

That poor Pulaya is not the weed
That sprouts in the shadow of the paddy plant
He too is the plant, if grown together, no doubt
That gives the golden ears⁹¹

So the state, he continues, is not to adhere to the *Sastras* opposed to truth and justice. Self seekers often construct perverted meaning to them. The state should not accept rules derived from such false sources. Caste rules are such false derivations. Caste is synonym for the manifestation of egotism, hatred and the evil thinking. It is only a divisive force that destroys family and friends, and that will ultimately destroy

90. -----, "Chandalabhikshuki", in *Asante*, pp. 545-46.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 546. Trans. mine.

the world. It is an embodiment of all the evils, that may degenerate even the great. It is nothing but cruelty that torments incessantly the equals in their births, and makes the human birth a waste. The only solution to this problem, the poet suggests, is the abolition of it by law on the grounds of compassion and natural justice⁹². The divisive force, caste, that works havoc on the people, is the enemy of love, the force of creation and preservation. Asan is the poet of love. In his understanding, the world originates from love, the world prospers on love, the universe is sustained on by the power of love and the source of happiness for all is love. The essence of life itself is love and the absence of it means death⁹³. In short love is the creative and motivating force as the source of happiness. All progress comes from it. To attain human progress and the unity of all the people, caste, the enemy of love, is to be destroyed. The message of the poet can be so encapsulated. It is a clarion call for equality and fraternity and against the Varna Dharma of Brahmanical theology.

Being a pacifist like his guru Sri Narayana, Asan never advocated any violent revolution against the Varna Dharma. His also was an attempt to enlighten the people and inculcate new values like universal love, compassion for fellow creatures, tolerance and brotherhood. In this attempt like many others of his time he was influenced by the teachings of the Buddha. But he was not for conversion en masse of the depressed classes to Buddhism since he was well aware of the degeneration of Buddhism when it became a religion that upheld casteism⁹⁴. He was

92. Ibid., p. 548.

93. Ibid., p. 549.

94. -----, *Mataparivarthanarasavadam*, Trivandrum, M.E. 1109.

attracted by the universalism and egalitarianism of Buddhism and the Buddha's revolt against Brahmanical theology, the essence of which is exclusivism and ritualism. He was for the revival of the pagan philosophical Hinduism that stood for humanism and universal brotherhood, and casting off priestly Hinduism as a means of reforming Hindu society. This he believed could be achieved through peaceful enlightenment as, to a great extent, man is his own destiny maker⁹⁵ and his unawareness of it is the main reason for the degeneration of the society⁹⁶.

Asan's ideal was a simple and egalitarian society. The principle that preserves the world is mutual service and mutual dependence. So individual's life should be devoted to the well-being of others. He should not waste an opportunity for it whenever it comes⁹⁷. His own prayer to God is for his mercy upon him and the prosperity of the world. "Let the sorrows be gone and happiness come even to my enemies" he prays⁹⁸. Ideological dogmatism would not do any good for man. The fragrance and nectar of a flower are lost when squeezed. Similarly too much interpretation and legalism would only destroy the beautiful flower that is religion. Life is too short to dream away. Seek serenity of mind without lamenting the limitations and sorrow of life. It is better for man to limit desires for worldly pleasures, and learn to love everybody⁹⁹, he observes. What he seeks from God is the feeling of fraternal love for all beings in

95. -----, "Karuna", in *Kumaranasante*, II, p. 241.

96. -----, "Chandalabhikshuki", *Ibid.*, p. 214.

97. -----, "Duravasta", *Ibid.*, p. 162.

98. -----, "Nisaprarthana", *Ibid.*, p. 91.

99. -----, "Ente Pranaman", in *Asante*, p. 616.

this world¹⁰⁰. Though the poet is not speaking on socialism or communism, he envisages a society that transcends all kinds of sectarianism and that is based on universal love, fraternity and equality. The immediate requirement of his time was not economic equality but a place in humanity for the depressed, the recognition of the human being as a human being. Civil rights and all kinds of equalities were to spring from the foundation of that recognition.

Asan was proud of the rich philosophical heritage of India¹⁰¹ and had a pan-Indian outlook. But like his contemporaries Chandu Menon and Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar he also was doubtful whether India deserved independence and self government in the given conditions of his time. All the three were discontent with the social condition. When the uppercastes opposed the opening of English education to the depressed classes Asan justly saw it as a deliberate attempt to prevent them from acquiring government jobs and share in political power. A disappointed and bewildered poet sang then,

Why O! Mother India you are crying?
O Mother! enslavement is predestined for you
Just think, why you must have self government
When your sons are being ruined by caste feuds¹⁰²

The poet is not advocating enslavement for India. The poet who states that 'enslavement is more horrible to the proud than death' cannot

100. -----, "Prabhata Prathana", in *Kumaranasante*, II, p. 77.

101. -----, "Duravasta", *Ibid.*, p. 112.

102. -----, "Oru Thiyyakuttiyute Vicharam", *Ibid.*, pp. 329-30. Trans. mine.

be supposed to have longed for the continuation of the colonial rule in India. His is a justifiable fear felt by the down-trodden classes that if India secured independence in the given condition of caste divisions and oppression the depressed classes would again be kept in darkness by the fascist rule of the upper castes. In other words freedom of India would mean the freedom of the uppercastes and the enslavement of the depressed. The contemporary enslavement was seen only as a logical culmination of the age old oppression of the large majority of the Hindu society by the minority of caste Hindus, especially the Brahmanas the hegemonical class. Compared to the past the colonial rule was felt to be an enlightened one by those who could very well understand the whole gamut of moral degeneration and material backwardness of the pre-colonial India, from the existing conditions. His stand is the same as that of the Indian National Congress under the moderate leadership which was for the continuance of British rule in India.

Men like Asan saw the better treatment of the depressed classes under the colonial rulers. Colonial rule was far better than the Brahmanical hegemony since the depressed classes were considered as human beings under its cultural imperialism. When imbibing the teachings of the Vedas and Upanisads, and being proud of them Asan was a nationalist, not a rigid nationalist but a liberal nationalist. 'One nation, one language, one God and one society for you' is the slogan he raised¹⁰³. He was not at all inspired by the sectarian nationalism of the erstwhile ruling class who had lost something. Asan and his ilk had nothing to be

103. -----, "Prabhata Nakshatram", in *Kumaranasante*, II, p. 263.

proud of the past and had nothing to be lost. But now they had much to gain, especially the social deliverance under the rule of law of the new masters. The economically exploitative nature of the colonial rule was not a problem to be seriously thought of and to make them jump into the vortex of a political struggle for independence for the depressed classes. On the other hand Asan was singing for the social freedom of the subaltern class in the favourable atmosphere created by the change of political masters. The colonial subjugation of the country proved to be a blessing in disguise for the down-trodden because of the internal contradictions of the Indian society. They could see the dawn of a new era of social freedom under the imperialist yoke. Asan was convinced that India was attaining peace and prosperity under the British rule¹⁰⁴.

Women characters in his works are always treated as respectable beings and not as the instruments of pleasure for the menfolk. They, like the depressed classes, enjoy the compassion of the poet. The feelings of a helpless woman deserted by her regal husband to satisfy the scandal mongers of the kingdom are most sympathetically represented by the poet^{104a}. The righteous Rama, according to the poet, turns an oppressor with the assumption of throne to preserve the Brahmanical dharma. The killing of a Sudra *muni* and the desertion of Sita for no crime of hers and her exile into the forest are acts of cruelty in the eyes of the poet. Rama without power, as a man, husband and lover is an ideal person. Rama in

104. -----, "Delhi Kiritadharanam", in *Asante*, p. 635.

104a. -----, "Chintavishtayaya Sita", p. 414 ff.

power simply becomes an agent to implement the dharma of Brahmanical theology, that is Varna Dharma and *Karmakanda*, and becomes oppressive to the depressed classes and women who are denied human rights treating them on par with the Sudras. He has now become the defender of an oppressive ideology which guides his administration. Being coronated to establish the kingdom of Varna Dharma, Rama becomes a slave of tradition that negates values of love and fraternity. He is now the champion of the hegemonical class¹⁰⁵ who rules according to the *Sruti*. The righteous Rama could not turn the evil state into the righteous state but he takes on the evil nature of the state. The poet believes that, like the depressed classes, the womenfolk also are not to be oppressed. They are treated as human beings mutually complementary to the menfolk in all his works. To him gender inequality is as condemnable as caste inequality.

Asan was a worshipper of the goddess of liberty. Liberty for him is not a right to be enjoyed by a few. He prostrates himself before the sun that regulates this entire world by dispelling the darkness with the rays of liberty and equality for all¹⁰⁶. For the poet liberty and equality are mutually corresponding human rights and caste system is one that denies both these rights to the down-trodden classes. Caste discrimination is the dictate of the cruel tyrants who have no compassion for the fellow creatures¹⁰⁷. He urges the youth to fight against them. His prayer to the

105. -----, "Chintavishtayaya Sita", in *Kumaranasante*, I, pp. 540, 533.

106. -----, "Parivarthanam", in *Asante*, p. 575.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 591.

king is to free the depressed subjects from the chains of slavery¹⁰⁸. In his urge to fight against caste discrimination he reminds the youth not to hurt anybody but to die without succumbing to the arrogance of the enemies, the exponents of Varna Dharma. The poet believes that liberty itself is the nectar, liberty itself is life, and subjection is more horrible than death for the proud¹⁰⁹. Asan's prime concern is social freedom of the individual. Transcending all the sectarian barriers the poet expounds the cause of universal humanism in all his writings. Liberty, equality and universal fraternity are the ideals that he advocates for the new world. Tolerance and enlightenment are the weapons he upholds as the means to achieve them.

Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer (hereafter Ulloor) was a well-known poet and contemporary of Asan. To him also the main challenges of the time were caste discrimination and the heterogeneous nature of the Hindu society. He also responded to those challenges in the same manner as Asan. The basis of his ideology is monism. Taking the standpoint that the essence of all is the One, the Absolute¹¹⁰, Ulloor preaches the equality and brotherhood of all human beings. Good always stays along with wisdom. Wisdom is realisation. Good accompanies it. Stating so, the poet hints at the absence of both these qualities in Sankara, the great commentator on Advaita, who failed to see the presence of God in

108. -----, "Swatantryagatha", Ibid., p. 502.

109. -----, "Oru Udbodhanam", in *Kumaranasante*, II, p. 288.

110. Ulloor. S. Parameswara Iyer, "Aikyagatha", pp. 51-52. "Maru", p.68. "Premasangeetham", pp. 1,4 in *Manimanjusha*, place (?) M.E. 1108. *Vidurabhiksha*, Trivandrum, 1965, p. 26.

fellowmen before his attainment of realisation. Referring to Sankaracharya the poet says that by writing *Brahma Sutra Bhashya* and securing the victory stand of omniscience one cannot attain salvation. It requires the realisation that all are parts of the same God, the Whole¹¹¹. Referring to the story of Sankaracharya's mistake in asking the Chandala to 'go away' that tarnished his image, Ulloor warns his fellow caste-men not to repeat it by practising untouchability and unapproachability. Caste only helps to perpetuate enmity between man and man in this world¹¹². Human beings are the manifestation of the same essence but they are different only in aptitude or qualities¹¹³. So, caste barriers are artificial creations of man himself and he criticises the meaninglessness of the purity - pollution practices¹¹⁴.

Asserting change as the nature of the universe¹¹⁵ the poet puts stress on the need for reforming the society. In the world of becoming it is wise to bring changes in life consistent with the changing situations. That would help the regeneration of the world¹¹⁶. In fact the past does not die. When the pure in the ancient is perpetuated by discarding the impure, the ancient always becomes modern. Only those who do not know what is ancient and what is modern would oppose the modern¹¹⁷. Seeing the

111. -----, "Maru", in *Manimanjusha*, p. 73.

112. -----, "Soubratraganam", in *Tharaharan*, Trivandrum, 1985, p. 61.

113. -----, *Vidurabhisiksha*, p. 93.

114. -----, "Ambalakulam", in *Kalpasakhi*, Trivandrum, 1962, pp. 94-107.

115. -----, *Pingala*, Trivandrum, 1963, p. 5.

116. -----, "Bhama", in *Manimanjusha*, p. 66.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

reality of rise, growth, decline and decay as the unchanging process of the world, the poet is very much progressive-minded to recognise the need and inevitability of change as a requisite for progress in the evolution of this universe. Ulloor also is a poet of love who writes.

Like the bright, moon that provides us all with elixir

The one religion that ensures the prosperity of the world is love¹¹⁸

He contents that,

While the natural trait of the physical world is mutual attraction

Mutual love is the prime quality of all creatures¹¹⁹

Love is described as the soul force that brings happiness and well-being to humanity¹²⁰. From love emanates the feelings of compassion and brotherhood. Like Asan and others, Ulloor also finds these gems of ideals in Buddhism. He advocates the revival of the dharma of the Buddha against the Varna Dharma of Brahmanical theology to attain a world of equality and brotherhood¹²¹. They are the eternal values of human progress for the whole world and for all times¹²². So he advocates brotherhood, the absence of which is seen as the cause of all misfortunes of the country, as the necessity of the time for the Indians¹²³. For the attainment of brotherhood, the poet exhorts the people to be

118. -----, "Premasangeetam", *Ibid.*, p. 1. Trans. mine.

119. *Ibid.*, p. 3. Trans. mine.

120. -----, "Asamsaganam", in *Kalpasakhi*, p. 19.

121. -----, "Kapilavastuvile Karmayogi", in *Kiranaivali*, Trivandrum, 1966, pp. 97-106.

122. -----, "Soubratraganam", in *Taraharam*, p. 63.

123. -----, "Innathe Karthavyam", in *Kalpasakhi*, p. 106. "Asamsaganam", *Ibid.*, pp. 18-23.

compassionate. Compassion only inculcates service-mindedness. The self, the other and God, all being the same, the other can be transcended by identifying the other with the self. Then the happiness of the other and the agony of the other become the happiness and agony of the self¹²⁴. Service to the world is the greatest good¹²⁵ and the human being means one who does service to others¹²⁶. The altruistic philosophy of Sri Narayana is found echoing in the lines of Ulloor.

The poet is secular and rational in his attitude towards life. Human life is seen as a creation of man. Man himself is his enemy¹²⁷ and he himself is his friend also. The values of humanity, industry and compassion are the building blocks of human life and progress; man creates his own heaven or hell in this world itself¹²⁸. Nothing is impossible for man. Loss of faith in his capability would only lead to decay¹²⁹. It will destroy moral courage of man which is essential for his prosperity. He must be ambitious. Ambition is the inspiring force behind human progress. Even God created the world because of ambition. Ambition is the stimulus to creation. Desire is the compelling force behind human industry and human beings enjoy the fruits of it. Human life becomes meaningful only when it is creative¹³⁰. The poet is for the enjoyment of worldly life and the

124. -----, "Premasangeetham", in *Manimanjusha*, p.5.

125. -----, "Keesasandesam", *Ibid.*, p. 23.

126. -----, "Vilapapanchavimsati", in *Taraharam*, p. 7.

127. -----, "Soubratraganam", *Ibid.*, pp. 61-64.

128. -----, "Premasangeetam" in *Manimanjusha*, p. 3.

129. -----, "Bhavanagati", *Ibid.*, p. 80.

130. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

negation of it to attain heaven is considered as foolish. In his opinion, heaven and hell in the other world are the creation of imagination and belief in them is exploited by the priestly class for subsistence. To him it is a ridiculous concept¹³¹. Material progress through scientific achievements is necessary for the enjoyment of this world¹³². Spiritual knowledge alone would not bring progress in human civilization. Spiritual knowledge would become meaningful through man's acquisition of scientific knowledge which brings prosperity to humanity¹³³. What is required is a balance between spiritual and scientific knowledge. They are complementary to each other¹³⁴. He finds no substitute for human intelligence and human effort to bring him prosperity. For that reason he is opposed to superstitions. While the future is determined by God how can the astrologer predict it?¹³⁵ The poet does not hide his contempt for the popular pseudo-science of astrology¹³⁶.

Like caste, another institution that divides people, the poet feels, is faith. He denounces divisions in the name of faith. He could not see any difference between human beings following different religions. They are seen as the members of one brotherhood¹³⁷. He held Quran and Prophet

131. -----, "Mayabramam", in *Kalpasakhi*, pp. 27-29.

132. -----, "Keesandesam", in *Manimanjush*, p. 21.

133. -----, "Atumitum", *Ibid.*, p. 88.

134. -----, "Keesandesam", *Ibid.*, p. 21.

135. -----, "Bhavi", *Ibid.*, p. 93.

136. -----, "Mayabramam", in *Kalpasakhi*, pp. 27-29.

137. -----, "Srimulanakshatramala", in *Kiranaivali*, Trivandrum, 1966, p.5.

Mohammed in high esteem¹³⁸. Religious tolerance is an ideal preached by him for the unity and brotherhood of man¹³⁹.

The poet appreciates friendship with the British and has an admiration for them. The trade they had with the country is seen as economically useful to the natives and a means to the eradication of poverty¹⁴⁰. For the unification of the country and its economic prosperity, the poet recognizes indebtedness to King George¹⁴¹. This does not mean that the poet is wanting in the national spirit. He is proud of the rich spiritual heritage of India¹⁴² and deplors the degeneration and subjection of the country in his time¹⁴³. But he blames her sons who are engaged in fratricidal strife among themselves for it. The burden of the mother country in his opinion is not poverty or subjection but her own sons¹⁴⁴. Pained at the insult and humiliation poured on her by critics like Miss Mayo the poet describes those biased and unfriendly critics as vermins that eat away the core of the rosewood¹⁴⁵. Though proud of India's cultural legacy, the poet does not expound narrow nationalism. While he gives a fitting reply to Miss Mayo he could not but appreciate the contributions of the writers and thinkers produced by her own country America¹⁴⁶. The

138. -----, "Umakeralam", Trivandrum, M.E. 1130 (1955), p. 141.

139. -----, "Soubratraganam", in Taraharam, p. 61.

140. -----, "Umakeralam", pp. 287-90.

141. -----, "Bharatiyaprarthana", in Kiranavali, p. 43.

142. -----, "Divyadarsanam", in *Manimanjusha*, p. 11. "Divyasantwanam", in *Kiranavali*, p. 38.

143. -----, "Divyadarsanam", in *Manimanjusha*, p. 11.

144. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

145. *Ibid.*, P. 11.

146. -----, *Chitrasala*, Trivandrum, 1977.

poet transcends narrow political nationalism, though proud of being born in India, the mother country. Without succumbing to the false pride of birth in a place or group he takes pride in being a member of the human family under the fatherhood of one God¹⁴⁷. He writes,

Whether the son of the sun or the son of the charioteer
They are the sons of the goddess earth
On contemplation no difference in 'kind'
Is seen among the two when looked at the soul¹⁴⁸

This is the attitude of the poet. He believes in the message of philosophical Hinduism that is one caste that is human beings, one country that is the earth and one religion that is *Brahman* the incarnation of *sat*, *cit* and *ananda*¹⁴⁹. This is simple and pure humanism.

A contemporary of these two poets, Vallathol Narayana Menon (hereafter Vallathol) had written a number of poems. Poverty of philosophical perspective led to the poet's failure to represent with conviction any ideal other than political nationalism. The following lines,

On hearing the name Bharat
Let the soul be filled with pride
On hearing of Kerala
Let the blood boil in our veins!¹⁵⁰

147. -----, *Karnabhushanam*, Trivandrum, 1974, p.25.

148. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26. Trans. mine.

149. -----, "Mahasamadhi", in *Kalpasakhi*, p.10.

150. Vallathol Narayana Menon, "Choratilakkanam", in *Vallatholinte Padyakritikal*, II, Kottayam, 1975, p. 692. Trans. mine.

earned fame for the poet for ever. He also feels that the cause of her subjection and its continuation is the disunity and lack of brotherhood fostered by caste divisions among the people of India¹⁵¹. He is impatient with and intolerant towards the subjection of the country for, in his own words,

Though the pretty bird is in the golden nest
Bondage is bondage in this world¹⁵²

and he expects that the country would attain independence in the near future assuming that the friendly quarrel among the brothers will not make her disqualified for it¹⁵³. This is in contravention to his earlier stand that India would not return to self rule so long as the divisive practices of untouchability and unapproachability endorsed by caste rules, are keeping the Indian society segregated¹⁵⁴. He is more concerned with the political freedom of the country than the question of social justice and freedom of the crores of the down-trodden. He waxes eloquent about the cultural heritage of the country¹⁵⁵ but his political nationalism is not a product of the universalism of the philosophical tradition of the country. His nationalism is similar to that of the erstwhile ruling class. It is tinged with the bias of clannish pride¹⁵⁶ and hatred of the west¹⁵⁷. He

151. -----, "Pourastyam", Ibid., p. 147.

152. -----, "Kilikonchal", Ibid., p. 229. Trans. mine.

153. -----, "Nammute Marupati", Ibid., p. 376.

154. -----, "Ikyame Sevyal Sevyam", Ibid., p. 308.

155. -----, "Mathrubhumiyotu", Ibid., p. 44. "Satyagatha", Ibid., pp. 93-95.

156. -----, "Mathruvandanam", Ibid., p. 14. "Oru Thoni Yatra", Ibid., p. 156.

157. -----, "Ningaltanpokku Viparitamakola", Ibid., p. 243.

speaks well against caste discriminations¹⁵⁸ and communal antagonism¹⁵⁹ that impairs national unity. But his prejudice against Muslims¹⁶⁰ and his zeal to preserve caste rules are not helpful to create a national spirit. When he represents a Nair lady who kills a cruel typical Muslim as a brave and wise woman¹⁶¹, the poet does not hide his pride in the rich heritage of the Nair community. The theme of the *Katteliyute Kattu* is the letter given by Sivaji to Jai Singh the military leader of Aurangazeb's campaign against him¹⁶². In both these poems the poet takes an anti-Muslim stand that is not conducive to the cultivation of communal unity. Breaking of caste rules is described by the poet as a result of greed¹⁶³. These inconsistencies in the attitude of the poet towards caste and communal problems may compel one to conclude that the anti-caste and anti-communal eloquence is not coming from the soul of the poet. Want of ideological conviction and personal experience of sufferings inflicted in the name of caste may be counted as the reason for this. Deficiency in historical knowledge and consciousness and again the lack of ideological conviction make the representation of nationalism very feeble and superficial in Vallathol poems.

Story telling is an old literary art of man. It assumed the form of myths and legends in Kerala. The history of Malayalam short story

158. -----, "Oru Thoniyatra", pp. 155-56. "Muttathe Thulasi", p. 204. Ibid.

159. -----, "Onnamathe Matam", p. 544 "Nammute Marupati", p. 377. Ibid.

160. -----, "Oru Nair Streeyum Muhammadiyanum" Ibid., pp. 31-39.

161. Ibid.

162. -----, "Oru Katteliyute Kathu", Ibid., pp. 296-99.

163. -----, "Dura", Ibid., p. 794.

literature in its modern form had its beginning in the last quarter of the 19th Century. This literary form also was a product of the colonisation of the country by the British. So it could not have developed without being influenced by the English literature. One of the early short story writer in Malayalam was Moorkottu Kumaran (hereafter Kumaran) (1874 - 1941) He was a social reformer who belonged to the Thiyya community in North Malabar. His literary works and efforts to reform the society made him a memorable name in Kerala history. He was not a professed rationalist but a critic of the rationalist movement. He has even written a poetic stanza ridiculing the founders of the rationalist movement in Kerala. But his own short stories embody the ideas of rationalism, secularism, humanism and hitherworldliness.

North Malabar was a fertile area for the Christian missionaries to swell the rank and file of their faith. The neglected sector of the Hindu population could find spiritual solace, moral upliftment and material progress through the new ideology. One of the short stories of Kumaran describes how a robber belonging to a subdivision of the Nair community is converted to Christianity and how that leads to a positive moral change in his personality and his material progress through getting a government job¹⁶⁴. Like Potheri Kunjambu, Kumaran also feels that Christianity is a religion that stands for practical application of the great ideals of service to humanity, equality and brotherhood. The altruistic activities of the Christian missionaries in the northern part of Kerala prompted them to

164. Moorkothu Kumaran, "Oru Katinakkai", in *Moorkothu Kumarante Kathakal Sampoorana Samaharam*, Kozhikode, 1987, pp. 13-18.

believe so. Both of them remained Hindus while carrying on the efforts to reform their own society on the foundation of modern ideas which they found being practised in life by the Christians in sharp contrast to the tradition of their own society ruled and regulated by Brahmanical theology which kept their fellowmen in an abject condition. Emancipation from the outdated and barbarian mores and beliefs conserved by Brahmanical theology could be achieved, they believed, through the adoption of Christian teachings instead of that faith¹⁶⁵.

The theme of Kumaran's stories is human deeds in this world. Human actions emanating from human passions of love, hatred, vengeance, crookedness, piety, ambition, deception etc. in different situations of life are depicted in a realistic manner in his stories. They remind the readers that human life is a creation of their own deeds and they enjoy or suffer the results of them. Man is characterised as neither an angel nor a devil. His stories give a description of the real man instead of the ideal man. But the story teller has ideals. The ideal of compassion or altruism is the most significant of them¹⁶⁶.

While God directs and controls the course of the universe, man is to direct and control his life¹⁶⁷. This is the basic tenet through which he looks at the world, and all his stories are about human involvement in the building up of human life. He believes in God, but discards the outward trappings of religion. To him such trappings are used as tools

165. -----, "Changatiyute Parinamam" Ibid., p. 66.

166. -----, "Vanakusumam", Ibid., p. 66. "Oru Madhyasta", Ibid., p. 215.

167. -----, "Avalute Makal", Ibid., p. 111.

for the exploitation of others by selfish people¹⁶⁸. One is not to seek heaven and hell in the other world. They are here itself, for man's deeds make life a heaven or hell¹⁶⁹.

Realism is the hallmark of his stories which are often devoted to the purpose of social criticism. Though he finds that people have to face some difficulties created by the new marriage act, he is for it as it would strengthen the marital status of man in society and bring an end to easy divorce at will¹⁷⁰. He appears to be a defender of the abolition of child marriage, and legalisation of widow remarriage as measures to save the womenfolk and the society¹⁷¹. Illiteracy of women as a misfortune for themselves and the society¹⁷², the helplessness of women in the matrilineal system¹⁷³, bribery¹⁷⁴, *talikettu kalyanam*¹⁷⁵, corruption, loopholes in laws, shortcomings in the new judicial system etc.¹⁷⁶ and brutal methods that do not suit civilised society to extract evidence in criminal cases¹⁷⁷ are some of the secular problems in human life selected for evaluation or criticism by the author.

168. -----, "Itinentuhetu", Ibid., p. 145.

169. Ibid.

170. -----, "Oru Theevantiyakatam", Ibid., p. 81.

171. -----, "Aveeralayam", Ibid., p. 101.

172. Ibid., p. 103.

173. -----, "Avalute Makal", Ibid., p. 115.

174. -----, "Kolayo Atmagatiyo", Ibid., p. 68.

175. Ibid., p. 70.

176. -----, "Oru Maranapatram", Ibid., pp. 231-36.

177. -----, "Kanakammoolam", Ibid., p. 237.

The author is for the assimilation of western culture but not for a surrender to the colonial power by a blind imitation of them by reading their superficial and third rate literary works. He is for English education as a means for the upliftment of women a cause which is seen essential for reforming the society as a whole¹⁷⁸. Equality of man and woman is considered as unavoidable for a peaceful and happy married life founded on love¹⁷⁹. Man and woman together build up human life and male chauvinism is not good for a prosperous family life. The ideals of Sita and Damayanti are the creations of male writers and only their sacrifices are recorded. Their role in leading their husbands in the right direction has gone unrecorded. Woman has a responsibility to guide the husband with advice and warning whenever necessary for their own good and their children's good¹⁸⁰. Woman must have freedom of choice or decision taking in matters that would affect their lives for it is the decision of man that shapes human life. Human life is completed by the mutual understanding of man and woman¹⁸¹. So goes the argument of the author in favour of women's freedom and equality in society.

As a social critic the writer is well aware of the limitations of the new educational system under the colonial government. It is not sufficient to inculcate value consciousness. It only helps to strengthen or develop the inherent qualities, both good and bad, in man¹⁸². English education

178. -----, "Kolayo Atmagatiyo", Ibid., p. 69. "Oru Madhyasta" Ibid., p. 211.

179. -----, "Avalute Makal", Ibid., pp. 112-13.

180. -----, "Tharavattilekutty", Ibid., p. 120.

181. -----, "Katinam" Ibid., p. 332.

182. Ibid., pp. 325, 332.

is not counted as essential for success in life. It requires shrewd observation of worldly events and human experience and behaviour¹⁸³. Love for one's enemies too¹⁸⁴ and service to others¹⁸⁵ are the basic human values the writer highlights in most of the stories. Love is seen as a great curative medicine that can work wonders on human psyche. The healing touch of it can lead the criminal to righteousness¹⁸⁶ and the drunkard to temperance¹⁸⁷. The absence of it, on the other hand, leads to perversion in human life. In fact the analysis of human psyche as an explanation for the strange behaviour of human beings is an interesting aspect of story telling for Kumaran. In two stories somnambulism has been adopted as the theme. The writer tries to give the reader a deep insight into the causes of this psychic aberration. Intemperance¹⁸⁸, isolation, ill-treatment sense of insecurity and the suppression of agony¹⁸⁹ are explained as the causes. The author generally makes a rational approach to human behaviour and actions and in the two particular stories that approach becomes most impressive even though he is highly critical of the rationalists misconceiving them as atheists and enemies of religious faith¹⁹⁰ and opportunists.

183. Ibid., pp. 324-25.

184. "Parishkaram Prapicha Patni", Ibid., p. 171.

185. -----, "Oru Madhyasta", Ibid., p. 215.

186. -----, "Oru Katinakkai", Ibid., p. 14.

187. -----, "Kuttappan", Ibid., p. 167.

188. -----, "Vairamotiram", Ibid., pp. 218-23.

189. -----, "Lokapavadam", Ibid., pp. 274-302.

190. -----, "Jeshtathiyamayute Abharanangal", pp. 129-130. "Changatiyute Parinamam", pp. 177-79, Ibid.

The stories of Kumaran serve the purpose of making the readers aware of their own problems in this world. Supernatural beings are buried and God is installed in His highest niche to rule over the universe. They are aimed at civilizing the secular life of man. Conflict between the real and the ideal in ordinary life is mirrored in them. The writer's commitment to mould the conscience of man through self awareness is quite evident in the stories. Literature becomes a medium for social criticism without degenerating into mere propaganda. Rationalism, secularism, altruism and humanism are the ideals that set the tone of Kumaran's stories.

Of the literary works so far subjected to analysis poetry was mainly didactic in nature. But novels and short stories ever since their origin in Malayalam were self representative and self evaluative in character. This latter trend continued to be predominant as a sign of man's grave concern with life in this world. As a corollary to it developed the critical evaluation of literary works. It was the beginning of an inquiry into the motive and interest behind and the nature of the literary works. Both the writings and the writer began to be dissected. This new trend also had a colonial route. Occidental knowledge in science and humanities also happened to guide the critic. The trend was inaugurated by Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai (hereafter Kesari).

It was pointed out by him that the dependence on Sanskrit, the language of the erstwhile hegemonical class, alone would not bring any development to the Malayalam language. An opening to western literature without breaking the roots in Sanskrit and Tamil was very much required

to enrich the Malayalam literature. Similarly, free thinking and iconoclasm were the nutrients to the growth of language¹⁹¹. In fact language does not exist in a static state. It is the creation of human thought that is in constant change or the becoming state. Growth of language therefore means growth of thought. Language and thought are mutually creating. Exposure to other literatures means opportunities for assimilation of other thoughts. So Kesari represented the demand of his times for the mental and moral transition from the medieval cast. The literary critic had begun to learn that the literary creations are vehicles carrying the consciousness and interests of the author. That means the author is involved in the process of creating a consciousness and interest. So Kesari swore with P.K. Narayana Pillai, another wellknown literary critic of the time, that the author has the duty to consciously work for the eradication of social evils¹⁹².

Taking the standpoint from the behaviourists that the mental world and the behaviour of man are inseparably integrated to the external world or the environment, Kesari argued that a literary creation about the past would be a live one only when the author's mind lives in that past. Accepting the idea of Benedetto Croce that all history is contemporary history in the sense that past and future are actually implied in the present as he understood and, therefore, a contemporary drama or novel is more historical than a historical drama or novel dealing with the past, Kesari argued that the author must write without losing aesthetic beauty to create

191. Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai, "Kalangimarinja Kairali", in *Kesariyute Mukhaprasangal*, Kottayam, 1989, pp. 162-63.

192. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

a new world and should not write historical drama or novel which will be lifeless¹⁹³. In other words, the author, being the product of the contemporary world in constant progress, must write constructively so as to accelerate that progress with a view to creating a better world without taking themes from the past, since the past is very much active in the present itself. In a progressive world the author must be committed to write progressively without sacrificing literary merit. This means rationalising the literary activity as part of rationalising the whole process of human life.

In an ever changing world human life cannot remain static. Failure to keep pace with it would lead to his ruin. Kesari was well aware of how the old ideas were giving way to the new ideas like those of Einstein's relativism, Freud's concept of the sub-conscious and the findings of anthropologists. And he felt that the old aesthetic concepts which create the unscientific impression that they are eternal could not stand eternal and they are to be changed in the light of modern concepts in other branches of knowledge. In support of this view he illustrated the impact these new concepts could have on literary concepts. The relativism of Einstein had proved that universal poetics or signs/symbols are impossible and only particular poetics or signs/symbols are possible. Old type of characterisation and narration had undergone substantial changes as happened in the works of Marsel Proust and James Joyce in the west with Freud's finding that man is only a loosely knit bundle of animal instincts and feelings instead of a closely knit individuality. Similarly the

193. -----, "Sahitya Parishath", Ibid., p. 179.

findings in anthropology and psychology that God is a creation of man and paternal love is artificial would have their impact on literature. For example, the ideal Rama who is devoted to his father and to the practice of monogamy and who killed the innocent subjects of Ravana would not be an ideal man and a guide to the youth of the Kerala of tomorrow¹⁹⁴. He was against literary works that would promote narrow nationalism of political sectarianism¹⁹⁵. What Kerala required in the wake of a new social formation, in his opinion, was young writers who would assume the role of prophets and purveyors¹⁹⁶. Kesari put emphasis on the duty of the writer to provide new values, consistent with the changing world of knowledge of and about man to the society, and to get involved in the process of social progress as a catalyst to stimulate that process. He demanded that in a changing world with changes in man's knowledge, representation of the changing man and not of a static man is what is essential. Literary creation should be dynamic in consonance with the dynamism in human life and environment. The writer has to be conscious of the ever becoming consciousness of himself and of his society. Literary pursuit should always be progressive in a world in progression. He should be representative of time. Kesari's stand was very much in consistency with the process that had already been set in motion by the spiritual leaders and writers who immediately preceded him. Moreover, it was necessary at that time, to ensure that the tempo of the process was not lost in a negative and pessimistic direction.

194. -----, "Yuvajana Sahitya Sammelanam", *Ibid.*, pp. 183-84.

195. *Ibid.*, pp. 185.

196. -----, "Samasta Kerala Sahitya Parishath", *Ibid.*, pp. 188-89.

Kesari's was not a lone voice. Several writers and critics flocked to take the mantle of Kesari. One such scholar and critic was K.N. Ezhuthacchan (hereafter Ezhuthacchan). His definition of the progressivist is that he, the progressivist, is not to condemn the general function of art to produce rasa but to orientate the artistic work towards a social goal believed to be desirable by transforming the materials selected for its expression and the direction of expression¹⁹⁷. Ezhuthacchan was only substantiating what Kesari had stated. He opined that the progressive writer is to endeavour for the future well-being of the individual and the society by imbibing and giving expression to the new ideas and ideals of the rapidly changing modern world. The modern world is to be represented in his works. The writer is not to live in the past. The concept of the world may be controversial but the basic human requirements like food, shelter, dress, protection and love remain the same. Whether the world is a reality or not, is only secondary to these problems. Modern schools of thought give more importance to society than to the individual values, and achievements are assessed in terms of the good of the society. Modern concepts are opposed to authoritarianism. It is the new psychological themes that revolutionised human concepts about authority and moral principles. Since the discovery that the social and material environment of man has a great influence in moulding the mental world of man, an ardent desire for consciously changing the world was gaining ground. The interpretation of the evolution as the expression of the will for progress given by writers like Bernard Shaw helped to strengthen the view that

197. K.N. Ezhuthacchan, Introduction, in Tholan, *Kalayum Janathayum*, Bombay, 1948.

human deeds should be aimed at the progress of social life. The argument that the literary works should represent such modern ideas does not mean the destruction of the country's rich heritage of the past. The efforts of the writers should be to shape the future by drawing inspiration from that heritage. The progressive writer is not to be satisfied with the moral awakening alone. He must be keen on the creation, of a social environment helpful to a moral life. As the Marxist ideology recognises the predominance of the economic set up over social environment the progressive writer may agree with it. At several points the progressive writer and the Marxist follower may be in agreement. But it does not mean that they are thinking uniformly¹⁹⁸.

Along with the aesthetic beauty progressive literature should have some distinct characteristics, according to Ezhuthacchan. Its subject matter is to be the society. Its task is to represent progressive ideas of the modern world. Man is to be seen in the light of them. It should inspire the creation of a social order based on equality and well-being of all. The future of the human beings is to be characterised as promising . The author has to be inspired by the confidence in human will and goodness. The theme should be human problems and the narration realistic. Material world is to be seen as a hard reality¹⁹⁹. Ezhuthacchan further elaborated.

The process, inaugurated by Kesari in the 1930s to give a new orientation to literary pursuit as an attempt to make it rational, meaningful

198. Ibid.

199. Ibid.

and purposeful, is found well consolidated and assuming a definite direction with a slight twist that tethered it to the Marxian thought by the next decade. It now came to be known popularly as progressive literature. Ezhuthacchan was the man who was mainly responsible for this accomplishment. He set forth a paradigm for progressive writing attuned to the rhythm of Marxian ideology. He aligned the concept of Kesari with the Marxian idea of social progress.

But K.N. Ezhuthacchan was unforgetful of the limitations of such a process. He pointed out that it is not an easy task to combine both the aesthetic beauty and the purpose of writing. Concepts about human values and social good are not eternal. Human understanding of the universe is not final. Reason and sentiments have an equal share in the representation of truth. In different contexts the individual and the society would assume greater importance over the other. Therefore a balance between the two is to be maintained. Economic interpretation of human civilizations should not give way to the suppression of the freedom of self expression. Social restraints on the writer should not suppress his self expression²⁰⁰.

Both the critics were unanimous in acclaiming that literary pursuit must be value-based, secular and rational with the purpose of achieving human progress. The spirit of this argument and the spirit with which the writers are to be inspired is the same, humanism. Literary activity was seen as a part of social life and the critics wanted those who engaged in

200. Ibid.

it to be constructive and committed to themselves and the society at once. Though K.N. Ezhuthacchan aligned the concept of progressive literature to Marxian ideology, he warned against the fascist oppression against the freedom of expression the individual is rightly entitled to enjoy, in the name of that ideology or by any establishment. They were for the continuous and consistent progress of the individual and the society, the part and the whole. They were raising the demand of the time namely a literature mirroring and advancing the social, economic and political transformation of the society towards a better morrow. It conveyed the message of applying the principle of self-awareness and self construction to life in this world. Another aspect of their argument was the transcendence of narrow nationalism that would arrest human progress. They were for freely drawing ideas resulting from the development of knowledge across the world. They spoke for all-inclusive universalism and the cause of humanity of which the linguistic group of Malayalis form a part.

These critics were presenting before the Malayali mind certain elementary aspects of the epistemological problems involved in the creation of literary knowledge in relation to social demands which they got from the western scholars. Some of the Malayalam writers opted for the new epistemological approach to their profession. The noted writer Kesavadev was one who was determined to line up with these critics. In his opinion the fountain of literary creations is real life. They have no existence independent of it. The emotions, thoughts, and imagination all come

from real life. He asserts that without understanding this fact, a meaningful evaluation of literature is quite impossible²⁰¹. The writer is a product of the society. He is not above it or outside it. He represents it. The literary works mirror the writers' time. They are the products of those societies²⁰². The writer is a part of nature and that he is capable of bringing about changes in it is the distinctive fact about him. He is then the oracle of the all-inclusive nature. At a lower level, he is the oracle of his social environment²⁰³. A literary creation cannot but be the reflection of the class oriented social structure²⁰⁴. Kesavadev was following the path cut by K.N. Ezhuthacchan. According to him literature could be categorised into conservative and progressive based on class character. These two are in constant struggle as the dialectical forces in society. The history of literature is the history of this struggle, and the development through that struggle²⁰⁵. And every writer represents either the ruling class or the exploited class²⁰⁶. Tolstoy's definition that "art is the skill to circulate emotions" is accepted by him. But it is meant for the circulation of sentiments born from the reality of life and that are capable of providing inspiration to face the challenges of real life. The writer is to create

201. P. Kesavadev, "Jeeval Sahityam", in Kesavadev, *Kalnootantinumunpu*, Kottayam, 1969, p. 99.

202. Ibid., p. 100.

203. Ibid., p. 101.

204. -----, "Sahityathinte Vargaswabham", Ibid., p. 102.

205. Ibid., p. 105.

206. -----, "Njan Entinezhutunnu", Ibid., p. 125.

emotions in readers and refine them. He has also the duty to direct them towards his own good and the social good. A writer has to take the pursuit of art seriously²⁰⁷. "A writer has essentially to be a purveyor, a progressive-minded scientific evaluator and a prophet who has a sense of responsibility"²⁰⁸. All literature is propaganda and all writers are propagandists. This does not mean that aesthetic value of literature is to be sacrificed. Literary work which has aesthetic value only would help the propaganda of its ideological content. This compels the writer to keep a higher standard of aesthetic value for his work²⁰⁹. Kesavadev claimed and admitted that he was writing to propagandise his ideas intended for life's progress²¹⁰ which means enlightening. He claimed that he was strongly concerned with maintaining the aesthetic standard consistent with the belief that, "Ideas devoid of aesthetic sense and aesthetic sense devoid of ideas would be like the body without soul and the soul without body. A cordial synthesis of the two is the sign of good art"²¹¹.

When taken with the tinge of class-wise sectarianism eliminated, the response of the writer is positive and a good omen since it is of a self-conscious writer who knows the good or harm the writings will do to the

207. Ibid., pp. 106-10.

208. Ibid., p. 111.

209. Ibid., p. 112.

210. Ibid., p. 123.

211. Ibid., p. 125.

society through influencing its outlook, and its long term impact. The development of self-consciousness and the readiness for introspection and self assessment are signs of an awakened and growing society. The fact that the writer himself becomes conscious of the fact that he is a part of the society, and is writing for the society and effuses a sense of accountability to it, means that the making of art and literature is constructive and democratic. Kesavadev has synthesised the ideas of the two critics with a strong leaning towards the Marxian concept of social structure and social progress. His own novels proved to be the best examples of the new approach. Realism makes them distinctive without incurring the charge of failing to produce rasa, the dharma of art. Cutting across the caste line, the ordinary labourer got a place in his novels and stories. The forward looking aspect of progressive literature tempts the writer to picturise an ideal world or an ideal man. It becomes a sign of rational outlook of life when life is taken as a creation of man with his capability to mitigate its hardships and make it more pleasant. Apart from producing rasa to entertain the individual man, literature came to be conceived as a social medium to create the social man. By providing conceptual framework with stress on creating values and ideas suitable to the changing world of man, aimed at the enrichment of human life, for literary pursuit these critics were trying to reduce the cleavage between the individual and the society. Seeing the society as one entity, and the reader and the writer as parts of it and literary knowledge as a product of the collectivity of man, critics were demanding its usefulness to the collective life of human beings. Implied in their concept is the idea that the human being is a human artifact, but they are not consciously

advocating it. Of the spiritual leaders Sri Narayana gave the utmost importance to this principle.

The early writers evaluated in this chapter were trendsetters and the ideas and ideals set forth by them were deeply entrenched in the minds of the Malayalis. Worthy successors carried on their mission with vigour and realistic consciousness. Literature became symbolic of the ascending self-consciousness of the Malayali.

The thirties of the twentieth century saw a notable successor to Nayanar in E.V. Krishna Pillai, (hereafter E.V.) a writer and politician. Discarding conventional technique in literature, and using wit and humour, and satire and irony instead, E.V. was laughing at life and making others laugh mainly through burlesques. His theme is the natural man in his raw features with a leaning to the negative side. Man is conceived as mean, selfish, nasty and uncouth. He is a selfish creature created by a selfish Creator²¹². Everywhere man's selfishness triumphs. So justice remains a mirage. Law often eludes justice, as law is a creation of the ruling class. There is no relation between law and justice. Law is never founded upon justice. Justice remains uncontainable to law. So what ultimately triumphs is man's selfishness even in the administration of justice²¹³. E.V. the writer and thinker, attempts to refine this selfish man. The contradictory characteristics of rationality and irrationality are ingrained in man. Man can never attain perfection because of this. His simple and thoughtless action invites troubles for himself and others²¹⁴.

212. E.V. Krishna Pillai, "Neethiyum Niyamavum", in E.V. Krishna Pillai, *Eviyute Thiranjetutha Kathakal*, Kottayam, 1996, p. 30.

213. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

214. -----, "Onnennu Parayenta", *Ibid.*, pp. 45-49.

With this sympathetic attitude towards man's inherent shortcoming, E.V. let loose his attacks on the shallow formalities, vanity, ill-manners and impropriety, arrogance of police and judicial officials, greed, accumulation of wealth, pretension and hypocrisy. At the same time he saw man as a creature craving for simple pleasures that need not be denied or suppressed. He wrote in praise of humour, romance, laziness and lust. Being a thorough-going materialist, he observed that conscience, that enables man to discriminate between good and evil, is the god to be followed, and rites and rituals are useless. No personal god is necessary and conscience alone would do to attain happiness. A pure and simple mind, unblemished by jealousy, and happy over good fortune of others is enough for bliss²¹⁵. Taking Lord Krishna as an ideal character, he quoted the essence of his advice as, "Live in this world, yet remain unaffected by it". What he teaches is to take vengeance against the enemies, to show bravery, to make the idiots understand their unworthiness, to love, to exhibit romance, to suppress cruelty, to help the innocent, to ridicule the self boasters, to display valour and to maintain nobility, while reminding always the momentariness of life in this world and the imbecility of man in that world²¹⁶. This reading of the character of Sri Krishna is a reflection of the author's view of life which is secular and rational and universal. They are meant for the refinement of the mean and selfish man of all castes and religions. Caste or religious identity, in his opinion, is only to secure the satisfaction of selfish motives.

215. -----, "Iswaran", Ibid., p. 72.

216. -----, "Vinodarasikatham", Ibid., p. 84.

Such identities are used or unused conveniently for that purpose. What ultimately triumphs is human selfishness and the thrust of the writing of E.V. is the refinement of human selfishness as a means to a better human life by making him pragmatic, and socialising him through self awakening. Little things which seem to be unimportant but which hamper the development of society are taken as the themes of the individual instances he chose for representation. E.V.'s attempt is to correct the individual man and change him to be a social man for achieving a civilized society through his burlesques.

In the forties of the twentieth century appeared the short stories and novels of the four authors namely Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai (hereafter Thakazhi), P. Kesavadev, Vaikkam Muhammed Basheer (hereafter Basheer) and S.K. Pottekkat (hereafter Pottekkat) who earned fame as the great luminaries of Malayalam literature. The trend set by the early writers got a still wider dimension in their works. Instead of representing the individual man and his problems, the focus now turned to the collective man integrated with the social and physical environment. Man is observed in their works as the creator of the systems and institutions that turn oppressive and beneficial to himself.

For the first time in Malayalam literature a scavenger and his class got the attention of a writer when Thakazhi wrote the *Thottiyute Makan* in 1947²¹⁷. The pathetic condition of the workers engaged in the most essential work in social life, the collection and removal of man's excreta

217. Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, *Thottiyute Makan*, Kottayam, 1996. (1st ed., 1947).

to the nightsoil depot, is the theme of the story. The job is an extremely stigmatised one and the workers engaged in it were objects of utter contempt and victims of exploitation. The peculiar social set up based on Varna Dharma never allowed the emancipation of their generations even in the changing situation. The society and the corrupt officials as well exploited them. Their much required labour was not adequately paid. Their attempts to organise ended in failure because of their ignorance and the manipulations of the officials. All these facts are highlighted in the novel. The story is centered around the hero Chudalamuthu a member of the scavenger community. He ardently desired the emancipation of his son from the wretched condition of his community/class and dreams of his son attaining a respectable position through education. He gives his son a modern name Mohanan and provides him with education. His attempt to make his son distinct from his class ultimately fails and Mohanan also becomes a scavenger. But the class consciousness of Mohanan's generation grows stronger and the scavengers secure better wages and conditions of labour through organised struggles. The author's emphasis is not on the emancipation of the scavenger class from their work but emancipation from the pitiable conditions of their work. Emphasis is given to the significance of labour, its dignity and sufficient wages for labour. Importance of the economic factor and class consciousness is highlighted. Caste and religion are given no importance at all. Life is represented as a creation of human collectivity in which the author asks man to be conscious of his position in that collectivity and to fight for the dignity and reward that his service is entitled to. The

social problems of human life are described as the creations of human being. The oppressive nature of many social practices is held to be the result of class distinction as ruling and ruled. The sufferings of the peasant labourer who has no right over the means and the product form the theme of his another novel²¹⁸. His poverty, the helplessness of the womenfolk of his class, his awakening, his class consciousness and will to organise and fight against economic exploitation and social oppression are the ideas eloquently drawn up in this novel. The class distinction stressed upon in this novel is that between the capitalist and the worker. The class division described in this novel as a cause of oppression is not seen from a narrow perspective. The role of human selfishness and compassion, human limitations in man's relations to nature and factors beyond human control and prediction in shaping human life are given due recognition.

Thakazhi gives a touching narration of the cruelty and ingratitude shown by man towards a helpless dog that serves man most loyally, in one of his short stories²¹⁹. When all are hurrying to escape from the horrors of a flood to a safe place, a dog is left to die on the roof of a hut and become the food of crows. Its pathetic cry for help and gestures of love and loyalty for man are ignored by those who come nearby in their haste to leave the place. Even then man is exhibiting his selfishness by stealing something in their reach. Such is man. He is described as a

218. -----, *Rantitangazhi*, Kottayam, 1948.

219. -----, "Vellapokkathil", in K. Ayyappapanikkar, et al., ed., *100 Varsham 100 Katha*, Kottayam, 1999, p. 168.

heartless, disloyal and mean creature compared to a dog. Even when he is helpless before the horrors of nature, man is most selfish and does not feel any compassion for the fellow creatures on this earth. As a raw product of nature, man is well integrated with nature in this story. A story which narrates the love of a farmer for his companion in tilling the soil, the ox, is eloquently represented by another writer of future fame Ponkunnam Varkey during this period²²⁰. The other side of man as the most loving and sympathetic creature in this world is vividly portrayed by him.

One of the best novels in Malayalam, of this period was written by Kesavadev. Revolt against injustice, love of freedom and identification of love with sacrifice are the ideas represented in this novel²²¹. Man's longing to love and to be loved and his determination to sacrifice for the benefit of fellowmen are idealised. Similarly individualism, equality, dignity of labour and realisation of the highest stage of human consciousness through leading a useful life for others as the greatest achievement of human life are also ideals conveyed by this novel.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, bands of fortune seekers were moving from central Travancore region to the virgin soil of North Malabar after selling all their possessions in their native villages. It was a kind of bidding farewell to the birth place and the kith and kin. But these jealous farmers were welcomed by the adverse climate and

220. Ponkunnam Varkey, "Sabdikkuna Kalappa", in K. Ayyappapanikkar, et al., ed., *100 Varsham*, p. 174.

221. P. Kesavadev, *Otayilninnu*, Thrissur, 1942.

contagious disease of malaria. It is the story of these people that Potttekkat tells us in one of his novels. The ambitious and industrious farmers lose everything in their new venture. After losing all the wealth and the dear ones, the survivors return with empty hands and bitter memories. The virgin soil happens to be a vicious virgin like the lustful woman who spoils the innocence of a young man in this novel²²². The aspirations and experiences and the loss and sufferings of the migrating farmers are well illustrated in the novel. The pitiable conditions of the greedy, cruel, wicked and helpless man who is struggling against external nature and his own nature are effectively narrated. The struggle of man against nature, his own nature and his fellowmen creates problems for him. Man is seen as an integral part of nature and he is represented in a most realistic way. The purpose the novel serves is to awaken man to the realities and limitations of human life.

But the representation of man most vivaciously in relation to everything in this universe - man syncretized with the universe - is achieved by Basheer. Man is taken only as one among the crores and crores of living beings in this universe. His existence or non-existence does not make any difference to the eternal universe. He is taken realistically and not idealistically. Human beings are described as "creatures of sweat and blood, thirst and desires and all that"²²³. Man is thus reminded of the meaninglessness of his ego and vanity. To the author, nature is a manifestation of contradictions. So is human nature. "Like the day and

222. S.K. Potttekkat, *Vishakanyaka*, Kottayam, 1998 (1st ed., 1948).

223. Vaikkam Muhammed Basheer, "Premabhajanam", in Basheer, *Sampoornakritikal*, I, Kottayam 1999, p. 430.

the night in a day, in each man and woman, there are the two sides of darkness and light"²²⁴. This dualistic nature creates problems in life. "If two persons remain on the earth those two will wage war. If one man remains, his left and right hands will quarrel with each other"²²⁵. So strife as the essence of the dialectical process is the law of nature. In that process, the strong ones dominate over the weak ones or every being is a prey for another. He illustrates this aspect in a very simple manner²²⁶. The innocent girl, the heroine of a novel of Basheer, takes a bath in a pond full of water-lilies and different types of water beings. A leech bites her and the innocent girl out of sympathy lets it go unhurt. But, no sooner does it fall into the water, it is swallowed by a big eel fish. Then she sees several other creatures. She sees a water-snake coming to the surface of the water with a small fry in its mouth. To her dismay different kinds of fish, frogs, tortoise etc. are seen co-existing in the pond. The flowery water-lilies are also there. The pond appears to be very beautiful and at the same awesome. It is like a loving and frightening friend²²⁷. The pond is described as a replica of this world that is lovable and frightening, a world where the rule is might is right. The world being such, by nature beastliness is the dominating character in man. He cannot be so easily enlightened. The human heart is a dark world where the rays of science have not reached, he writes²²⁸. He cannot be easily made

224. -----, "Oru Chitrathinte Katha", Ibid., p. 270ff.

225. -----, "Yuddham Avasanikkanamenkil", Ibid., p. 372ff.

226. -----, "Intuppupakkoranentarnnu", Ibid., p. 517ff.

227. Ibid., pp. 540-41.

228. -----, "Oru Chitrathinte Katha", Ibid., p. 270.

rational. He is a victim of his own nature. He is a helpless creature. In real life, everyone is a single orphan, he remarks²²⁹.

Basheer's representation of human life is based on the mutual affinity between the human beings and the nature of the universe. Human life in its totality well integrated with nature is the theme of his stories. He narrates the story of human beings who are creations of sweat and blood, and thirst and desires as pointed out earlier²³⁰. His life is a miserable one. The realities of that life are very hard. But the story teller is not disappointed. He does not become the exponent of defeatism. His attitude to life is that it must be lived creatively and carried forward. In one context, he writes, "I have understood that life has no ultimate aim"²³¹. In another, he says, "Live until death comes. Live but bravely. Live, but as a man of consciousness. I am a man on this earth, in the great universes..."²³². Man is relatively situated in this world by the author. He is infinitesimally insignificant in the objective world. Subjectively, he is the master of this world. Man and the universe are described as mutually contradictory and complementary at once. The underlying concept of that description is the philosophy of monism, which the author has taken as his standpoint in most of his stories. He assesses the meaning of life as the subjective experience of each individual²³³. Whatever may be that experience the individual in himself is a being that cherishes a longing for

229. -----, "Aparatayute Arikil", Ibid., p. 458.

230. -----, "Premabhajanam", Ibid., p. 430.

231. -----, "Poonilavil", Ibid., p. 380.

232. -----, "Sabdangal", Ibid., p. 460.

233. -----, "Jeevitham", Ibid., pp. 357-60.

love and to love²³⁴. It is love that makes life meaningful. The motivating force of life is happiness. Every action of man gives him pleasure²³⁵. Every moment, he is enjoying life. What adds fragrance to his life is fun²³⁶. Parenthetically it may be stated that the artist in Basheer, the author, builds up human life as serious fun in words designed through different streams of thought.

Basheer's man is neither a rebel nor a slave and not even a conformist. But being all these he is only a passing link in an all-inclusive chain of changes, a process of becoming, who is to be wise enough to accelerate that process of change towards human progress. His ideal man is one who is enlightened and free without being a slave of any system of belief secular or religious. Man in the name of faith always commits all kinds of follies²³⁷. Systems of belief, political or religious, are only ideological weapons for securing and exercising power. Believers do it in the name of God and non-believers in their own name and all are struggling for power to rule the whole world absolutely²³⁸. Both religion and state are oppressive. Both political and religious leaders are not doing anything to eliminate poverty. In the author's words "poverty is a horrible disease, which destroys the body, the heart and the soul. And so lakhs and lakhs of men and women having lost their soul and body and

234. -----, "Chattukali", Ibid., p. 333.

235. -----, "Sabdangal", Ibid., p. 461.

236. -----, "Premalekhanam", Ibid., p. 111.

237. -----, "Visudharomam", Ibid., p. 376-79.

238. -----, "Kamukan", Ibid., pp. 431-32.

heart are there in so many communities"²³⁹, No ideology and their spokesmen come to their help, he laments.

One of his stories describes the ways of the oppressive priestly class. Here is drawn the picture of how an enlightened man is heinously killed by the priestly class by arousing the rage of the ignorant and irrational believers against him through manipulation²⁴⁰. So, human beings should not become slaves of organised religions and its authorities, the priests^{240a}. With the statement "scriptures say there is no priest in Islam"²⁴¹, Basheer hints at the dominance of priests over the followers of Islam. Anything fanatic about religion is meaningless to him "No, I do not believe in any religion. More or less all religions are the same. All are trying to make man good. The existence of the universe and so on is not according to your faith or mine. You may or may not believe. Mind enough the satisfaction of the mind"²⁴². These words of one of his characters point to the state of mind the author has reached - a mind that has turned from religion to man, a mind of the humanist. He makes a peaceful protest against the barriers erected by religions in general and the irrational, blind and superstitious beliefs, customs and practices in the name of religion. As for his own fellowmen, he wants them to discard adornment of the person, as marks of distinction from other groups, and dowry, and to reform their dress style and language. He reminds them

239. -----, "Balyakalasakhi", Ibid. p. 156.

240. -----, "Analhaq", Ibid., p. 388ff.

240a. -----, "Intuppupakkoranentarnnu", Ibid., p. 571.

241. -----, "Visudharomam", Ibid., p. 378.

242. -----, "Sabdangal", Ibid., p. 422.

that false prestige, disputes in the name of religion and pride in past wealth and position all are ruining them, and he wants to enlighten them on the need of modern education and of a shift in job from the traditional and exclusive profession of business, a world of uncertainty²⁴³.

In his view the state is not better than religion. It is equally oppressive without doing any good for the people. They are treated as criminals. The police is used as the instrument of oppression. "Police is the mirror to see the government", he says²⁴⁴. The nature and intention of a government is revealed through its use of the police force. The more state becomes democratic and benevolent, the less the police force becomes relevant. The jails are also symbolic of the nature of the government. "Our jails are the place where the honest are taught on theft, a place which creates criminals", he observes²⁴⁵. Basheer also thrusts on the class character of the state. When state becomes an instrument of vested interests of the elite, he remarks, the police and jail remain oppressive only. All the officials and the police are the pillars of that institution, the establishment. And, "A little good in man, full of beastliness, vanishes with his entry into government service, especially as a constable, it seems", he says²⁴⁶. The idea that all are brothers and equal in the sight of God and the earth belongs to all is a common place ethical principle. But a minority secured possession of the land and became wealthy. The laws of the state are to protect them. On becoming

243. -----, ""Intuppupakkoranentamnu", Ibid., p. 517ff.

244. -----, "Kaivilangu", Ibid., p. 293.

245. -----, "Oru Jailpulliyute Chitram", Ibid., p. 293.

246. -----, "Polisukarante Makal", Ibid., p. 339.

an official, one has to but become a supporter of that establishment. The establishment is actually responsible for the degeneration of the individual. That establishment is to be changed. The establishment is in the hands of the wealthy, the officials, the political leaders and the religious authority. When the helpless impoverished man happens to look at any of them, the law, the police and the army, the jail and the scaffold all come to punish him. Removal of poverty remains none of the business of the government or political leader or the religious authority²⁴⁷. The author is indignant at the establishment of his day because he has an ideal about the state. The existing state is quite contrary to that ideal. The author believes in the values of equality, fraternity, love and compassion. To him the state is to be an institution that ensures a social life based on these values. He wishes that all should get food, education and medical aid²⁴⁸. Then it is the duty of the state and religion to provide them. State, according to him, is for the ruled and not for the rulers²⁴⁹.

To him humanity is one. "Men are alike everywhere. The only difference is in language and dress. All are men and women. They take birth, grow, copulate and multiply..."²⁵⁰, he writes. This being the natural order, all discriminations are man-made. He is the creator of his life and himself. Religion and state are two institutions which predominate human life. They are to be so shaped as to attain an ideal state of simple, free and egalitarian social life.

247. -----, "Pathrareport", Ibid., p. 329.

248. -----, "Oru Jayilpulliyute Chitram", Ibid., p. 294.

249. Ibid., p. 294.

250. -----, "Balyakalaskhi", Ibid., p. 153.

That the economic wealth is the very foundation of human life is well established in one of his well known novels. But that alone is not taken as the mould that shapes human life. When he writes, "Desires, duties led Majeed boldly forward", the compulsion of love inherent in human life is revealed²⁵¹. Man is conceived as a part of nature. "Nobody is certain about what is going to happen in the next moment. Nobody expects anything unpleasant"²⁵². When he writes so, man is not left to fate. Life remains still in the hands of man. The author appreciates the unbounded desire of man to live with a strange optimism in the most uncertain world of changes when the wonderful secret about life eludes all the intelligence of man. He does not make his characters scared at the future and lead them to defeatism. Basheer remains unexcelled in the art of well integrating human life with nature and representing it in its totality, among the writers of Malayalam literature. As a gifted writer Basheer exhibits that rare skill to make the writer in him the subject of his story. The commitment of the writer to the society, his plight in penury and his hypocrisy, for the first time probably in Malayalam literature, also form his themes²⁵³. The writer is seen as an integral part of the life of which he makes stories. He is not put outside or above the society. Relativism and scepticism often find their ways into his narration.

The man of Basheer is man and woman inseparable. They are one and eternal, not only among human beings but in all species. The

251. Ibid., p. 168.

252. Ibid., p. 169.

253. -----, "Kathabijam", Ibid., pp. 182-228. "Second hand", Ibid., pp. 274-84, "Chattukali", Ibid., pp. 330-33.

compassion of the writer for the helpless woman who is treated by man as if she were created by God to be used by man and then ignored is very effectively expressed through the subtle words of Suhra, "Have I not told that nobody asked me? Then, how long will I live as a burden. Am I not a woman?"²⁵⁴. He draws the plight of woman due to the ignorance and brutality of man, and sometimes perpetuated by religion, most effectively through some of his women characters²⁵⁵. He longs for an ideal woman conceived as one educated, enlightened, self conscious and free and equal in rights and duties with man as her partner²⁵⁶.

Basheer was a writer who saw man and his life as part of the dynamic universe and tried to represent him as a consciously living being. He wanted him to be aware of himself and the realities of the world in which he lives. Man who occupies a relative position in this dynamic world is to be ever moving with it to better his own life and those of his fellowmen and of the generations to come. He was writing about man who is to be committed to himself and his fellowmen. And he was always sympathetic to him - his limitations. Liberty, equality, fraternity, compassion, tolerance, gender equality, material progress etc. are the ideals he tried to drive home. Mysticism, scepticism, relativism, monism, communism, feminism all these ideas have their place in his writings.

in the feverish atmosphere of social reform the new literary forms were impressively used as a media by the reformers of the Namboothiri

254. -----, "Balyakalasakhi", Ibid., p. 160.

255. -----, "Intuppupakkoranentarnnu", "Balyakalasakhi", etc. Ibid.

256. -----, "Intuppupakkoranentarnnu", Ibid., pp. 580-91.

community to take the ideas of reform to its members in an attempt to accelerate change in a progressive direction in the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. The self portrait of the Brahmana society is drawn in a realistic style in their writings. The most effective in achieving the purpose and distinguished for literary merit of all of them is the drama written by V.T. Bhattathiripad (hereafter V.T.) and staged in the year 1929²⁵⁷. In this work we get almost all the facts about the Namboothiri life in the beginning of the 20th century which are corroborated by other evidences.

The originators and upholders of the Varna Dharma in Kerala were the Namboothiri Brahmanas and they happened to be the worst victims of that system. In their strong bid to preserve their economic predominance and stability and social status as the hegemonical class they had fenced themselves into a closed society with beliefs, customs, rituals and taboos. The law of primogeniture and the marriage custom of the eldest son, the *moosamboori* of the Namboothiri family, alone marrying from the same community ensured the continuity of the aristocratic status of the community. The eldest was allowed to have four wives from his own community and *sambhandham* with the lesser lord's class, the Nairs, and the royal class of Kshetriyas. The younger sons *apphan* Namboothiris, were left without property rights. They were denied the right to marry from their own community and to establish an independent family. They could only have *sambhandham* with the lesser

257. V.T. Bhattathiripad, "Atukkalayilninnu Arangathekku", *Veetiyute Sampoonakritikal*, Kottayam, 1997, pp. 347-94.

lord's class without having the bond of family responsibilities and duties. Naturally the love and respect, and the pleasant experiences of such a bond were denied to them. Such a set up became obsolete in the colonial context that ushered in changes in the socio-economic milieu in which the Brahmanas lost political power. The ego of the *apphan* Namboothiris awakened to the challenges of the time. See what one character, an *apphan* Namboothiri, in the drama of V.T. says "...who is there to love an *apphan*?.... I may take birth as a dog, or a cat, or as any other despicable being. But I never like to be born as an *apphan* in the Namboothiri community"²⁵⁸. So unthinkable was the horrible conditions of the younger sons in the Namboothiri families.

More pitiable was the plight of the womenfolk. Life was a 'hell' for them. A story written by M.R.B. gives a touching narration of a Namboothiri woman's bondage in the family set up. The short stories of M.R.B.²⁵⁹ and Moothirungottu Bhavatrathan Namboothiripad²⁶⁰ were aimed at the enlightenment of the womenfolk of their community. While denouncing male chauvinism under which the women suffered untold miseries, they generally expounded the liberation of the Namboothiri women. Their rights to love and to be loved, to get education, to marry to *apphan* Namboothiris, to marry without dowry, to have equality with men and so on are the themes. As the eldest sons alone could marry from the same community and they are allowed to practise polygamy

258. -----, "Atukkalayilninnu Arangathekku", *Ibid.*, pp. 379-80.

259. M.R.B. *Valkannadi*, Trichur, 1946. (1st ed., 1931).

260. Moothirungottu Bhavatrathan Namboothiripad, *Atmahooti*, Trichur 1954. *Poonkula*, Trichur 1952.

and receive dowry, old men marrying young girls became a common practice among the Namboothiri Brahmanas. Such marriages assumed the character of a profitable transaction for the Namboothiri male folk, the *moosambooris*. The bridegroom was usually lured by the dowry he could receive as a reward for unburdening the Namboothiri parents of their daughters. Both sexual pleasure and issues were denied to a young lady when married to an old man. Premature widowhood and oppression from senior wife were other sufferings that accompanied marriages between old men and young brides. Subjection to *smarthavicharam* and excommunication of young innocent ladies resulting from manipulation or greed of the menfolk was another fate of a Namboothiri lady. Squabbles among the wives of a *moosamboori* were commonplace. In short a Namboothiri woman had no right to have her own will and she was denied the usual pleasures of human life. She was a tool with life in it to be used by the menfolk. V.T. likens her status to a sweetmeat eaten without its consent²⁶¹.

In short the majority of both men and women of the Namboothiri society were denied the happiness and well-being of a married and settled family life in a civilized society. Except for the children, the Namboothiri families were jails or hells where human love had no place. Expediency robbed the place of love and compassion and the sense of justice required for creating such feelings. Life was a ritual or ordeal in the name of faith and tradition. The observation of both was ensured by the tyrannical command of the *vaidikans*.

261. V.T. Bhattathiripad, "Atukkalayilninnu Arangathekku", in *Veetiyute*, pp. 380-81.

Without accepting any calling or seeking any industrial or commercial pursuits, and depending completely on the rent received from tenants most Namboothiris led a life devoid of meaning or usefulness. Reliance on attendants for everything, absence of challenges and exclusiveness from other groups made them apathetic, lazy and unenterprising. They turned their back on new education in the name of Varna Dharma and remained disqualified to get an entry into government service which was rewarding in monetary and social terms in the changed atmosphere.

The Namboothiri mind was closed to the intellectual and material world outside. The result was stagnation. For several centuries it remained so. The two wellknown intellectuals the community produced were Poonthanam and Melpathoor who dwelt upon a philosophy of spiritual salvation and defeatism in the 16th and 17th centuries. The community lived in a world of exclusiveness with the false belief in their superiority over all beings in this universe. They became anachronistic in the changing world. They became simpletons as revealed in the simple jokes, very popular among the Malayalis as *Namboothiri Phalithangal*, which poke fun at their naivety, ignorance and self deception²⁶² and a laughing stock for others who were moving with the time.

These facts slowly but strongly impressed the mind of the young generation of Namboothiris, who faced the identity crisis due to the denial of freedom of marriage and property right. It aggravated with the demand

262. Kunjunni, *Namboothiri Phalithangal*, Kottayam, 1997.

of the Nairs for the abolition of *marumakkathayam* and the demand for legal regulation of marriage among them and partition of property among family members. Their eyes now turned to the prohibited fruits namely the womenfolk of their community and the properties of their families. They felt a rightful claim on them as their own. They soon realised that the *vaidika dharma* of Brahmanya and its spokesmen the *vaidikans* were their enemies. The prominent among the intellectuals of the discovery were Moothirungottu, M.R.B. and M.P. Bhattathiripad. V.T. Bhattathiripad, far ahead of them all, was ofcourse in the forefront. They became the activists of the reform movement among the Namboothiris. The ideological bases of their movement were individualism, secularism, rationalism, civil society of nuclear families, gender equality and above all humanism. The demands V.T. raised were the right to marrying from the same community and the right to family property for the *apphan* Namboothiris, abolition of polygamy and *ghosha* and the discontinuation of the traditional learning. What he stood against were found to be an impediment to the development of the community as a whole. At the same time he put emphasis on the need of taking to the new education, secular education for women, entering into government service and state intervention to regulate marriage, inheritance etc. He was seeking ways to achieve freedom and self-respect for the Namboothiri youth to enable him to live a useful and meaningful life experiencing the pleasures and sorrows of married life. He wanted to emancipate the Namboothiris from the tyrannical rule of the *vaidikans* and to make them citizens of the

state ruled by secular laws²⁶³. His was an attempt to make the Namboothiri a 'human being'.

British colonisation meant the contact with an advanced civilization for the Malayalis, and the Malayali mind showed the dynamism to absorb the elements of that civilization which it was capable of. With a self and language streamlined by Brahmanical religion could not easily harmonise with the new elements. Tradition and modernity were juxtaposed in a parallel course in the process of transition. Unlike the erstwhile master class, the Brahmanas, the new masters did not make any attempt to reform the vernacular. That task had been taken up by the missionaries. The new rulers addressed the natives in their own language. The vernacular and the English language stood face to face and those who took to English education failed to harmonise the vernacular with the new learning and language. Malayali was seized by the crisis. But the Malayali was not swept away by that crisis.

A.R. Rajaraja Varma (hereafter A.R.R.), scholar and literary critic, a linguistic patriot and a rhetorician had the insight to grasp the situation and he took the mantle of a linguistic reformer. Taking the premise that language is the revealed self of a people, and the structure of it is the reflection of the cultural level of a people²⁶⁴ he dwelt upon the need of restructuring the language of the Malayalis in the context of the colonial contact. Through that contact Malayali could reach the wide horizons of

263. V.T. Bhattathiripad, "Atukkalayilninnu Arangathekku", in *Veetiyute*, p. 381.

264. A.R. Rajaraja Varma, "Adhunika Malayala Bhasha", in A.R., *Prabandha Samgraham*, Trivandrum, M.E. 1112, (1937), p. 1.

the intellectual and material world crossing all barriers of traditions and geography²⁶⁵. He was becoming inclusive. The colonial contact had led to an explosion in the proliferation of knowledge. The subjects of knowledge that came down to the Malayali mind from the erstwhile master class were Logic, Grammar, Vedanta, Astronomy, the Science of architecture, the science of medicine and the Science of rituals and charms²⁶⁶. From the new master class the Malayali got new subjects like History, Natural Science, Political Science, Economics etc.²⁶⁷. The scope of the Sanskritized-Malayalam with the traditional literary form of poetry was very limited and therefore insufficient to handle the new subjects. Structural rigidity and poverty of vocabulary seemed to be the problem with the vernacular. What was lamentable of the situation was that those who took to new education either switched over exclusively to English or disfigured the vernacular by mixing the vernacular and English without symmetry²⁶⁸. This meant either negation of their own self or mutilation of it. This posed a serious identity crisis. So to save the self identity of the Malayali A.R.R. felt the need of restructuring the language in such a manner as to bear the brunt of the cultural leap the Malayalis had accomplished with the spread of new type of education and the flow of the varied streams of knowledge in the hitherto unknown realms. It was in such a situation that A.R.R. wrote a rhetorical work in 1911²⁶⁹ based

265. Ibid., p. 2.

266. -----, "Namboothirimarum Sahityavum", Ibid., p. 34.

267. -----, *Sahithyasahyam*, Kottayam, 1969, (1st ed., 1911), p. 177.

268. -----, "Adhunika Malaya Bhasha", in *Sangraham*, pp. 4, 18.

269. -----, *Sahithyasahyam*.

on the concepts of the English rhetoricians. What the author of the *Leelathilakam* was doing for the master class was now being done by A.R.R. for the ruled class.

According to A.R.R. in restructuring the Malayalam language the only way open to the Malayalis was either to find-out words in Malayalam equivalent to the English words or to absorb the words of the master's language in their own forms in a harmonious style wherever required in handling new subjects. To copy down the style of the master's language in its own form through translation would lead to the death of Malayalam. And the other way of thinking first in English and then translating the thought into Sanskrit and finally into Malayalam would be awkward for the Malayalam literature²⁷⁰. What was desirable, he felt, was to express the word meaning of English in simple sentences or the use of English words in Malayalam sentences which required no participle²⁷¹. In learning especially those subjects like natural sciences, new to the indigenous mind, it was difficult to find out equivalent words for technical terms. Translation of them also would be a hard job. In such cases, he suggested that, technical words or usages could be borrowed as such in the mother tongue²⁷².

The acumen of the Malayali to move with change and to keep safe on the surface was displayed by him by effecting a structural reform of his revealed self - the language - in prose to make it cogent and flexible,

270. -----, "Adhunika Malayala Bhasha", in *Sangraham*, p. 12.

271. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

272. -----, "Nattubhashavidyabhyasam", *Ibid.*, p. 58.

simple and elegant and suitable to assimilate the ideas particularly of the master class and generally of the Europeans and assert himself to survive while marking an advancement in civilization through a rational approach emanating from self-awareness. That aspect of the Malayali intellect was represented by A.R.R. in his rhetorical and grammatical works.

A survey of the literary works of wellknown litterateurs and social reformers of the period from the fag end of the 19th century to the fifties of the twentieth century reveals the fact that a yearning for new values was very much in the air. Values and ideas represented by individual writers have been already highlighted and no repetition is intended here. Human life in its entirety was subjected to evaluation and values conflicting with human liberty, equality and fraternity were often questioned in their works. Ideologically the early works marked a strong reaction to Brahmanical theology without any hatred for the Brahmanas. Valuewise they made a far cry against hierarchy and discrimination in social life. A slow change appeared in the later stage. Legislation for the eradication of unapproachability and untouchability, and granting of equality of opportunity in the social, political and cultural life (see next chapter) were the reasons for it. A protest against economic exploitation and class discrimination was the characteristic of the later works. The ideal of the writers of the later stage was an economically just society with a more or less equal distribution of wealth. Throughout, the ideal represented was self-awareness. Reflection on the self and its enlightenment through language and literature became strong by the later stage. Literary criticism marked the climax of it. The general trend of

the whole period can be reduced as a protest against religious, economic and political oppression. Basheer has achieved a unique place among the writers in synthesising the various exploitative aspects of human life. All the writers showed a love for rationalism, secularism and humanism. They did not denounce either religion or polity. Anarchism or violence had no place in their thought. Vedantha Dharma, democracy and socialism were their ideologies. Revolution through reform was the predominant motivating idea of the writers taken together. Structural change of society demanded a structural change of thought and the literary works reviewed reveal this change. Ideologies that preached the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity found favour with them.

CHAPTER V

A NEW POLITY SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

The Varna Dharma ideology was not one that ever united the people into one social or political entity. On the contrary it kept them always divided into isolated and mutually antagonistic groups. The poverty of it as a politically inspiring force in a confrontation with the enemy was well demonstrated when the Mysore rulers first and the British later attempted the occupation of Kerala. The three main rulers of the country could not secure, by their sincere adherence to the Varna Dharma to protect the Brahmanas and cows, the divine grace to withstand the onslaught of the trading company of a modern state.

In the early stage of their occupation of the country the British had to face two minor uprisings. In Malabar Pazhacci Raja and in Travancore Velu Thampi organised them. Both of them were not inspired by any national spirit. Personal disappointment led them to the suicidal adventures. The illegitimate occupation of the land was not taken as the cause of these uprisings. Nor were these leaders upholding any national or people's cause. To secure the support of the chieftains and the people they proposed the ideology of Varna Dharma. It is more illustrative in the case of Velu Thampi. But it was only a repeated demonstration of the poverty of the Varna Dharma - *Karmakanda* ideology that the leaders were swearing by the gods and Brahmanas to take vengeance against foreign occupants of the land.

Both Tipu and the British had been resisted by the chieftains of North Malabar. They took it as a fight to protect the Brahmanas and the poor¹. The first claim has legitimacy but the second has none. The poor had never been cared for by these chieftains as the Varna Dharma ideology always kept the poor as poor, since for everyone status of birth was held to be predetermined by the deeds in the previous birth. Pazhacci was fighting for the cause of the *Perumal* and *Bhagawathi*² and Brahmanas³ and not the people. He first successfully fought against Tipu to protect the British factory at Tellicherry and expected some rewards⁴ for this. But he was disappointed when the British made an alliance with the Kurumbranad Raja, the overlord of Pazhacci, by which the right to collect the revenue of Kottayam Taluk was given to the elder brother of Pazhacci⁵. Pazhacci wanted the British to recognise him as the legitimate chieftain of Kottayam Taluk as an obedient, loyal subject of the English East India Company. In his own words, "It is my wish that the Company should permit me to collect the revenue from the principality and give it to the Company"⁶. His demand was not the freedom of the country from the British but his freedom to be the loyal subject of the Company in place of his elder brother. When the Company refused his

1. "Tellicherry Factory Diary Consultation", 11 August 1788, 27 August 1788. Cited in, K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassisamarangal*, Trivandrum, 1988, p. 13. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samararekhakal*, Manatouy, 1986, p. 42.

2. K.K.N. Kurup, *Samararekhakal*, p. 47.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

4. *Ibid.*, pp.8, 10-11.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

illegitimate demand Pazhacci took up arms against the British. In fact Pazhacci was seeking the favour of the Company for himself which now his brother was legitimately enjoying. Pazhacci was not disputing the right of the British as foreigners to occupy his native land and he was not preaching nationalism as a cause to be fought for, because nationalism as an idea had not even taken its embryonic form in the mind of the natives at that time. The British were not seen as foreigners but only as another power in the neighbourhood that could be allied with if necessary to fight against a native enemy by the rulers of India with the exception of Tipu Sultan.

In 1785 the Travancore Raja signed a treaty of perpetual friendship, alliance and subsidy with the English East India Company. As part of this treaty the English appointed a Resident at Travancore. The first Resident was Macaulay. With his approval the Raja appointed Velu Tampi as the Dewan in 1801⁷. It was not a secret that maneuver and surreptitious methods had played a role in that appointment⁸. The despotic and cruel nature of his administration fomented rebellion in the country and he suppressed it and saved his Dewanship with the moral and military support of the Resident Macaulay⁹. The grateful Dewan together with the Resident prepared the blue print of a new treaty between the Raja and the Company. Though there was much opposition to this new treaty

7. T.P. Sankarankutty Nair, *A Tragic Decade in Kerala History*, Chennai, 1997, p. 85.

8. P. Sankunny Menon, *Thrivitamcore Charitram*, Trivandrum, 1973, pp. 228-29.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-38.

from the royal family and court, the Dewan prevailed upon the king to sign the treaty that completely surrendered the sovereignty of Travancore to the Company in 1805¹⁰. At the cost of the freedom of his country the grateful Dewan Velu Tampi now paid off his indebtedness to Macaulay and the Company. But the Dewan soon quarrelled with the Resident over the question of the payment of the dues to the Company. Without the knowledge and consent of the king the Dewan organised a revolt against the Company. He now tried to provide an ideological tinge to his rebellion. His letter seeking the support of the Zamorin¹¹ and his Kundara Proclamation¹² reveal his ideological conviction that prompted him to revolt. He asserted in these two documents that under the British rule Varna Dharma would be destroyed. For instance caste distinctions would be removed; charitable institutions would not be allowed to function; religious ceremonies like *murajapam* would be stopped; and both Hindus and Muslims would be converted to Christianity. It is stressed that the Brahmana dharma and Kshetriya dharma would become extinct in the country under British rule. The calamity going to happen to the Brahmanas and *karmakanda* was reiterated in both the documents. He cautioned that “all the unjust and unlawful things which characterise *Kaliyuga* would be practised¹³. In other words the occupation of the land by the British would lead to *Kaliyuga* which means the ruin of Varna

10. Ibid., p. 240.

11. T.P. Sankarankutty Nair, *Decade*, pp. 127-29.

12. P. Sankunnu Menon, *Thiruvitamcore*, pp. 261-64.

13. T.P. Sankarankutty Nair, *Decade*, p. 133.

Dharma and, he exhorted the people to fight against the British to avert this impending calamity. The revolt which failed to secure the support either of the king or of the people was suppressed by the English without much effort.

To describe Pazhacci Raja and Velu Tampi as great patriots and freedom fighters as often done is an instance of a romantic and emotional approach to the past. This does not help a rational understanding of the past.

The attempt of the two rebels was not simply to uphold a tradition sustained by the Varna Dharma ideology or to uphold the ideology itself. It was also an attempt to rely on the ideology of tradition to gain power illegitimately. Yet they represent the champions of the Varna Dharma ideology.

The failure of the native rebels is in fact the failure of an ideology founded on irrationality, discrimination and superstitions in the face of superior strategy and the value of earnestness of purpose and industry evolved by a secular and rational ideology. Subsequent history shows the erosion of that ideology under the British rule that inaugurated the process of secularising and rationalising the politics and administration of the country. It was founded on the political ideology of liberal democracy and the economic ideology of capitalism bottomed on the capabilities of man and his achievements in this world.

The subjugation of the land of Kerala by the British in simple words meant the change of the hegemonical class. The event assumed a wider dimension by providing an opportunity for the *avarana* classes to start a struggle for liberation. It did not bring a sudden end to the age old institutions and practices that sustained the hegemony of the former masters, the Brahmanas. Those institutions and practices which centered around the ideology of Varna Dharma and the system of ownership and distribution of the means of production namely land were interconnected and the liberation of the down-trodden would have become a reality only by the destruction of that system. Politics in Kerala of the period roughly from 1850 to 1950 was mainly a struggle for this. The presence of the new colonialists acted as a catalyst in that struggle. The struggle was politically against the theocratic nature of the state and economically against the feudal set up. Socially the struggle meant the restructuring of the social set up based on Varna Dharma and the political and economic struggle was to bring forth this end.

When the British established their dominance over Kerala it was direct in Malabar and indirect in Travancore and Cochin. The nature of their presence determined the variation in the character of the struggle in these political divisions. In Malabar the struggle was mainly against the feudal set up. Its political struggle was a part of the national struggle for political independence. That aspect is not taken up for an analysis here.

Malabar was acquired by the British from Tipu Sultan by conquest in 1792. Tipu's claim to the territory rested on conquest he inherited

from his father Haider Ali. Haider's first military intervention in Malabar came in the wake of the succour sought by the Raja of Palakkad against the Zamorin during 1756-57¹⁴. It did not have much consequences other than restoring the lost territories of the Palakkad Raja from the Zamorin. After his assumption of throne in Mysore Kingdom in 1761, Haider got an opportunity to meddle with Malabar politics through the promptings of Ali Raja of Cannanore, and Kappu Thampan a contestant to the throne of Kolathunad¹⁵, and in 1766 he led the successful military campaign against the main chieftains of Kolathunad, Kadathanad, Kurumbranad and finally the Zamorin of Calicut. The interesting point here is to see whether there was an ideological background to this conquest. Though it was not in the name of any ideology that Haider Ali started his campaign against Malabar, the Muslims of Malabar had turned to his help against the opppressive rule of the Hindu chieftains of Malabar in the name of the ideology of Islam¹⁶. They took Haider as a fellowman with the expectation of a deliverer in him.

As pointed out in the first chapter the intrusion of the Portuguese into the Kerala politics had created an identity consciousness among the Christian and Muslim communities outside the Varna Dharma ideology. Ever since the seventh century A.D. Islam had begun to spread in Kerala. In course of time the number of its followers increased considerably and had constituted a significant part of the Kerala population of the coastal

14. P.A. Sayd Muhammed, *Kerala Muslim Charitram*, Trichur, 1969, p. 151. A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Madras, 1996, p. 306.

15. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Survey*, p. 307.

16. P.A. Sayd Muhammed, *Kerala*, p. 153.

regions¹⁷. In the kingdom of Zamorin they enjoyed royal patronage and economic privileges, and secured high positions in the state service and social life¹⁸. Generally there was no communal discord between the Hindus and Muslims under the Hindu rulers in Kerala¹⁹. The Muslims being a business community made a considerable contribution to the economic prosperity of the Zamorin's Kingdom and could enjoy this position uncontested as there was no Vaisya Community among the Hindus. Militarily also the Muslims were rendering great assistance to the Zamorins. But the alliance entered into by the native rulers with the Portuguese, the commercial rivals of the Muslims, in the 16th Century had steadily estranged the Muslims from the Hindu community. This estrangement reached an irreconcilable degree with the departure of the Zamorin from the traditional policy of friendship with the Muslims by signing the treaties of 1597 and 1599 with the Portuguese²⁰. The Muslims now felt beleaguered by an hostile community of Hindu rulers and foreigners and sought the help of the Arakkal Raja, the only Muslim political power of little significance in Kerala. It was against this background that the Arakkal Raja extended his invitation to Haider who was on his campaign to Badnur in the neighbourhood of Northern Kerala. The failure of the Zamorin, the upholder of Varna Dharma ideology, to display political acumen and the opportunistic alliance the Zamorin and the native chieftains made with

17. Ibid., pp. 63, 64-65, 74.

18. Ibid., p. 81.

19. Shaik Zainuddeen Makhdoom, *Tuhafatul Mujahiddeen*. C. Hamza, ed., Calicut, 1995, pp. 34-35.

20. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Survey*, pp. 122, 128.

an alien power, the Portuguese, alienated the Muslims from the social main stream of Kerala and caused the growth of a separate political consciousness and nationalism emanating from insecurity feeling and embedded in the ideology of Islam.

Neither Haider Ali nor Tipu Sultan took Islam as a cause for the fight against their political enemies in Kerala. Nor were they utilising Islam as a means to advance their political interest. But conversion was resorted to on a limited scale by Tipu Sultan to frighten the ruling class into subjugation²¹ and this had helped the increase in the number of Muslims in Malabar. As a political fall out of their conquests a sense of pride was created among the Muslims for the time being and the Muslims could enjoy respite for a shortwhile from the oppression of the elite class of the Varna Dharma ideology. But Islam could bring about the further political consolidation of the Muslims. More enduring was the impact of the administrative measures taken by the Mysorean invaders. Land was surveyed and tax was assessed on all lands including *devaswam* and *brahmaswam* holdings²². This was a great blow to the hegemonical class. Tipu Sultan also ordered the wearing of blouse by the Hindu womenfolk²³ and the abolition of polyandry known as *sambandham* practised by the Nair women²⁴. These policies compelled many of the hegemonical class and the Nair chieftains to flee from Malabar seeking refuge in Cochin

21. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Mysore Kerala Relations in the Eighteenth Century*, Trivandrum, 1975, pp. 33, 35. Stephen F. Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar*, Oxford, 1980, p. 85.

22. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Relations*, p. 64.

23. C.K. Kareem, *Haidaraliyuteyum Tipuvinteyum Keralam*, Trivandrum, 1987, p. 219.

24. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Relations*, p. 35.

and Travancore. In the absence of these landlords the tenant farmers, both Hindus and Muslims could temporarily assert their independence. For the Hindu tenants and underlings this was an opportunity to experience freedom from the ritualistic enslavement also.

Tipu Sultan had completed a number of roads which linked the important trading centres in Malabar. Some of them connected the trading centres of Malabar with Coimbatore and Karnataka²⁵. It can be assumed that the development of trading centres²⁶ helped the free labourers of Hindu and Muslim community to seek some jobs in these centres and thereby escape from the economic and ritualistic subordination to the Varna classes. In fact the Varna Dharma ideology could function effectively only in an agrarian economy. For all these reasons Tipu's invasion and reforms can be taken as an event that had temporarily shaken the foundation of the feudalistic set up with its source in the Varna Dharma ideology. Its complete destruction was hindered by the establishment of the British dominance over Malabar. The British allowed the erstwhile feudal lords who had escaped to return and resume their possessions²⁷. The revenue policy of the British allowed them to continue enjoyment of their economic privileges while showing preference also in accommodating them in the local administrative service²⁸ as political expediency. The British thought it wise to secure the support of these

25. Ibid., pp. 65, 66.

26. C.K. Kareen, *Keralam*, pp. 167-168, 247-50.

27. Stephen F. Dale, *Mappilas*, p. 109.

28. Ibid.

classes to effectively establish their political dominance and ensure peace and political stability in Malabar. That policy was pursued in the light of the unorganised condition of the tenant class who remained insignificant in the prevailing political situation. It was inexpedient for the government to ameliorate the conditions of the peasant class who showed signs of resentment against the new regime. Varna Dharma ideology enjoined complete surrender of the Hindu peasants to the lord's classes. In the absence of any political party with a secular ideology to unite and transform them into a political force the Hindu peasant class remained ignored and insulted. The British authority for this reason did not show any enthusiasm to take any measures intended to protect the interests of the peasants from whom the government was not going to have any benefit as compensation for alienating the lord's class.

But this was not the case of the Muslims. They were the followers of an ideology that preached brotherhood, and remained as one in opposing the British authority and the Hindu lord's classes. They had no ritual obligation to their Hindu landlords. When the British government took measures in support of the lord's classes, uniting under the ideology of their religion the Muslim tenants waged a series of revolts throughout the 19th century. These revolts were not founded on an ideology of class consciousness but had a class character. The latent class consciousness behind their revolts was strengthened by the ideology of Islam in the absence of any secular political party to assume that role.

The oppression of the Hindu lord's classes was felt by the shopkeepers and businessmen and the Muslims in general. So the Muslim peasants could secure the support of other classes also. Moreover the ideology of Islam inculcated the value of brotherhood among its followers and they showed the capacity to stand by one another and remained faithful and loyal in conditions of contingency²⁹.

The lords of the land in Malabar had begun to politically organise to protect their interests even during the 19th century³⁰. But the cause of the peasants was taken up for the first time by the Indian National Congress. The leaders of the Congress in the early stage of its activities in Kerala came from the lesser lord's class. All the well known leaders of it in Malabar belonged to the Nair Community³¹ and the peasant class was not attracted to its fold. The nature of the grievances of the two - the lesser lords were *kanakudiyans* and the peasants were *verumpatta kudiyans* - caused a cleavage between them. The peasants' grievances like frequent evictions, rack-renting, heavy renewal fees and *melcharthu*, all being the essential features of *jenmi* system³², were quite different from those of the lesser lords.

The Muslim peasants still remained united under the ideology of their religion. In Malabar the largest number of Muslim peasants were in Ernad and Valluvanad taluks. These peasants got an opportunity to strike

29. M. Gangadharan, *Malabar Rebellion 1921-22*, Allahabad, 1989, p. 39.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

31. Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, Cochin, 1985, pp. 20-29.

32. M. Gandadharan, *Malabar*, p. 21.

with unprecedented vigour against the oppressive Government and the lord's classes of Brahmanas and Nairs when the Khilafat Movement started. The Khilafat Movement was mainly a religious struggle for the Indian Muslims while for the Indian National Congress it was a political struggle. But in the Ernad and Valluvanad taluks the large scale participation of the Muslim peasants gave it a different character. For them the movement meant one for the redressal of the long-standing economic grievance namely freedom from the economic oppression of the feudal lords. So some of the more oppressive of the higher lord's and lesser lord's classes had been killed. Instances of the murder and looting of Muslims who were suspected to be loyal to the government or against the revolt also had been reported³³.

The callousness of the British Government and the apathy of the Congress, the only significant political association of the time, towards the cause of the peasants and the merciless oppression of the *jenmis* gave Islam an opportunity to assume the role of a secular ideology to foment the dormant class consciousness of the peasants and a cohesive force to lead them to action with the support of petit-bourgeois section of the Muslim society. Islam was not ushering in modernity or an ideological force against feudalism but was able to give a severe blow to the caste-oriented feudal set up in Malabar as a unifying force at least of a section of the peasant population and as a haven for the polluting castes to escape from humiliations and social suppression. There they

33. K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, Kozhikode, 1993, pp. 137, 169, 180-181, 206, 208, 258, 261-62, 278.

could enjoy the grace of fraternity and self-respect. Overnight a low caste man could gain social respect and social equality with the caste Hindu on conversion to Islam. No wonder then that over a single decade of 1871 to 1881 nearly 50000 non-Muslims of Malabar had joined Islam to be delivered from the rigours of caste system³⁴.

In Malabar the destruction of the theocratic political regime was brought about by the successive occupation of the land by Tipu Sultan and the British. When the British rule granted whatever civic rights to all irrespective of caste and creed there was no need of an exclusive civic right movement for the depressed classes and the Muslims in this region. Public places including roads, institutions, schools and offices were open to all. In the rule of law regime the Brahmanas and Pariahs were treated equally. But the land revenue policy favourable to the lords retained the Varna Dharma character of the feudal set up in the social life of Malabar. A political organisation professing secular ideology was required then for the struggle against that feudal set up.

In the case of the Hindu tenants the ritualistic hierarchical status put the *jenmi* castes at an advantage. They could use the weapon of ex-communication of the low caste tenants from the entire village community and deny services of any kind³⁵. So the Hindu tenants were

34. *Imperial Census of 1881*, "Operation And Results in The Presidency of Madras", Madras, 1883, p. 122. Cited in, Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 25, 51.

35. P. Radhakrishnan, *Peasant Struggle Land Reforms and Social Change*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 31.

at a more disadvantageous position than their Muslim counter-parts. Their religion was the cause of it and they had to fight against both religious and economic oppression. A struggle against the feudal set up meant this. In 1922 the first tenant organisation namely Malabar Kudiyan Sangham was formed and its candidate Raman Menon tried to awaken the *kudiyan* of his problems. He also made the *jenmi-kudiyan* relations a serious issue of the election³⁶. After the Malabar Rebellion the Indian National Congress also seems to be very concerned with the agrarian problems³⁷ and mainly due to its efforts the Malabar Tenancy Act XIV of 1930 which bestowed some benefits upon the *kanakudiyans*, that is the lesser lords of Nair community, was passed. The *verumpatta kudiyan* belonging mainly to the polluting communities and a few poor Nairs got nothing³⁸ and they had now to lead the struggle against the *kanakudiyan* Nairs. They required a secular ideology having no caste or religious colour. They were to be consolidated into an economic class to fight for the removal of caste disabilities and the evil of class oppression. The Kerala Karshaka Sangham founded in 1933 assumed an active role in this struggle. It organised inter-caste dinners at its conferences and an economic agenda was placed at the top of the aims of the struggle.

In May 1934 the Kerala Congress Socialist Party (hereafter KCSP) wedded to socialism was founded at a meeting presided over by

36. Ibid., p. 80.

37. Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile*, p. 62.

38. P. Radhakrishnan, *Peasant*, pp. 79-88.

K. Kelappan at Calicut. Membership of the party was restricted to Congress men only. This was in consistency with the development at all India level. In the beginning of the 1930s socialism had become an enticing ideology to the youth wing of the Indian National Congress. They found it inspiring as an ideology to infuse vigour and provide definiteness of purpose to the anti-imperialistic struggle of the Indians and the Congress Socialist Party was founded in 1934 at its first meeting at Bombay. To propagate the ideas of socialism and to convince the people of the need of accepting that ideology as a goal Sampoorananda and Jayaprakash Narayanan wrote the two books namely *Socialism* and *Why Socialism* respectively³⁹. As the All India Congress working committee was not willing to accommodate ideas like class struggle and nationalisation of private property without compensation, of the socialist ideology, an ideologically based rift became inevitable in Indian National Congress. Gandhi had expressed his disagreement with the programme of the Congress Socialist Party. P. Krishna Pillai the Secretary of the KCSP was critical of the policy and programme of the Indian National Congress and declared that the Congress Socialist Party wanted the Indian National Congress to accept the political and economic emancipation of the masses as the goal of its struggle against imperialism⁴⁰. In its first conference on 13 October 1934 it was resolved that a new constitution for India based

39. N.E. Balaram, *Keralathile Adyakala Communist Prasthanam*, I, Trivandrum, 1980, pp. 64-65.

40. P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, II, Trivandrum, 1966, pp. 405-07.

on socialist principle should be drawn up⁴¹. The KCSP thereon concentrated on organising both industrial workers and the peasants including agricultural workers. Apart from them it began to organise the teachers, civil servants of lower category and students into a mass force⁴² in the political movement and that could acquire a popular democratic character. Thus cutting across caste and creed the ideology of Socialism was securing a grip on the social mind of Kerala to give a new orientation to political activities.

In 1939 the KCSP became the part of the Communist Party of India. The policy, programme and method all remained the same while the change was confined to the name only. Ideologically the marked change was the move from Socialism to Marxian Socialism. Now the goal of the political movement was not merely political independence but the achievement of political, social and economic equality. Caste consciousness was transformed into class consciousness which created inconsequential situation for communal organisations. In the absence of a capitalistic economy the socialists directed their struggle against feudalism in its all aspects and they could well understand the impossibility of a direct transformation of the feudal economy to a socialistic economy. The communist leader and ideologue E.M. Sankaran Namboothiripad⁴³ and the socialist Sahodaran Ayyappan⁴⁴ put emphasis

41. Ibid., p. 408.

42. Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile*, p. 88.

43. P.K. Balakrishnan, ed., *Narayana Guru Samahara Grantham*, Kottayam, 1969, p. 101

44. M. Sahadevan, *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making - A Study of Sahodaran Ayyappan*, Trichur, 1993, pp. 123-24.

on industrial and commercial progress of the country. Industrial and commercial progress was taking place at a slow pace in the country and yet it was bringing about social changes. But that was not sufficient to cause a natural death of the feudal set up. The idea of socialism or Marxian socialism was a product of the Industrial revolution in Europe. In Kerala there was no such revolution. Nevertheless the idea of socialism found alluring to the Keralites. It was the anti-feudal attitude that added fertility to it and not the sharing of industrially and commercially produced wealth. The stress of the socialist minded writers put emphasis on the destruction of the feudal set up that seemed to be the source of social and economic inequalities and injustice. This created a psychic atmosphere congenial to the abolition of feudal ownership and distribution of wealth. The immediate impact of the socialist ideology was the acceleration of the process of the destruction of feudalism and social upliftment of the depressed caste / class sections.

Socialism could become an effective ideology in the struggle against the ritualistic and economic aspects of feudalism in Malabar. For the Hindu peasants economic liberation and religious freedom were identical. Without having access to the lords' temples the non-caste Hindu peasants had their own deities and temples dedicated to them. Their religion was independent of Varna Dharma ideology. But there also they were exploited by the lord's class. The lord's class assumed the trusteeship and control of some of these temples and took away the donations to such temples for themselves. When the tenants were becoming class conscious under

the influence of socialist ideology they also became aware of the religious exploitation they were subjected to by the lord's class and began to resist it⁴⁵.

The immediate demand of the down-trodden classes in Malabar was the redressal of the social and economic grievances arising out of the feudal set up, and the goal of political independence aimed at by the Indian National Congress could not make a strong appeal to them. The ideology of socialism could win their support when the final goal of the political struggle was declared to be the attainment of a socialist set up by the KCSP and freedom struggle appeared to be meaningful and purposeful to them. It now meant the political, social and economic liberation of the society from the foreign masters, the British and the native masters, the lord's classes.

The Indian National Congress being a political organisation that represented all the people of India it could not give leadership to struggles of sectarian character emanating from the internal contradictions of the Indian society. For instance it could not exclusively take up the cause of the workers or the peasants against their Indian masters. This does not mean that it was insensitive to issues relating to the interests of castes or classes. It could not foster class/caste consciousness. Moreover it was not taking a natural formation from the interests of such classes/castes but from the upper classes/castes, who had been fortunate to get education and enjoy economic security. It was certain that they should have to

45. K.K.N. Kurup, *Kayyoor Riot*, Calicut, 1978, pp. 38-40.

experience the inconveniences of the political subjection of the country at points of denial of opportunities both in administrative service and governance. But the influence of the liberal education introduced by the colonial government helped them to be aware of the realities of the Indian situation. So being the product of their interests in national politics the Indian National Congress since its inception followed a policy of compromise against the British whose rule its leadership felt necessary for the progress of the country. Being sensitive to the issues of the down-trodden that conflicted with the interests the Indian National Congress represented, it followed a policy of compromise towards them too. It took it as its responsibility to mobilise the entire population across caste, class and creed barriers for the national struggle with the entry of Gandhi into its leadership. Eradication of untouchability and the upliftment of the depressed classes were made live issues of the national agenda of the Indian National Congress. Simultaneously the grievances of the peasants also got a place on that agenda. But the delicate and complex nature of the national struggle prompted Gandhi also to follow a policy of compromise in the class/caste struggle within the Indian society. Any sectarian struggle of a class nature would have helped the British to ally with the exploiting class and suppress the national struggle. One reason for this was the unequal growth of self awakening among the down-trodden classes and the variance of their interests at the all-India level. So Gandhi had to take seemingly contradictory or inconsistent postures on certain issues or events of the struggle. A life and death struggle on internal issues could never have been taken by him in the Indian situation due to

the constraints of internal contradictions. Yet with its liberal ideology of democracy it did much for the modernisation of the society by leading struggles against oppressive ritualistic and economic traditions.

Though the Indian National Congress could not play an effective role in the struggle against the economic aspect of feudalism in Malabar, it could make a lasting contribution to the fight against the ritualistic aspect. Along with the Non-co-operation movement Gandhi had chalked out the constructive programme of which an item was the eradication of untouchability. Kerala offered a challenging situation for experimentation with this programme and the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhi was very much responsive to take it up.

When the British took over the reins of governance in Malabar from the Zamorins the theocratic rule ceased to exist. The colonial government continued to support the erstwhile lord's classes and to protect the economic character of the feudal set up. In social relations it did not show much enthusiasm to keep up the Varna Dharma dictates. For instance when in 1917 the Zamorin demanded the Madras Government to ban the lower castes from travelling on the side roads of the Tali temple at Calicut, he got the reply that the road belonged to the Municipality and therefore the freedom of travel enjoyed by the low castes on that road could not be prohibited⁴⁶. In the next detailed representation of the Zamorin to the Madras Governor it was pointed out that those low caste people who demanded freedom of travel on roads passing near

46. N.M. Namboothiri, *Zamootiricharithrathile Kanapurangal*, Sukapuram, 1987, p. 157.

temples would subsequently claim that they were also Hindus⁴⁷. Where the shoe pinches is very much clear from this letter. The Zamorin or the *savarna* class whom he represented was not willing to consider the lower castes as their Hindu brethren. Legend insisted that the Zamorin was to rule in subordination to the Brahmanas⁴⁸ and the Zamorin was keen on patronising the Brahmanas with rank and wealth⁴⁹. When the Zamorin lost political power Varna Dharma ideology lost its relevance in the governance of the country but in the administration of institutions under the direct control of the Zamorin that ideology was strictly followed. In the Zamorin's college admission was denied to the lower castes. The Indian National Congress had demanded the opening of that institution to all. In the more socially important issue of temple entry it demanded the opening of all the public Hindu temples to all the followers of Hinduism at its Kerala State Political Conference held in 1931⁵⁰ and the Congress Temple Entry Satyagraha Committee was formed. Its president K. Kelappan requested the Zamorin to grant an appointment to discuss the issue of opening the most popular Lord Krishna temple at Guruvayur under the Zamorin's trusteeship to all Hindus. In his reply the Zamorin stressed the point that since very ancient times Kerala was the land of *karmakanda* and the traditions followed in rites and rituals could not be broken⁵¹. Thereon K. Kelappan started an indefinite fast to secure the

47. Ibid., p. 158.

48. Ibid., pp. 22-26.

49. Ibid., pp. 114-15.

50. Perunna K.N. Nair, *Keralathile*, p. 75.

51. N.M. Namboothiri, *Kanapurangal*, p. 165.

opening of the Guruvayur temple for all Hindus as their right. Gandhi sent a letter to the Zamorin in September 1932 requesting him to oblige the demand of the satyagrahis. Responding to this letter the All India Varna Dharma Swarajya Sangham sent a letter signed by its secretary Heralal D. Nanavathy. He accused Gandhi of trying to undermine the citadel of Hindu religion and Hindu culture by encouraging the removal of untouchability, temple entry for all, interdining and intercaste marriage⁵². It may be apt to remember here that the same was the charge Godse levelled against Gandhi in justification of his assassination⁵³. Gandhi had clearly stated that he was a believer in *jati* which is quite different from the existing varna system. It has to be kept in mind that Gandhi has given his own constructions to whatever Hindu doctrines he had upheld and often they contradicted the ones given by the fundamentalists and priestly class. In his opinion all laws and commentaries that violate truth and morality had to be refuted. "The God who creates the law that contradicts truth, I refute"⁵⁴, he declared, in justification of his stand against laws enjoining pollution by touch or approach and the concept of *jati*. Gandhi's was an attempt to give a rational interpretation to the Hindu scripture against the irrational interpretation given by the priestly class motivated by vested interests. This earned him the wrath of the advocates of Varna Dharma.

Earlier, on the occasion of the Vaikkam Satyagraha in the native state of Travancore in 1924-25 Gandhi had substantiated his ideas of

52. Ibid., pp. 178-79.

53. Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*, London, 1969, pp. 637-41.

54. N.M. Namboothiri, *Kanapurangal*, 9. 187.

Hinduism in relation to the practice of untouchability. Vaikkam Satyagraha was to secure the right to walk on the public approach roads of the Vaikkam Temple, a right enjoyed by the Christians and Muslims, for the *avarnas*. It was a struggle against the practices of untouchability and unapproachability that denied the civic right of freedom of travel, to the *avarnas*. It was in fact against the ideology of Varna Dharma that sanctioned those practices. As it was an issue related to the native state, Indian National Congress did not assume the leadership of it directly. Eminent Congressmen like K. Kelappan, K.P. Kesava Menon etc. were at the forefront of the movement. If any single leader who undauntedly endeavoured to organise the Vaikkam Satyagraha it was T.K. Madhavan, a follower of Indian National Congress. He had secured the approval of Gandhi and the Congress to the satyagraha programme⁵⁵. So it was very much an Indian National Congress movement based on the ideology of Gandhi. As politician and social reformer Gandhi showed a very keen interest in the Vaikkam Satyagraha. In 1925 he visited Vaikkam and had a debate with some of the *savarna* leaders who opposed the entry of the *avarnas* to the approach roads⁵⁶. Their leader was Devan Neelakantan Namboothiri of Indanthuruthil who told Gandhi that *avarnas* are worse than dacoits or robbers who are born in the unapproachable caste because of their bad *karma* in their previous births. Gandhi's contentions can be condensed like this. Hindu religion set no bar whatsoever on the use of

55. T.K. Ravindran, *Vaikkam Satyagraha and Gandhi*, Trichur, 1969, pp. 47-52.

56. Proceedings of the Conference held at Mr. Indanthuruthil Devanarayanan Namboothiri's house, Vaikkam, on 10 March 1925, "Correspondence on the Vaikkam Satyagraha", Vol. IX English Records, Secretariat, Trivandrum. Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 164-91.

public roads or semi public roads by any person whatsoever no matter to what class he belongs. Neither reason nor Hindu scriptures justify the prohibition on the freedom of travel or movement of the lower communities. Such a prohibition is proper neither for those who prohibit nor for those who are prohibited. It is not consistent with human dignity for anybody to prevent any human being from making use of even private roads if generally they are accessible to the public simply because a particular human being is born in a particular caste in Hinduism. Low caste people are not suspicious characters or enemies. They are not to be treated as such. Nobody has any right to punish one who is born in a low caste even if it is taken for granted as a punishment for the sins he committed in the previous life. Only God has the right to punish. Human beings have no right to encroach upon the powers of the Divinity. Those who oppress the lower caste people in the name of religion do it out of ignorance. The practice of untouchability or unapproachability has its source in customs and laws followed in the name of religion. To use reason to establish an authority in support of irrational and unjust customs or practices is simply the prostitution of reason. On the contrary reason is to be a means to attain religious freedom. Hinduism should not be reduced to the former state. The discrimination in the use of temples by the caste Hindus is contrary to Hinduism and the spirit or essence of religion. And Gandhi even offered to withdraw the satyagraha if any authority from Sankaracharya, not a spurious one in his name, was produced in support of unapproachability practised by the Hindus⁵⁷.

57. Ibid., pp. 165-67, 170-71, 183-189.

For Gandhi religion as a moralising force was the ideological basis of politics. He defined religion as universal toleration. To him it aims at the welfare of nations which is the concern of politics⁵⁸. He took religion as a means to humanise politics and not to establish a theocratic state. He took much pains to substantiate unsuccessfully his version of varna a concept which had become absolute in a world he lived. Probably he was motivated by a desire to uphold the ethos of the country in his attempt to foster national spirit in a struggle against the British. Whatever it may be, he was not subscribed to the Varna Dharma concept of the hegemonical class of the Brahmanas. Gandhi spared no place for hierarchy or superior inferior gradation in social order, caste and the idea of pollution by touch or approach in his varna concept. All these he refuted. Varna is not conceived as man made institution but an epithet to a person for the talent he exhibits in a calling. Any calling is to be done with a spirit of duty or service as all callings are required to the sustenance of the society, and social life emanates from the interdependence of individuals⁵⁹. According to his construction *Varnasrama* satisfies the religious, social and economic needs of a community and caste is a distortion of varna concept which deserves no mercy at all⁶⁰. In his own words, -

Varna has nothing to do with caste. Down with the monster of caste that masquerades in the guise of varna. It is this travesty of

58. Shriman Narayanan, ed., *Selected Works of Gandhi*, VI, Ahmedabad, 1969, p. 435.

59. Ibid., pp. 475-76.

60. Ibid., p. 476.

varna that degraded Hinduism and India. Our failure to follow the law of varna is largely responsible for both our economic and spiritual ruin⁶¹.

As usual, in his peculiar way, Gandhi was trying to effect a compromise between the orthodox and radical elements by denouncing caste and its associated evils on the one hand and on the other hailing the varna theory in a possible rational way. Modernisation of Hinduism and the Hindus as well in a compromising line seems to be the aim of Gandhi.

Gandhi who wrote his own commentary on the *Bhagavat Gita* and had invented the concept of an ideal Rama wanted to read Hindu scriptures in a rational and humanistic way. In this regard he is close to Chattampi Swamikal and Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi in Kerala context. He wanted to discard accretion of irrational and unjust interpretations on Hindu scriptures to ensure an egalitarian society and tried to reform it in such a direction that would promote equality and civic rights for all. In fact he was opposing Varna Dharma ideology of the priestly class which dehumanised Hinduism. He was trying to make Hinduism a useful ideology that would better human life. Through Vaikkam Satyagraha and Guruvayur Satyagraha Gandhi was trying to apply his ideology based on Indian thought by bringing in Hinduism in the political and social struggle against Varna Dharma ideology. Both these sathyagrahas were a great success in arousing public opinion against untouchability and

61. Ibid., p. 479.

unapproachability and paving the way for temple entry for all in the near future.

By the third decade of the 19th century the Basel Evangelical Mission Society (hereafter Basel Mission) was very active in the socio-economic life of Malabar. The ideology of this missionary society was Calvinism which represented some radical values. They had become the vanguards of democracy in Europe. They were preaching values like frugality, industry etc. intended to inculcate the spirit of dynamism leading to social progress. What exactly was lacking in the Varna Dharma ideology was such values. This had been very well noted by the Basel Mission. Its opinion on the natives was this, "Loyalty in word and deed, loyalty in fulfilling duties of oneself and to others, awareness of the value of time, circumspection and looking forward, understanding and acquisition of what is new and changing are found so seldom in heathens, for he sees nothing of them, and hears nothing of them...."⁶². The Mission with the avowed aim of conversion was trying to put into practice the values of their ideology through various enterprises. Christianity being a non-hierarchical religion appeared to be an asylum of social emancipation for those in the lower rungs of the hierarchical Varna Dharma set up. It was an ideology that identified prayer as work and work as prayer⁶³. With its emphasis on duty to oneself and to others and work as worship, the Calvinist ideology was not different from the ideas of Sri Narayana and Gandhi

62. "Report of the Industrial Commission", Basel Mission Archives, 1856, p.4. Cited in Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Basel*, p.16.

63. Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Basel*, p.10.

who in turn had absorbed such ideas from the *Isavasya Upanisad*. The essence of these ideas is service to man is service to God and this idea is rooted in the identification of man as an incarnation of God.

Calvinism had enjoined its followers that for the glorification of God man has the duty to work for the social achievements. The missionaries engaged in useful works with this belief. They established charitable institutions like educational institutions and hospitals, and industries like weaving, book binding, carpentry, tile manufacturing etc. Large scale exportation of industrial products also had been begun by the missionaries⁶⁴. All these had a significant impact on Malayali social and economic life.

The mission started the first vernacular newspaper in Kerala. Promotion of literacy and education and the proliferation of knowledge were achieved by the mission. Calvinism attached no stigma to any useful calling and therefore dignity of labour and labourers was assured. Conversion of non-caste Hindu to Christianity now enhanced his social position by annihilating the social stigma attached to him by the ritual and vocational status. He could enjoy the right to equality and a sense of brotherhood in his community. As women were employed in the industrial units and provided with separate hostels women could emerge to a position equal to that of men. Both women and low caste men were welcome to the Mission's educational institutions. Knowledge of secular subjects was now radiating its light into the dark caverns of the native

64. Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Basel*, pp. 25-36, 57.

mind which was kept ignorant by the Varna Dharma ideology. They were thus trained to think in a secular and rational way leading to self awakening. Callings in industrial units promoted social status and social mobility. Caste discrimination had no place in them. Industries and trade speeded up the urbanisation of certain centres which was a factor that could help in the long run the destruction of the feudal set up. Large scale exportation of the industrial manufactures linked the native economy with world capitalistic economy. This also could have a destructive effect on the village based feudal economy.

The positive result of the disseminations of secular and rational ideas was the development of a democratic sense while the development of trade and industry could help the origin of a capitalistic economy. Negatively these developments could cause the destruction of the Varna Dharma ideology and the feudal agrarian economy. Thus Christianity offered a serious challenge to the Varna Dharma ideology. This challenge was conspicuous in provoking the intellectuals to think against Varna Dharma ideology and its socio-economic and political set up. The best instance of it was the novel *Saraswathy Vijayam* of Potheri Kunjambu. The thrust of his novel on education, dignity of a calling useful to himself and his society, a useful life of the individual engaged in such a calling and service to mankind was a creation of the Christian missionary work in North Malabar. Similarly Vengayil Kunhiraaman Nayanar was prompted to advise his fellowmen, the Caste Hindu *jenmies* to mend their ways practised in the name of Varna Dharma. Pointing to the Christian missionaries, he reminded them that there were people to take care of

the marginalised people, the non-caste Hindus, contrary to the tradition that kept them away. He wanted them to be humanistic in their approach to the non-caste Hindus for their own well-being and their society's. Christianity promised self respect and human dignity to those who sought refuge from the oppressive Varna Dharma ideology and contributed to the moral and material progress of North Malabar.

It was the ideology of Protestantism that signalled the civic right movement in the native state of Travancore which had been founded by Marthanda Varma in the 18th century. Marthanda Varma crushed the power of the feudal lords and local chieftains through a policy of military conquest. After consolidating his conquests he dedicated the kingdom to the Hindu deity Sri Padmanabha and ruled in his name according to the dictates of Brahmanical Hindu scriptures. He introduced the *bhadradeepam* and *murajapam* ceremonies in the Padmanabha temple as a penance and as a way to propitiate the deity and the Brahmanas. Special feeding houses named *uttupuras* for the Brahmanas were established throughout the kingdom. Marthanda Varma also established the precedent of conducting the two ceremonies of *hiranyagarbha* and *tulabhara*⁶⁵. The Brahmana priests were to conduct the expensive ceremony of *hiranyagarbha* according to Vedic scriptures. On this occasion Vedic hymns and prayers were chanted by them. They were well-paid with gold and *dana*. The Travancore rulers earned the title of 'Ponnuthampuran' by performing this ceremony. Alvanchery Tampurakkal

65. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Rise of Travancore A Study of the Life and Times of Martanda Varma*, Trivandrum, 1976, p. 47 ff.

who exercised supreme power over the Brahmanas in Vedic rites was the *kulaguru* of the Travancore royal family. All these point to the subordination of the Travancore rulers to the Brahmanas. The Government functioned according to the Hindu scriptures as construed by the Brahmanas. In other words the Travancore State was a theocratic state committed to preserve the Varna Dharma ideology. It meant the preservation of the caste-oriented social structure and the denial of civic rights to the lower castes.

Though the feudal lords were politically subordinated to the king by Marthanda Varma, their economic and social ranks were allowed to remain undisturbed. The lesser lord's class was exempted from land tax⁶⁶. At the same time the tenant class of Nadars and Izhavas had to bear the major chunk of the government's revenue⁶⁷ while the servile classes were meted out capital punishment even for minor thefts⁶⁸. Thus the theocratic fudal state retained its discriminatory character. It was in this context that the British rulers and the Protestant missionaries came to the land of Kerala. The presence of a foreign power and a reformed ideology of Christianity namely Protestantism created a troublesome situation to the lord's class.

In the native states of Travancore and Cochin Protestantism exerted its influence on Kerala life through the London Mission Society (hereafter LMS) and Church Mission Society (hereafter CMS). They were the

66. R.N. Yesudas, *A People's Revolt in Travancore*, Trivandrum, 1975, p.17.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

offsprings of the English Protestantism which was mainly a product of Calvinism. Calvinism preached an ideology that makes man dutiful in the worldly life. So LMS and CMS aimed at the enrichment of human life in this world. They had begun to work in Travancore by the beginning of the 19th century and the non-caste Hindus began to seek asylum in Christianity. There was an exodus of converts to Christianity from the Hindu population during the period from 1800 to 1803⁶⁹. Naturally the missionaries turned against some of the feudal dues and obligation of the Christian converts. The first visible result of it was the intervention of the Resident Col. Munroe to force the Travancore Government to issue the Proclamations of 1814 that exempted the Christians from paying the poll tax and some other dues⁷⁰ and subsequently from *uliyam* services⁷¹. The right to education which the Varna Dharma ideology denied to them was now conferred upon them when Ringletaube a Prussian missionary of the LMS founded a number of schools open to all⁷². With the diffusion of knowledge through these schools self-awareness and civic consciousness developed among the servile classes. The inevitable result of this was the struggle for civic rights and social justice. The first school for girls was started in Nagercoil in the year 1819, thanks to the spirit of Mrs. Mead. Institutions for vocational training for girls also were founded⁷³.

69. H.R. Pale, *Madras District Gazetteer, Tinnavelly*, Madras, 1917, pp. 93-94. Cited in R.N. Yesudas, *People's*, p. 51.

70. R.N. Yesudas, *People's*, p. 61.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

72. T.K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, III, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, p.698.

73. R.N. Yesudas, *People's*, pp. 66-67.

These institutions proved to be the harbingers of women's liberation and gender equality and also the industrial progress that caused corrosion to feudal economy. Secular education in various subjects added fertility to the barren mind of the natives to bear the fruits of enlightenment in the near future. Values conflicting with the medieval feudal set up began to emerge with the new type of education introduced by the Protestant missionaries. Individualism, new economic concepts and the idea of self help passed through the curricula to the youth⁷⁴.

The LMS and CMS took up the role of protectors of civil rights of the low caste converts to the Christian fold. They began to endeavour for securing the civil liberties like exemption from *uliyam* and freedom to use the public roads, to appear in public buildings and to speak and dress like the caste Hindus of lord's class. With the Travancore Government's proclamation of 1851 the converts systematically avoided *uliyam*⁷⁵. This was an eye-opener to the servile class of Hindus who also could now demand the same right.

The reorganisation of judiciary in Travancore and Cochin based on the democratic values was ultimately to ring the death knell of the prerogative power of the Brahmanas in judicial administration. Most important than the principles of legal administration was the appointment of non-caste Hindus like the Syrian Christians and European missionaries as judges that cut at the social barriers of the hierarchical set up.

74. Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominannce*, New Delhi, 1976, p. 150.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

Ultimately the judicial reforms led to the undermining of Brahmanical dominance as law givers and law interpreters⁷⁶. Atrocities on servile classes by the Nair lords started to decline as several Nairs of rank were sentenced to death for such crimes⁷⁷.

The enhancement of wages to coolies recruited from among the lower castes by the intervention of Munro⁷⁸ gave an incentive to the lower sections to leave agricultural fields and an encouragement to extend their demands further. Munro's order in 1813 granted the right to wear jackets for the lower caste converts to Christianity. In 1815 the Dewan issued the Proclamation allowing the Izhava, Nadar and other castes converted to Christianity "to wear cloths over their bosom as directed in the Christian Vedam"⁷⁹. So for the first time a civic right of primary importance, the right to cover the body, was granted to the lower castes. This civilizing process was to exert its impact on the moral and material life of the down-trodden in the course of the 19th century. Not satisfied with the freedom to wear jackets the Shanar converts started wearing the scarves over the jacket which was a privilege of the caste Hindus. This was resented by the latter and a series of clashes occurred at many places during 1829-1830. This necessitated government intervention, and by the proclamation of 1829 the converts were prohibited from interfering with the privileges of the caste Hindus. It also made *uliyam* compulsory

76. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajyacharithram*, II, Trichur, 1912, p. 886.

77. "Minutes of Evidence", VI, Political, p. 279. Cited in R.N. Yesudas, *People's*, p. 71.

78. R.N. Yesudas, *People's*, p. 71.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

for the converts and other sections⁸⁰. The missionaries represented this matter relating to the style of dress to the governor of Madras province and the Viceroy. Subsequently Trevelyan the governor of Madras reminded the ruler of Travancore that the British empire was ruled by a lady and any humiliation to the woman folk of Her Highness's subjects from anybody would not be forgiven. The ruler was warned that abolition of restrictions on dresses would be effected even if the use of cold steel was necessary⁸¹. But the government was not in a mood to relent and revolts spread throughout southern Travancore and were suppressed by the government. The converts and the missionaries were persecuted by the Government. Finally in 1859 by a proclamation the Shanar converts were allowed to cover their breast in any manner they liked but not like women of high castes⁸². The Izhavas had to continue the revolt until the right was granted to them and similar castes by a proclamation in 1865⁸³.

The struggle for the right to wear clothes as one liked and exemption from *uliyam* service was a product of the Protestant ideology supported by a government that functioned democratically. The struggle being one that for economic liberty and social freedom and equality was to adversely affect the economic interests and social rank of the lord's class of caste Hindus. So they opposed it. Instead of discovering the defects of the system sustained by the Varna Dharma ideology and rectifying them by

80. Ibid., pp. 118, 125.

81. C. Kesavan, *Jeevitasamaram*, (autobiography), Trivandrum, 1999, pp. 105-07.

82. Ibid., pp. 140, 145, 150.

83. Ibid., p. 157.

reforming the system and the ideology as well in conformity with the changes set in by the colonisation of the country, the lord's class resorted to violence in suppressing the freedom struggle of the down-trodden classes. They failed to see the progressive traits of a foreign ideology that stood for liberty and equality. Their oppression still was against the servile classes without challenging the foreign ideology. The theocratic state came to the protection of the lord's class and became intolerant towards the missionaries. What the state opposed was the departure of the converts from the feudal customs and usages and obligations both economic and ritualistic based on Varna Dharma. Government only helped to perpetuate the oppressive nature of that ideology.

It was against this background that a new ideology was developed by Sri Narayana that aimed at the liberation of the down-trodden in all fields. Even before him the trend had been set. Muthukkutty, a Nadar by caste and a poor palmyra climber, had organised the Samattua Samacam or Society for Equality. He preached to the down-trodden about the need to strike work for the caste Hindus demanding just wages, and advised his fellowmen to assume the costumes of the privileged classes⁸⁴. He did not evolve an ideology but voiced the demand for equality of the servile classes with the lord's classes. It may be quite right to assume that inspiration came to him from the Christian ideology.

While in Malabar slave trade was effectively abolished by the British government in 1843 no effective measures were taken for this purpose by

84. R.N. Yesudas, *People's*, p. 135.

the governments of Travancore and Cochin. The missionaries showed much enthusiasm for the abolition of slavery in Travancore. In 1847 the LMS and CMS jointly submitted a petition seeking abolition of slavery⁸⁵. The Government was unsympathetic towards their appeal. They relentlessly campaigned through the newspapers and continued to petition. Finally their efforts proved to be fruitful when the government of Travancore abolished slavery in 1855⁸⁶. The example was followed by the Raja of Cochin. Slave trade was made a serious offence and slaves employed or residing in government land were emancipated in Cochin in 1862. Abolition of slavery was a serious blow to the feudal set up in Kerala. Unlike in the west in Kerala slave labour was an important factor in sustaining feudalism. Slave labour was largely employed here in the agricultural sector and the abolition of slavery had a great impact on the economic and political life of Kerala. While agricultural sector was deprived of slave labour, the free labour of emancipated slaves became available in other sectors like plantations and industries on wage system. Ideologically it meant the promotion of liberty and equality. The ideology of Protestant Christianity and the liberal democracy of the British with its emphasis on rule of law gave a jolt to the foundation of the theocratic feudal set up in Kerala in the second half of the 19th century.

The establishment of educational institutions which were open to the down-trodden also had a twofold effect on the Kerala society. In the

85. Cited in T.K. Ravindran, *Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1972, p. LXXXVI.

86. Robin Jeffrey, *Decline*, p. 68.

first place the down-trodden were awakened to their own plight in the existing system, and the existence of an external world. Secondly it precipitated a struggle for civic rights as they were denied admission to the government schools justifying the opposition to it by the caste Hindus. Anti-feudal values like individualism and self help and new economic concepts gave the young men a new orientation. They now became conscious of the denial of liberty and equality and the ground for it. How they were being oppressed by the lord's class struck them in the changing situation that raised issues of conflict in practical life. They now saw that everywhere the doors of freedom and progress were closed to them. Public places, public institutions and public service were found fenced to them by the weapon of unseeability, unapproachability and untouchability.

In the second half of the 19th century the indigenous ideology of Advaita as preached by Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana and Sivayogi had begun to find expression through practical actions for the attainment of liberty, equality and fraternity. The assertion of these rights was put into action by Sri Narayana in the consecration of the Siva, the Aryan god, at Aruvippuram, the river side of Neyyar in Travancore. Consecration of the Aryan gods was the birth right of the Brahmanas. The simple action of Sri Narayana meant the breaking of the corner stone of the ideological foundation of the old regime and the laying of the one of a new ideology, the Advaita, of moral liberation. It was inscribed on a board kept at the premise of the Siva temple. The inscription reads as follows: "This is the ideal place where everybody lives in brotherhood

without any malice in the name of caste or religion". Realisation of this utopia in Kerala meant a longterm social and political struggle against the powers that stood in the way to fraternity along with an attempt at economic change. The proceedings of the Cochin and Travancore Legislatures vouch for this. What went on there were the manifestations of the words and deeds outside them. The Vaikkam satyagraha and the Guruvayur satyagraha were only two instances of the latter. Political thought and movements formed the major part of the struggle.

In the last quarter of the 19th century the lesser lord's class of Nairs began to show signs of a struggle against the Brahmanical suzerainty over them. The influence of Chattampi Swamikal and western education began to work on them. Under the new circumstances they were losing the old privileges and had to compete with the down-trodden who could enjoy certain benefits and were in the ascendant in the social hierarchy. The Nair *tarwads*, the social and economic units of the Nairs in the feudal set up, were on fast deterioration resulting from the feudal practices of expensive ceremonies like *talikettukalyanam*, superstitions, vanity and the feudal system of inheritance namely *marumakkatayam*⁸⁷. Their dependence on an agrarian economy without taking to industry and commerce in the new environment was fatal to their social and economic superiority. The only refuge for them was the bureaucracy. That was now increasingly under the control of the non-Malayali Brahmanas⁸⁸ who caused the social humiliation of the Nairs by having *sambandham* relations with Nair

87. Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente Jeevitasmaranakal*, (autobiography), Changanassery, 1957, p. 18.

88. Ibid.

women⁸⁹. The Nairs felt the need of reforming their systems of marriage and inheritance, the two major sources of their subservience to the lord's class of Brahmanas. Diffusion of western education among Nair men and women as well was the primary item on the agenda of the Malayali Sabha, an early social organisation of the Nairs⁹⁰. All such social organisations that sprang up during the period had some common objectives of uniform anti-feudal nature. They won the ending off of the expensive and ruinous ceremony of *talikettukalyanam* and the *sambandham* type marriage, obtaining legal sanction for marriage and property rights for all the off-springs, extending property right to female and male members as well, casting aside the Brahmana priests and eliminating the differences between the various sections within the community⁹¹. The implicit ideas of these reforms are frugality and economy, institutionalization of marriage with legal sanction of the state, direct inheritance, gender equality, homogeneity of society and freedom from the suzerainty of the priests and lords. This means that the Nair community was on the move to democracy and capitalism.

To put an end to the slavery to the Brahmanas was an immediate requirement of the Nair community. To assert self-respect and identity they demanded the change of the epithet Sudra given to them by the Brahmanas, meaning servants, into Nair⁹². Eradication of ranks and

89. Balakrishnan. V. and Leela Devi. R., *Mannath Padmanabhan and the Revival of Nairs in Kerala*, Delhi, 1986, p. 17.

90. Robin Jeffrey, *Decline*, p. 158.

91. E.M. Sankaran Namboothiripad, *Kerala Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*, Calcutta, 1968, p. 267.

92. Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente*, p. 41.

positions within the community and untouchability in general got the serious attention of the reformers⁹³. Self awareness gradually dawned upon them. The life and work of Booker T.Washington (1856-1915), the U.S. Negro reformer and educator very much influenced the Nairs to become altruistic. A longing for new values of self help and service-mindedness set in due to this influence. Social reformers like C. Krishna Pillai and M.A. Paramu Pillai who was a student of English literature, endeavoured much to enlighten the Nair community to emulate the example of Booker T.Washington for the upliftment of the community. Paramu Pillai was almost fanatical in insisting that Booker T.Washington, his idol, should be taken by all the oppressed classes as a model to be followed. He had written a biographical work on Booker T.Washington. C.Kesavan, an Izhava leader had acknowledged the influence this book had on him⁹⁴. As a part of the efforts to get redemption from the Brahmanas one Neelakantatheerthar Swami wrote a book explaining the rites and rituals required to be followed by the Nairs based on *Smritis* and Hindu scriptures⁹⁵. One Rayingan Sankaran Asan, an influential person of his village, set an example to the reformers in defying the authority of the Brahmanas. He concluded the *pula* ceremony of his uncle in ten days instead of sixteen days, contrary to the injunctions of the Brahmanas. Infuriated by this the Travancore ruler issued a circular enjoining sixteen days of mourning for the Nairs⁹⁶. In Cochin the abdicated

93. Ibid.

94. C. Kesavan, *samaram*, pp. 138-39.

95. Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente*, p. 76.

96. Ibid., p. 77.

ruler Rama Varma (1895-1914) had issued a circular insisting on keeping the tuft with required length of hair by the Nairs⁹⁷. How the lord's class of Brahmanas exercised an octopus hold on the lesser lords with the king as their agent to make money and enjoy power is revealed from these instances. The rites and rituals and the dress and style were all stipulated for the lower communities by the Brahmanas. The rulers proved to be over zealous to enforce the prescriptions of the Brahmanas in the social life of their subjects. It was against such an enslavement of the community that their great leader Mannath Padmanabhan and others started the great struggle for liberation. But some of the leaders of the community were awakened to the reality of the social condition of the community only when the humiliating verdict that the *sambandham* type of marriage had no legal validity. The Brahmana judges in a series of cases gave the verdict that, "The Nairs have no marriage relations, it is not certain who is their father, they are the sons of prostitutes and their children have no right even to desire protection from their father"⁹⁸.

On the political front the Nairs did a historic performance in 1891 by submitting the Malayali Memorial signed by 10037 persons including Syrian Christians, Muslims, Izhavas, Nairs, Namboothiris and other Christians demanding reservation of jobs in state service to the Malayalis since most of the offices carrying higher salaries from Rs. 500/- onwards were filled with imported Brahmanas. While rhetoric about Malayali nationalism the memorial was no proof of the unity of the communities

97. Ibid., p. 78.

98. Ibid., p. 98.

represented in it. It was mainly a handiwork of the educated Nairs who resented the neglect of them in accommodating in the service. Moreover it could not have been expected that a theocratic government vowed to protect the Varna Dharma would be liberal in accommodating non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus in the service at that time. So Malayali Memorial was a gilt paper embodying the high ideals of equality, brotherhood and nationalism in high sounding language. But in reality its underlying purpose was to secure a greater share of jobs for the Nairs in public service. This was testified by the fact that their fraternity with other sections disappeared when the Nairs began to get berths in the service of Travancore state. They also showed keen interest in denying English education to lower castes by opposing admission to them in government schools on the ground of untouchability. When the government opened the schools for Izhavas also and some Izhava pupils got admission in an school at Haripad the whole of central Travancore witnessed a violent communal riot between the Nairs and the Izhavas. The Dewan had to take stringent measures to put an end to it⁹⁹.

As a document Malayali Memorial is significant as a high sounding ideological expression of Malayali national spirit. But it is the Malayali nationalism of Travancore as reflected in the novels of C.V. Raman Pillai. The anti-Brahmanical attitude is the other important aspect of the document. It may well be remembered here that the document was prepared mainly by C.V. Raman Pillai¹⁰⁰. With the implied demand of

99. C. Kesavan, *Jeevithasamaram*, Kottayam, 1968, pp. 174-76.

100. V.K. Parameswaran Nair, "Memorialinepati", in P.K. Balakrishnan, ed., *Guru*, p. 47.

Travancore for Travancoreans, the sons of the soil demand, the document contained the germ of an independent Travancore predominated by the lesser lord's class of the Nairs. The idea then was of a constructive nature in opposing the importation of those who could not claim any loyalty to the country in the name of community or any aristocratic lineage or higher moral superiority as alleged by Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai¹⁰¹ to occupy the highest position next to the king and other influential offices in the government. Referring to the Brahmana officials from outside he exclaimed that it was quite unfortunate that the people were ordained to be the slaves of the whims and fancy of such persons similar to characters in a drama¹⁰². It was the same sentiment that led to the opposition to legislation favouring the amassing of the landed wealth of the country by Europeans¹⁰³. But the lesser lord's class failed to take the tenant class and the down-trodden along with them. When the government threw down some loaves and fishes of office to them they forgot the latter. Government took the stand that the Izhavas who were satisfied with their existing status were only seduced to sign the document to swell the number of the signatories and that a policy of absorbing them into the service would impair the material progress of the country¹⁰⁴. In other words, the government contented that the drawers of water and hewers of wood should remain as such to sustain the economy of the country.

101. K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai*, Kottayam, 1956, pp. 186-87.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

104. P.S. Velayudhan, *SNDP Yogacharitam*, Quilon, 1978, pp. 45-46.

In another way also the document gained historical importance by effusing the idea of reservation in service, that proved to be the epicentre of Travancore politics with wider dimension during the following decades. The lesser lords gave the lead in this regard to the less fortunate subjects of the country in choosing the way in their future course of action to secure civic rights. The Izhavas submitted a separate memorial namely the Izhava Memorial signed by 13176 Izhavas in 1896. The demand of the Memorial was for the opening of all government educational institutions and the service to the Izhavas also¹⁰⁵, since they were accessible to them or to the lesser fortunate than them on conversion to other faiths or on migration in other states. In reply the government clarified their stand in a manner becoming of a theocratic feudal state founded on Varna Dharma ideology, that caste discrimination is an exclusive feature of the Hindu society that preserves the mutual rights and obligations of the castes, and the government was not intending to do anything in violation of that rule of the traditional Hindu state of Travancore¹⁰⁶. In 1882 an Izhava graduate who sought a job in the state service was asked by the then ruler Visakham Tirunal to become a Christian¹⁰⁷. For the next one and a half decade the government of Travancore did not move an inch forward. The Hindu state of Travancore was not willing to mend its ways of suppressing the civic rights in the name of Varna Dharma to the down-trodden classes is clear from the reply to the Izhava Memorial. So the

105. P.K. Balakrishnan, ed., *Guru*, p. 60.

106. C. Kesavan, *samaram*, p. 166.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

struggle for civic rights namely admission to government schools, freedom of travel and participation in governance through a place in the service was to be carried on. The issue involved in such a struggle concerned the attainment of liberty, equality and fraternity by eradicating untouchability in the social and political life of Kerala. The untouchables could not hope for a united effort in this endeavour. Having an exclusive or distinct identity in the hierarchical social set up no caste could expect an unreserved support from other castes. Each caste having a societal status had its own problems to be tackled. It is for this reason that Sahodaran Ayyappan asked his own caste-men to join hands with the lower communities instead of trying to reach up to the higher community¹⁰⁸.

The man who worked behind the Izhava Memorial was Dr. Palpu who was denied a place in the service of his native state of Travancore even while having the required qualification for the job of a physician and had to enter the service of the Mysore state. He identified his grievances and sufferings with those of his brethren and took the initiative to organise them. This finally resulted in the founding of the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (hereafter SNDP Yogam) in 1903. Sri Narayana in whom the community found its deliverer was unanimously elected as the permanent president of the SNDP Yogam. As the name indicates the organisation was committed to spread the ideology of Sri Narayana and to work for the attainment of a social set up based on that ideology. A fortnightly called *Vivekodayam* was also started with Kumaran

108. M. Sahadevan, *Social Justice*, pp. 65-66.

Asan as its editor to spread the teachings of Sri Narayana and Swami Vivekananda as the mouthpiece of the SNDP Yogam. In fact there were not many to appreciate and absorb the ideas of universal humanism and brotherhood propounded by Sri Narayana through his philosophy of Advaita outside his own community in a sectarian society of Kerala. But a few important thinkers, writers and reformers like V.T. Bhatathiripad, E.V. Krishna Pillai, and P. Kesavadev had great admiration for him and were influenced by his humanism. In his own community the number of those who could comprehend the depth and spirit of his philosophy of humanism seems to be none with the single exception of Sahodaran Ayyappan. Others who associated with his ideology seems to be inspired by the requirements of the time. So naturally the SNDP Yogam that suffered from the limitation of the social environment of the time, could not become the promoter of his philosophy transcending the barriers of sectarianism.

The SNDP Yogam aimed at the reform of the religious beliefs of the Izhavas by encouraging the worship of gods of the caste Hindus and discouraging demonolatry along with the rites and ceremonies, the regeneration of their socio-economic life by encouraging cleanliness, integrity and unity among them, discouraging expensive customs like *talikettukalyanam*, fostering frugality and economy, disseminating modern education among them and promoting interest in improving agriculture, handicrafts and industry. A distinct feature of it is the admonition to its members that while doing all these, other sections should not be harmed in any manner and as far as possible the Izhava community should be

exhorted on the need of uplifting the depressed classes¹⁰⁹. Under an enlightened leadership the SNDP Yogam gradually displayed its progressive nature in responding to the social, economic and political issues that arose in the first half of the 20th century. It is quite revealing in the declaration of rights ratified at a great convention held at Ernakulam on 23rd December 1925. The chief architect of the declaration was Sahodaran Ayyappan¹¹⁰. It was a memorable event in the history of the SNDP Yogam for the thrust of the document on the rights of man as citizen and not as a member of caste. The rights presented as demands speak plainly for the ideologies of democracy and socialism with much concern for the interests of women and workers¹¹¹.

In the politics of Travancore and Cochin states the identity of an individual subject was the membership of his caste. For the state he was not a citizen. The relation between the state and subject was determined by the caste factor. The state existed to preserve and protect the caste identity of the subjects. The political and social problems of the subjects then emanated from the caste identity. So to organise politically meant to organise caste-wise and caste-wise organisations took their origin in these two states. Caste overlapped class and this hampered the class-wise organisation. Only the owners of the means of production who were put at the top of the social pyramid could have a class organisation and we get the *jenmi sabhas*. But the *jenmis* also having caste status that

109. P.S. Velayudhan, *SNDP*, pp. 133-36.

110. M. Sahadevan, *Social Justice*, pp. 52.

111. *Sahodaran*, XXV, No. 26, 22 December 1945, pp. 1-3.

overshadowed their class status, because of their own insistence, could not do otherwise than to organise caste-wise, for their problems also were of a caste nature rather than a class nature. Caste character outweighed the class character of every caste group.

SNDP Yogam in effect was a caste organisation. It was soon followed by similar organisations of different communities. Ayyankali founded the Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham with the aim of securing education and freedom of travel for the Pulayas¹¹². The Pariahs were organised by Kandan Kumaran¹¹³. Educationally lagging behind, all the depressed classes could not formulate any ideological background to their demands.

The Varna Dharma ideology turned out to be a boomerang to the expounders themselves in the changed situation. Within the Namboothiri community the customs, institutions and values meticulously developed to keep up their exclusiveness and superiority in the Hindu society of varnas became anachronistic in the changing circumstances of the 19th century. The new tenancy acts were sufficient to undermine their economic superiority¹¹⁴. The younger sons (hereafter the *apphan* Namboothiri) and the female members of the community were the suppressed creatures to keep up the glory of the community as pointed out in the first chapter. The *apphan* Namboothiris were agitated by the

112. T.H.P. Chentharasseri, *Ayyankali*, Trivandrum, 1985, pp. 25-26.

113. Mannath Padmanabhan, "Viplavakariyaya Sri Narayanan", in P.K. Balakrishnan, ed., *Guru*, p. 340.

114. O.M. Narayanan Namboothiripad, "Welcome Speech", Twentieth Annual of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha, Angadipuram, M.E. 1103 (1928), p. 10.

existing practices. The pollution concept and the morganatic marital relations with the Nair women, the law of primogeniture etc. began to boomerang upon the community in the new matrix. The community was constrained to reform itself. The pollution practice impeded the Namboothiri children from taking to English education which was necessary for moral and material progress. The demand of the Nair community to get legal validity for the *sambandham* type marriage and to get a share in the property of the husband irrespective of his community for the Nair woman and her children, posed a challenge to the Namboothiri community. When put in effect these demands would mean the drain of wealth from Namboothiri families to the Nair community and the gradual decline of the Namboothiri population and the intensification of the Namboothiri women's sufferings. Against this background the Tenancy Act 1907 promulgated by the Cochin state provoked the Namboothiri community to organise the Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha in 1908 at Aluva. The aim of the Sabha was the educational, religious, political and economic progress of the community¹¹⁵. In the beginning it was mainly an association to protect the economic interests of the community and its leadership was in the hands of the conservatives who were not evincing much interest in the problems of the *apphan* Namboothiris and the womenfolk. What they wanted was to preserve the religious and economic superiority they enjoyed in the traditional society¹¹⁶. Gradually

115. P.K. Aryan Namboothiripad, *Nalukettilninnu Natilekku*, Trichur, 1969, pp. 32, 34.

116. K.C. Narayanan, "Verunangathavakku", in V.T. Bhatathiripad, *Veetiyute Sampoorana Kritikal*, Kottayam, 1997, p. 18.

by the twenties of the 20th century the youth wing of the organisation namely Namboothiri Yuvajana Sangham became active within the organisation. It was actually this section of the community that endeavoured for a social revolution within the community.

The first remarkable thing about the Namboothiri community in the new situation is that it came to realise how far the ideology of its supremacy in the society, and its traditional values and institutions had become obsolete in the changing conditions. They could observe the changes that came over the entire social environment. In the editorial of the *Unninamboothiri*, the mouthpiece of the Namboothiri Yuvajana Sangham, the following factors of religious fundamentalism, ignorance, apathy to modern education, and fanatical orthodoxy were enumerated as the causes of the stagnation of the community. The ways suggested for the progress of the community are to discard the injunctions of the ignorant and arrogant *vaidikans* and the useless content of existing education among the Namboothiris and to accept the teachings of great men irrespective of their caste, creed and nationality and to give secular education to the womenfolk¹¹⁷. The reform of the Namboothiri community was to have begun with the family. A disciplined family life for every member, man and woman, of the community was an urgent requirement and measures for it had been included in the Cochin Namboothiri Family Bill. The bill suggested equal participation for all members in family matters, equal share for all in family property and income, right to all

117. Unninamboothiri, "Editorial", *Unninamboothiri*, No. 9, Vol. 7, Edavam, M.E. 1101, pp. 501-507.

male members to marry within the family, restriction on the powers of the head of the family and regulation of the law of inheritance to ensure it¹¹⁸.

It was the habit of the conservatives in the community to glorify the past and to demand the revival of it for the progress of the community. To establish the meaninglessness of this attitude an article written by Mahadev Govinda Ranade had been reproduced in one of the issues of the *Unninamboothiri*. To prove the hollowness of the argument Ranade was recalling the humiliating practices prevailed among the Brahmanas. Ranade was pointing to the inhuman practices the Brahmanas indulged in in the name of religion and their ridiculous usages to drive home the point that the community had nothing to be proud of in the past¹¹⁹. He drew the vulgar picture of the Brahmana life led according to the Varna Dharma ideology. The Namboothiri Yuvajana Sangham reminded the community that the baseless claim about the past would only lead them backward¹²⁰. The community was advised to break the taboos on callings and to engage in any respectable calling in any part of the world that would bring prosperity to one and all of the community. It was further advised that the Namboothiri must give up the sense of exclusiveness and realise that they were equal to all other ordinary human beings and there was nothing that made them a unique category. The need for taking to

118. Ibid., pp. 541-49.

119. K.N., "Aa Pazhayakalam Etu", in *Unninamboothiri*, No. 3, Vol. 8, Vrischikam, M.E. 1102, pp. 221-24.

120. Ibid., p. 229.

English education and entering the state service was given emphasis. Another point was the liberation of the womenfolk through secular education, freedom of movement and the change in the ugly ornamentation of their body as a way to make them live like human beings¹²¹. Partition of family property and the removal of the fetters on individual freedom put by the joint family set up were the demands mooted by Moothiringottu Bhavatrathan Namboothiripad¹²².

The Namboothiri community also felt the need of re-reading the *Sastras* in such a way as to break the barriers of caste sectarianism and to come out of the self-imposed exclusiveness. Equality of all beings in this world and the identification of every being with the one Supreme Being were given importance with quotings like *yatra viswam bhavedekarupam*, and *namasyoyaspati reka evam*¹²³. The Muslim contributions to the glory of Indian architecture was highly appreciated¹²⁴ and the synthetic character of the Indian culture was recognised.

The elder section of the community was not lagging behind in understanding the pathetic condition the community had fallen into and the causes for it. They could find out that the community was suffering from lack of diligence, self help, initiative and enterprise, and sense of

121. "Presidential Address", Namboothiri Yuvajana Sangham, 8th Annual Conference, *Ibid.*, pp. 225-33.

122. Moothiringottu Bhavatratan Namboothiripad, "Koottukudumbajeevitam", *Unninamboothiri*, No. 6, Vol. 8, Kumbham, M.E. 1102, p. 342.

123. Unninamboothiri, "Editorial", *Unninamboothiri*, No. 7, Vol. 8, Meenam, M.E. 1102, p. 379.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

responsibility¹²⁵ which are required for progress. One gentleman even complained that the community in general was in an infant stage because of the arrested growth of their intelligence with the exception of a very few¹²⁶. They also advocated the need of taking to English education and securing government jobs while engaging in agriculture, handicrafts, trade etc.¹²⁷.

Though late, the Namboothiris also began to think of the duty of man in this world. One writer tries to enlighten his fellowmen on the duty of the individual as a social being on this earth and denounces escapism in the name of salvation after death. In his opinion the Indians had forgotten the fact that man is expected to utilise the God given creative intelligence for the well-being of the society. One of the causes of the degeneration, in his opinion was the caste system which destroyed individual initiative and enterprise required for the moral and material progress. He erroneously held the Buddha and Sankara responsible for emasculating the Indians with the emphasis on *moksha* as the aim of life and the elements of resignation and defeatism as given in their philosophies instead of the emphasis on duty consciousness required for the enrichment and enjoyment of the worldly life as taught by the *Gita*¹²⁸. The critic was searching for an ideology of rationalism, secularism

125. Edappally Krishnaraja, "Nammute Alasata", in V.S. Narayanan Namboothiri, ed., *Samudayabodham*, Trichur, M.E. 1092, pp. 17-22.

126. Edappally Ganapathy Raja, "Utsaham", *Ibid.*, pp. 37-44.

127. Edappally Krishnaraja, "Nammute Alasata", in V.S. Narayanan Namboothiri, ed., *Samudayabodham*, p. 26.

128. Kurur Narayanan Bhatathiripad, "Swadharmavum Mokshavum", *Unninamboothiri*, No. 10, Vol. 8, Mithunam, M.E. 1102, pp. 554-62.

and humanism as against the feudalism and Varna Dharma ideology which are devoid of them.

With their heads buried in the books without knowing the meaning and without applying reason at all the conservative elements of the community became dogmatic about the *Sastras*, and strangers to the fast moving world. They were criticised by the young generation of radicals. Quoting a Sanskrit verse one writer points out that for worldly success one might be first aware of himself. He must know what he is, what his financial position is, what his capability is, what space and time he lives in and who is his friend. Only one who acts with an awareness of all or some of these could attain prosperity in this world. The orthodox Namboothiris, the writer complains, do not have any such awareness. So long as they prefer a blind reliance on the *Dharma Sastras* as the authority for all places and all time there is nothing lamentable then about their decline, the writer points out¹²⁹.

Rationalism and free thinking are advocated as the pre-requisite for the progress of the community. Here is the relevance of the opposition to the *vaidikans*. A youngster of the community comes to understand that in the changing world individual initiative and enterprise are the qualities essential for success and not the birth status or aristocratic lineage. He opposes the Varna Dharma regime perpetuated by the *vaidikans* who were enjoying unspecified and unlimited powers over the community. They are accused of being upholders of the meaningless and

129. K.S., "Parinamaphalam", *Unninamboothiri*, No. 12, Vol. 8, Chingam, M.E. 1103, pp. 695-703.

superstitious customs and usages that perpetuate a regime which impedes the progress of the society in general. The Namboothiri community is kept as a closed and secluded society by them. In actuality it is their duty as the ideologues to revise the content of the *Sastras* in conformity with the requirements of the time and take the people to a better life instead of being dogmatic. The arguments of an enlightened radical Moothiringottu Bhavatrathan Namboothiripad followed this line of attack against the *vaidikans*. He concluded with the bold statement that the youth of the community would never be prepared to be suffocated by the feat of *vaidikans* and their authority¹³⁰.

The concluding statement is the declaration of revolt against the power centre of the whole set up of the state in Kerala by one of the most oppressed of all sections in Kerala society, the *apphan* Namboothiris. They were inspired by the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity and rationalism, secularism and humanism. The community produced some geniuses to lead the revolt. The greatest of them was V.T. Bhatathiripad (Reference has been made to his contributions in the third chapter of this work). He was in the forefront of the revolt against the *vaidikans* who in actuality constituted the core of the hegemonical class. Within a short span of one generation the revolt started by Sri Narayana had reached the citadel of the hegemonical class. The Namboothiri youth were indebted to Sri Narayana for that. And this has been acknowledged by V.T. Bhatathiripad in these words, "It was the life and teachings of Sri

130. Moothiringottu Bhavatrathan Namboothiripad, "Vaidikadhikaraniyantranam", *Unninamboothiri*, No. 1, Vol. 8, Kanni, M.E. 1102, pp. 66-72.

Narayana Guru that inspired the radical and revolutionary Namboothiri youth in their struggle against Brahmanical hegemony”¹³¹. Theirs was a struggle within the community in the context of a social and economic transformation of the entire society. Politically there was no much scope for a struggle as the Namboothiri community itself formed the hegemonical class. It was limited to the passing of the Namboothiri regulations in both the native states. Internally the struggle was to democratise the Namboothiri community while externally that process was taking the Namboothiri community to the main stream of the Malayali society.

Compared to the classes of higher lords of Brahmanas and the down-trodden Izhavas and people below them, the lesser lord's class of Nairs suffered some minor disabilities. Their main grievances were subservience to the Brahmanas because of their *sambandham* type of marriage and deprivation of ranks and offices in government as they enjoyed formerly, with the overlordship of the British. The Malayali Memorial solved the latter problem to a satisfactory extent as the government began to confer greater attention on them in recruitment to public service. A caste-wise census of the occupants of public service in Travancore during the first three decades of the 20th century shows that a disproportionately high number of Nairs could secure a place in the public service while other communities were grossly under-represented in proportion to their population¹³². As a solution to their first problem the

131. V.T. Bhattathiripad, “Yugapurushanaya Gurudevan”, *Veetiyute*, p. 474.

132. *Travancore Sri Chitra State Council Proceedings* (hereafter *TSCSCP*), 1933, IV, Trivandrum, 1935, p. 150. V, Trivantrum 1935, pp.155-56,160.1935, VI, Trivandrum, 1936,pp. 101, 215, 540 - 41, 649. 1936, VII, Trivandrum, 1937,pp. 511 - 12, 514. 1937, X, Trivandrum, 1938, pp. 531 - 32.

Nair community worked for a legislation regulating their system of marriage and inheritance. Their work bore fruit with the passing of the Nair Regulation Acts of 1912 and 1925.

A national alliance of the various Hindu communities in the beginning of the 20th century was not at all possible. Variation in social status and economic interests blocked the forging of such unity. Even by the fourth decade such a possibility was not in the vicinity. The idea of a broad formation of Hindu fraternity under the leadership of the Hindu Mission as desired by the Nair Service Society and its leader Mannath Padmanabhan did not bear fruit¹³³. It was not before long that the Nairs were in the forefront to oppose the admission of the Izhavas in government schools. After the Malayali Memorial the Izhavas and others had been deserted by the Nairs over the issue of service entry. The hollowness of the idea of Hindu fraternity and the danger lurked in it¹³⁴ struck the Izhavas very well and they showed the wisdom not to join it against the non-Hindus.

It was quite natural on the other hand that the Izhavas joined hands with the non-Hindus as all of them were birds of the same feather. They constituted the marginalised groups having common grievances. Ideologically there was nothing in Christianity or Islam that held the Izhava or other Hindus polluting and untouchables unlike the Varna Dharma ideology. The Izhavas collaborated with the Christians and Muslims for their political and social liberation against the caste Hindu regime. The

133. Mannath Padmanaban, *Ente*, pp. 139, 229, 235.

134. K. Ayyappan, "Editorial" in *Sahodaran*, republished in *Kerala Koumudi*, XVII, 3-4, March, 1936. Cited in K.K. Kusuman, *Abstention Movement*, Trivandrum, 1976, p. 60.

unity of the three communities was a historical creation. The first united political movement of them was the Poura Samatvavada Prakshobhanam or Civic Rights Movement started under the leadership of E.J. John and T.K. Madhavan in 1919. The three communities organised the Civic Rights League in 1919 and it submitted a memorial to the Dewan in 1920 demanding full rights of citizenship to all subjects irrespective of caste and creed,

- i) by throwing open all ranks in every department of public service to all subjects of His Highness Maharaja, irrespective of caste or religion.
- ii) by extending the benefits of all public institutions equally to all communities in the state, and
- iii) in so far as it lies within the province of government by removing the stigma of untouchability which has been such an insurmountable obstacle in the path of progress of the depressed classes of this country.

in consonance with the traditional policy of the rulers of Travancore and the spirit of the Queen's Proclamation¹³⁵.

The memorial is notable for its demand for full citizenship and its basis on the proclamation of the Empress. So it is undoubtful that the civic consciousness of the oppressed classes was mainly a product of British rule founded on the ideology of liberal democracy. The memorial

135. File No. 1, "Political Development", 1920, Directorate of Archives, Trivandrum, cited in C.N. Somarajan and S. Sivadasan, *Civic Rights Movement in Travancore*, Kollam, 1995, pp. 85-86.

has to be regarded as a landmark in the history of Kerala as it was an important event followed by action that accelerated the transformation of the society of subjects into a society of citizens or civil society and a civil state. The Travancore society was yet a society of subjects of a monarchical state. The evolution of Travancore as a modern state can be traced to the reorganisation of judiciary and administration started by Col. Munro. But the rulers of Travancore were not acting as the head of a civic state. As pointed out in the reply to the Malayali Memorial they still presumed to be the head of the theocratic state of the caste Hindus. So the discriminatory policy towards the caste-oriented subjects was pursued. The importation of upper caste Hindus to occupy the highest offices in their state testifies to their ignorance about their duty towards their subjects. They lacked faith in the capability of their own subjects and failed to entrust the responsibility of governance for national interests with the natives. They ruled under the overlordship of a foreign power with the help of 'foreign' administrators. Appointment of foreigners to high offices meant granting them freedom to patronise their kith and kin in the service. So the policy was against national interests and it fostered corruption and nepotism and the drain of wealth.

Monopoly of high offices meant securing power and patronage along with a share in governance, financial benefits and status of influence. The educated Nairs were the first to understand this and they started petitioning for appointments. Malayali Memorial originated in this process and subsequently without much hue and cry they were accommodated on large scale in the public service. But that privilege was not extended

to the non-caste Hindus and the non-Hindus. They were still held as the occupants of the peripheries of the state. Inspired by the liberal democratic ideology of the colonialists and the indigenous philosophies that upheld the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity they became more and more politically conscious and it manifested itself in the Civic Right Movement. For the non-caste Hindus entry into public service involved the greater stakes of social and political liberation and the attainment of equality than securing its fiscal benefits. Monopoly of the public service by the caste Hindu was discriminatory and meant the denial of social justice and equality to the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus. For the non-caste Hindus the source of all their disabilities was their caste status fortified by its pollutive character. This necessitated for them a two pronged struggle namely social and political. On the social front casteism was to be exterminated to secure citizenship. At the political level reservation of jobs as a safeguard against tyranny and oppression by caste Hindus was to be secured. The two issues were of an intertwined nature. So securing a place in the public service would lead to social liberation and social justice.

The provocation for the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus to start the Civic Right Movement was the closure of the Revenue Department to them in the matter of appointment on the ground that it was part of the Dewaswam Department which could not be opened to none other than caste Hindus. In 1919 on the floor of the Legislative Council the Dewan had clarified the position of the government on the issue of bifurcating the Revenue - Dewaswam Department that the Travancore state was

administered by the king based on Hindu principles and as the servant and agent of the deity Sri Padmanabha¹³⁶. The Dewan conveyed the message that in a Hindu theocratic state the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus could not enjoy equality with the caste Hindus. Later in the same year the Dewan categorically stated that "Christians cannot be employed in the Land Revenue Department as long as the management of the Hindu religious institutions vests in the officers of that department"¹³⁷ with an intention to drive a wedge between the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus. Resting on the Varna Dharma ideology the Travancore monarchs were following a policy of divide and rule and denying citizenship to the marginalised Hindus and minorities. In almost all the negative replies to the demands of these people the government expressed its inability on the lame excuse of the displeasure of the caste Hindus. The leaders of the Civic Rights Movement were well aware of these facts. They could understand that the Travancore state was one that of the privileged class of the Brahmanas and Nairs. Economically they were the landlords and ritualistically they were the *savarnas* or caste Hindus. In both capacities they were not contributing anything substantially to the material or moral progress of the country. As a class with the exemption of the majority of the ordinary section of it they were the beneficiaries of the state at the expense of the unprivileged who substantially contributed to its material prosperity¹³⁸. At a public meeting

136. *English Records*, Political, File No. 53 / 1919. Cited in K.K. Kusuman, *Abstention*, p. 15.

137. *Ibid.*

138. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

of the Civic Rights League on 5th April 1919 one of its leaders John Chandy somewhat vaguely but emphatically explained this reality as follows:

To love one's country and to work for its highest good is the bounden duty of every citizen, it is true patriotism. To love one's country merely for one's enjoyment of its advantages is not patriotism, it is selfishness. To govern a country in a spirit of exclusiveness and thereby to cripple the larger life of the country for the benefit of the few is not patriotism, it is selfishness. We should not be simply loyal and law abiding citizens of the state, but we should be actively patriotic. By loving one's country by working for liberty and equality among all our fellow citizens, by caring for the depressed, and helping them to rise in the social scale, by not obstructing the path of freedom to the poor by giving up and working against the monstrous system of untouchability, by self sacrifice when necessary, we can become true patriots. It is the object of the League to work on these lines¹³⁹.

John Chandy was not expounding any political theory in justification of a great movement. But implicit in it is a theory which actually had been consistently discussed in Travancore by a western educated journalist Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai (hereafter Swadesabhimani). Any one who carefully reads the writings of Swadesabhimani and the speech

139. Travancore Civic Rights League, "Caste and Citizenship in Travancore", Kottayam, 1919, p. 3. Cited in K.K. Kusuman, *Abstention*, pp. 16-17.

of John Chandy can very well understand that the latter was an echo of the former's. Swadesabhirnani like some of the great leaders of the Nair community was the son of a Brahmana by a Sudra woman. He was so enlightened by acquaintance with western political thought especially of Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau to think on the lines marked by Chattampi Swamikal that he vehemently criticised in an advising tone the lethargy and callousness displayed by the Nair community¹⁴⁰ and the monarchical government of Travancore. His political ideas can be condensed like this :

The days of absolute rules are gone. Absolute rule might have been suitable when society was in its infant stage. Today it is not so. This is the age of democracy and socialism. In the governance of a state the consent of the people is a prerequisite. Kingship is derived from the consent of the people. Sovereignty is vested with the people. They have only delegated that power to one or to a body of some among them to rule for them. The king deserves to be a king only when he governs with the consent of the people. The people retain the right to remove the king from power when he violates the will of the people and such instances have become very popular in modern times. People are always at liberty to exercise their sovereignty as they like¹⁴¹.

Taking Rousseau's political theory of popular sovereignty, general will and social contract as the standpoint Swadesabhimani began to

140. Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai, "Nayanmarute Sthiti", in Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadesabhimani*, p. 161.

141. -----, "Rajaneethi", *Keralan*, No.1, Vol. 2, Dhanu, M.E. 1081, pp. 17-18: *Ibid.*, pp. 181-82.

criticise the working of the monarchical government in Travancore. He likened the Dewans imported from other countries to the characters in drama and stated that it was a pity that Travancoreans were to bear the rule of those who were disloyal to the country and were not qualified by noble lineage or the moral strength of character¹⁴². He pointed out that the practice of spending huge amounts on the maintenance of the *uttupuras* meant for the feeding of the Brahmanas who were by profession engaged in banking and trade and were members of the bureaucracy, from the public exchequer to which contributions came from the non-caste Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others was against political justice¹⁴³ while the government did not confer favours on the poor and needy. It was an attack on the nepotism and the theocratic nature of the government. He condemned the corruption rampant in the state service and the indiscriminate expenditure on ritualistic marriages and other celebrations in the royal family¹⁴⁴. He did not refrain from exposing the moral laxity on the part of officials including the Dewan. The essence of his criticism was that the king was indifferent to the duties and responsibilities entrusted to him, he was not acting in consonance with the will of the people and that he was wasting the public exchequer on the private requirements of the royal family and was indifferent to the corrupt and criminal practices of the Dewans who wielded power in the

142. -----, "Paradesikadoshabeejam", *Keralan*, No. 3, Vol. I, Karkitakam, M.E. 1082, p. 103-04. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 187.

143. -----, "Rajaneeti", *Keralan*, No. 4, Vol. I, Karkitakam, M.E. 1080, pp. 89-90. Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

144. -----, "Editorial" *Swadesabhimani*, 18 April 1910. Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 266.

name of the king¹⁴⁵. Demanding an equal share for all the people in the governance, he reminded the king that, "For the Maharaja all the people from Brahmana to Pulaya are to be equal subjects"¹⁴⁶. It was exactly for these political views and criticisms that Swadesabhimani was exiled from Travancore state¹⁴⁷.

Swadesabhimani was advocating a popular democratic set up for Travancore with the king as a nominal head of the state, a legislature wholly representative and sovereign, and an executive responsible to the legislature. He wanted the government to function for the welfare of the people without discrimination based on caste or creed. He was fearlessly criticising the king and government with a conviction that there should be utmost transparency in governance, and the government and governed should always be mutually informed of. He took the king only as one among the citizens of the state and was bold enough to state that the king should not use the public exchequer for his personal affairs. He took the people not as subjects but as citizens enjoying civil rights and the state as a civic state granting and protecting the civic rights of the people¹⁴⁸. It was in the first decade of the 20th century that he was expounding the cause of an advanced democracy and the time was not ripe enough in Travancore for an immediate reception for his ideas. The people were not much enlightened to imbibe them. But later, since the Civic Rights

145. Ibid., pp. 180 ff.

146. -----, "Rajaneethi", *Keralan*, Ibid., p. 188.

147. -----, *Ente Natukatathal*, Kottayam, 1978, pp. 58-73.

148. K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadesabhimani*. R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *The Political Ideas of Swadesabhimani*, Trivandrum, 1975.

Movement, the political atmosphere of Travancore was surcharged with the ideas Swadesabhimani propounded.

In this context another name to be remembered is of the journalist and writer V.C. Balakrishna Panikkar (1889-1912) of Malabar whose social concept is based on the Advaita philosophy and the belief that the essence of all religion is one¹⁴⁹. In several of the issues of *Subhashini*, as its editor, he showered abuse on the foreign Brahmanas who were imported to occupy Dewanship in Travancore. Conceiving democratic polity as the civilized form of all polities he appreciated the Minto-Morely Reforms of 1909 in British India and indirectly demanded the introduction of representative legislature in the Cochin state¹⁵⁰. He declaimed against the unjustifiable exile of Swadesabhimani and presented strong arguments in support of the freedom of the press¹⁵¹. He warned the king that even if the divinity of king was admitted, people would not allow the king to rule when drastic rules were proclaimed without exhibiting the qualities of honesty, patience and sympathy¹⁵², and that he must, like a civilized ruler, forget the old injunctions of the Namboothiri Brahmanas in preserving their regime in Kerala¹⁵³. V.C. Balakrishna Panikkar also raised his voice for a democratic polity based on liberty equality and fraternity as against the theocratic regime of Varna Dharma ideology.

149. V.C. Balakrishna Panikkar, "Chilaneetisarangal", in K. Gopalakrishnan, ed., *V.C. Kritikal*, Cochin, 1981, p. 74.

150. -----, "Editorial", *Keralachintamani*, No. 2, Vol. 4, 28 Medam M.E. 1084, pp. 50-57. Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 322-23.

151. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

152. *Ibid.*, p. 351.

153. V.C. Balakrishna Panikkar, "Editorial", *Keralachintamani*, No. 2, Vol. 4, 25 Medam M.E. 1084, p. 7. Cited in Gopalakrishnan, ed., *V.C. Kritikal*, p. 329.

The political ideas of Swadesabhimani got a lucid and plain explanation by the beginning of the fourth decade of the twentieth century in a relevant political atmosphere in the writings of another known journalist Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai (hereafter Kesari) (1889-1960). Ambiguity had no place in his discourse on the nature of polity he desired for Travancore. On behalf of the people he editorially presented some reforms that the subjects expected, before the king in 1931. They were the establishment of responsible government, declaration of the protection of fundamental rights of the citizens, nullification of the notorious newspaper regulation, abolition of social inequalities, implementation of the equality of civil rights, equal treatment of all communities, restraint on expenditure, independence of the king from his courtiers, doing away with customs that hurt the self respect of the subjects, understanding of public opinion and a balanced view on the welfare of the people. He reminded the king that social equality for all meant the abolition of untouchability and granting of freedom of travel and temple entry. He asked the king to set an example to others by giving up the practice of untouchability in personal life and to make that practice a criminal offence, not to be partial in the name of religion or personal relations, to lead a simple life without spending much from the public exchequer that was filled up by the hard earned money of the subjects, to do away with the customs that might wound the self respect of the people, and to behave like an equal citizen to all his subjects¹⁵⁴. He demanded that the Izhavas, Christians and

154. Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai (hereafter Kesari), "Maharajavinotu", *Kesari*, 14 October 1931, in *Kesariyute Mukhaprasangal*, Kottayam, 1989, pp. 30-33.

Muslims should have a place in the personal staff of the king¹⁵⁵. Responsible or self government, fundamental rights including the freedom of the press for all, protection for the workers and peasants, and equal representation for all the communities in the public service were the other reforms he suggested for the polity of Travancore¹⁵⁶. Not good governance of an autocrat but self government was the demand. He warned the king against entrusting the administration into the hands of an autocrat and reactionary like Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer¹⁵⁷ Freedom of press being an essential aspect of democracy, Kesari described the Cochin Regulation of the Press and Publication as an encroachment upon the civic right of the citizen. He commented that the restriction on the freedom of expression would make man equivalent to animals¹⁵⁸. In his opinion the legislative reforms in Travancore of 1932 were intended to nullify the popular assembly by the creation of a legislative body unrepresentative of the people but representative of communal differences and to make it a monopoly of the aristocratic community and the conservative pensioned officers. So he described it as a retrogressive step that only helped to perpetuate communal conflicts and communal parties instead of reducing it¹⁵⁹. He asked the Nair community to cooperate with the All Travancore Joint Political Congress and criticised the king for appointing a reactionary like Sir C.P. Ramaswamy as the legal advisor to the king¹⁶⁰.

155. -----, "Moopelpu", *Kesari*, 4 November 1931, in *Kesariyute*, p. 35.

156. -----, "Moopelpu Prasangam", *Kesari*, 11 November 1931, in *Kesariyute*, p. 38.

157. *Ibid.*

158. -----, "Cochiyilum Patraniyaman", *Kesari*, 24 January 1934, *Ibid.*, p. 111.

159. -----, "Ullakanjiyilkuti Patayepitichittu", *Kesari*, 2 November, 1932, *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62.

160. -----, "Bharanaparishkarapadhatiyute Parajayam", *Kesari*, 18 June 1933, *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Kesari was a supporter of the Abstention Movement but he was critical of its silence on responsible government while justifying the demand for equal representation for all communities. He justified the movement for the reason that it was only one like the agitation of the Nair community to get representation in the public service by destroying the monopoly of the Brahmanas in it and advised them not to lament on the unity of the Izhava, Christian, Muslim communities to destroy their monopoly and to secure representation in the legislature¹⁶¹. He ridiculed the Nairs who were preaching about the fraternity of all, for the resolution passed at the Nair Conference held at Thiruvananthapuram in 1933 that the Nair Brigade of the Travancore government should not be opened to other communities¹⁶² intended to maintain its exclusive character. He regretted the intensification of communal conflict due to the Abstention Movement as that would only benefit the government and would do no good to either parties namely the Political Congress or its opponents. He did not forget to advise the government to solve the problem by holding a conference of all the communities and introducing a reform based on equal representation for all¹⁶³. As an intellectual the journalist Kesari, who carried further the political ideas of Swadesabhimani, was championing the cause of the liberal democratic ideology against the Varna Dharma regime. He supported the Abstention Movement and its demand for representation for all both in the public service and legislature

161. -----, "Bharanaparishkara Pratishedha Prakshobham", *Kesari*, 1 February, 1933, *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

162. -----, "Nayarsammelanam", *Kesari*, 4 October 1933, *Ibid.*, p. 141.

163. -----, "Bharanaparishkara Pratisandhi", *Kesari*, 5 April 1933, *Ibid.*, p. 81.

and advocated responsible government to be the goal of the liberation struggle going on in Travancore.

It was in the year 1888 that the legislative body known as the Sri Mulam Legislative Council (hereafter Legislative Council) started functioning in the Travancore state. It came into being through the Legislative Council Act II of 1888 without any infringement on the legislative power of the monarch and without making the bills passed by the Legislative Council binding on the king. They were simply to be legislative proposals. A bill passed by the legislative council would become law only with the assent of the king. More restrictions on the legislature were imposed by the Act V of 1073 M.E. (1908). Among other things the legislative council was prevented from passing any law affecting the reigning family of Travancore, Nayar Brigade and the bodyguard of the king. When in 1095 M.E. (1920) a legislative reform was effected by the Act I, Section 13 of it made it clear that the king's prerogative to make and pass acts and proclamations independent of the legislative council would not be adversely affected and it remained so until the disappearance of the Travancore state¹⁶⁴.

The election of non-official members of the legislature was not based on universal adult franchise. It was restricted by property qualification. Even when the property qualification was reduced to the payment of an annual tax of Rs. 5/- in 1922 only less than a lakh that is about 2.5% of

164. T.K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, IV, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, p. 317ff.

the population was entitled to vote¹⁶⁵. Representation was thus restricted mainly to the lord's class of Brahmanas and Nairs with a few exception. Retired officers of the Nayar Brigade also were granted voting right. Being numerically a minority community the higher lord's class of Brahmanas had no chance of getting elected in large number. In effect only the lesser lord's class of Nairs who could secure a large number of votes were able to get a majority of seats in the legislative council. The monarch was satisfied with it. The intention of the government seems to be of associating virtually the lord's classes alone with governance as prevailed in the pre-colonial period. With the legislature and bureaucracy monopolised by the Nair community and the prerogative powers vested with the monarch as the sovereign the government of Travancore continued to be feudal and oligarchic in character. The state still remained a Hindu theocratic state that treated its subjects on a caste and creed basis. Swadesabhimani was levelling his criticism on a limited degree against this nature of the state and government. The Civic Rights Movement inaugurated an organised struggle against it and it secured a partial victory when the king issued the Dewaswam Proclamation in April 1922 to separate Dewaswam from Revenue Department. Thereby the fetters on non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus to enter the revenue service were removed. But it was a freedom in wilderness that was granted to them for in the subsequent years also the entire public service remained a

165. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Survey*, p. 345.

monopoly of the caste Hindus as per statistics available¹⁶⁶. This fact strengthened the demand for communal representation in public service in proportion to the population of each section.

The Civic Rights Movement was the manifestation of the realization of the underlings in Kerala that they have a voice. They came to know that untouchability was a noose around their neck that could be tightened to silence them. Neither of the native states showed the magnanimity to remove that from their neck. But using that noose the voice of underlings could not be silenced for ever. The Vaikkam satyagraha was an attempt to remove that noose. Immediately it could not achieve its goal. The legislative council of Cochin asked for its removal. It went unheard. Vaikkam satyagraha has to be taken as an episode in the great struggle of the non-caste Hindus for securing a place in the governance, that aimed at the removal of the disqualification of untouchability. A place in the public service was only the first step towards the end of a place in governance. In essence the demand of the Civic Rights Movement was representation of the people irrespective of caste, race and religion in every section of administration and a share in the benefits derived from the state for a citizen and the removal of untouchability that blocked the way to the aforesaid rights for the non-caste Hindus.

The Nair community was still under the illusion of preserving the

166. TSCSCP, 1933, IV, Trivandrum, 1935, p. 150. V, Trivantrum 1935, pp.155-56,160.1935, VI, Trivandrum, 1936,pp. 101, 215, 540 - 41, 649. 1936, VII, Trivandrum, 1937,pp. 511 - 12, 514. 1937, X, Trivandrum, 1938, pp. 531 - 32.

old privileged aristocratic rank, and felt it just to claim privileges and special consideration as the old ruling class which occupied the top rank in culture and intelligence of the country and was rendering great services to the country, as one member claimed¹⁶⁷. They felt that they deserved a larger share in appointments and resented the appointment of foreigners or non-caste or non-Hindu subjects to the higher ranks when educated and qualified Nairs were available for those posts. The policy of the government was considered as deliberate and they claimed just share in public service consistent with the 60% of the land revenue the Nair community paid to the state¹⁶⁸. They felt it unbecoming of them to share power with the hitherto socially inferior classes. Aimed at maintaining the oligarchic nature of the polity they opposed the entry of the non-caste Hindus on the pretext of the erosion of the efficiency of service¹⁶⁹. The member even asserted that it was a Hindu state where a large majority of Hindus, that is caste Hindus, lived¹⁷⁰.

Much maneuvering and manipulation in the appointments to public service was noticeable in those days. Even after the bifurcation of the dewaswam and revenue departments manipulations were made to deprive the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus of appointments in higher posts in the revenue department by misusing the dewaswam department as a shortcut for the caste Hindus to reach the revenue department through

167. *Travancore Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Proceedings* (hereafter *TSM PAP*), 4 March 1926, Trivandrum, 1926, pp. 180-82.

168. *Ibid.*

169. *TSCSCP*, 26 August 1933, I, Trivandrum, 1934, p. 439.

170. *TSCSCP*, 23 November 1933, II, Trivandrum, 1935, p. 38.

promotions¹⁷¹. As early as 1907 during the term of Raghaviah as Dewan through a government circular all heads of departments were instructed to give chances for appointments to all communities in the public service without impairing efficiency¹⁷². But things went as before.

The monstrous practice of untouchability deprived the non-caste Hindus of admission to schools near temples and accessibility to government offices like *pakuti cutcheries* and *anchal* offices and government *satram*¹⁷³. When a Muslim member requested the opening of government *satram* near the railway station for the Muslims the Dewan's answer was that the government would consider the possibility of providing a new site near the railway station for a *satram* open to them¹⁷⁴.

The demand for the abolition of untouchability and communal representation arose simultaneously against this background in Travancore. A steadily growing sense of right and the concept that state and government exist for the governed strengthened that demand. Every section of the society began to feel that it was entitled to get a due share from the state. In justification of their right was raised the point that the public exchequer was filled with the tax paid by them. Thus they demanded public institutions and public facilities maintained out of it should not follow a policy of discrimination whether in matters of appointment or

171. *Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly Proceedings* (hereafter *TSMAP*), 4 March, 1926, Trivandrum, 1926, p. 193.

172. *TSMAP*, 26 May 1934, II, Trivandrum, 1935, p. 943.

173. *TSMAP*, 11 March 1924, Trivandrum, 1924, p. 178.

TSMAP, 5 March 1927, Trivandrum, 1927, p. 235.

174. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

public utilities, and must rule in the interest of all the people. Such a demand had already been made by Swadesabhimani with a warning that the people have the right to remove a government that does not govern in the interests of all the people. Now K.C. Eapan made the spirit of his writings heard loud and clear in the Assembly by asserting,

Admittedly it was (sic) the right of every citizen to expect good government, efficient government, and no government had (sic) a right to exist which did (sic) not exist in the interests of the governed. So long as appointments loomed large in the eye of the people whatever might be the cause, there was (sic) bound to be friction¹⁷⁵.

The problem of Public Service was (sic) a very serious one, it was (sic) a problem of problems and all the problems of the day arose out of that one problem. There was (sic) misunderstanding between one officer and another, between the government and the public¹⁷⁶.

The idea that government exists for all the people stressed the political equality of all. This political consciousness further developed into a demand for share in governance and everything that is of the state, for the tax paying citizen, by the end of the twenties of the 20th century. In 1927 a member had pointed out that so long as the tax due to the government was collected from all, all should get appointment as they were eligible for that on that matter¹⁷⁷. The statement "We are also tax

175. *TSM PAP* 4 March, 1926, p. 188.

176. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

177. *TSM PAP*, 5 March, 1927, p. 233.

payers” of Thariathu Kunjuthomma in the Assembly while demanding representation for all in the public service¹⁷⁸ was a declaration that fully carried the impatience and indignation of all the discontented and oppressed section of the Travancoreans. It was an assertion of the citizenship right and the civic right to equality of all members of the oppressed class and to a share in political power for them.

Appointments in the palace, the military department, the *nityachilavu*, the *parivakai*, the stables etc. were the monopoly of caste Hindus. Similarly the perquisites of the *murajapam*, *arat*, *tirumadampu* and other festivals were not available to the non-caste Hindus. An Izhava member claimed a right to them in their status as Hindus¹⁷⁹. It was a claim of a non-caste Hindu to social and political equality at the same time. He opined that the unequal distribution of offices was the reason for the communal strife and political unrest in the country and the privileged communities were responsible for it. They had secured a share more than legitimately due for them and were unwilling to divest themselves of clannishness¹⁸⁰.

Wedded to the Varma Dharma ideology the government found it unable to accept fraternity on the issue of representation on public service. This necessitated the struggle for communal representation. The general will of the people of Travancore was in favour of proportional communal

178. *TSMAP*, 26 November 1937, XI, p. 351.

179. *TSMAP*, 7 March 1927, p. 253.

180. *Ibid.*

representation in public service¹⁸¹. The proponents of communal representation in public service were not insisting that it should be at the cost of efficiency¹⁸². They justified it as an expedient in the existing condition, and an ideal apposite to the given situation until the ideal condition that did not require communal representation was attained, for the reason that the influence of a community depended upon the number of appointments that community acquired in public service¹⁸³. This fact had been emphatically presented by another member as “communal representation is a terrible cancer... but it is the nature cure”¹⁸⁴. Communal representation in public service was not seen as a permanent arrangement by its advocates but as a provisional one in a society divided by caste consciousness and discrimination arising out of it. While opposition was raised to the importation of officials it was argued by a Nair member of the Assembly that it was not a matter of career loss but one that “bound up with the self-respect and prestige of the citizens of the state”. It was viewed by him as a denial of right to a citizen to rise to the fullest stature of his personality, to express his talent for discharging administrative responsibilities by him¹⁸⁵. The same was the ground applicable to the demand for communal representation. That was the spirit of the Civic Rights Movement as effused in the speech of John

181. *TSMAP*, 28 July 1937, X, p. 353.

182. *TSMAP*, 4 March 1926, p. 186.

183. *Ibid.*, 5 March 1927, p. 233.

184. *TSCSCP*, 26 May 1934, II, Trivandrum, 1935, p. 934.

185. *TSMAP*, 30 July 1936, VII, Trivandrum 1937, p. 785.

Chandy. That is, everyone should have the right and opportunity to develop and become what he can. The Varna Dharma ideology was basically a negation of this ideal.

The ritualistically sanctioned social stigma of untouchability attached to the lower castes was the biggest impediment to their enjoyment of civic rights and the status of citizens. The freedom of travel, freedom of education in public schools, freedom of worship in public temples, freedom of employment in state service, freedom of using public wells and tanks etc. were denied to them in the name of untouchability. So the struggle for civic rights necessitated a struggle to eliminate this stigma attached to castes. It was as part of it that the Vaikkam satyagraha was organised. Sri Narayana had categorically refuted the theory of varna in his critique of caste. Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi also had denounced caste as baseless and nonsense. Yet a longstanding social and political struggle against casteism and untouchability was required to make the Malayalis both human beings and citizens.

A theoretical explanation in justification of the twin demands for communal representation and the abolition of untouchability did not come from the leaders of the civic rights movement of Travancore. But we get one from a leader of the oppressed classes in general and the Izhavas in particular in the native state of Cochin which was a replica of the sister state of Travancore in the matter of denying civic rights to the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus on the same ground of Varna Dharma ideology. This leader was Sahodaran Ayyappan who persistently fought against it,

and for communal representation and the abolition of untouchability. His profound and convincing elaboration on the twin issues, forms the political thought of the marginalised classes in securing social justice and political liberation and also for the good of the whole society.

As part of the social struggle he advocated the two means of interdining and intermarriage to get rid of caste, for the taboos on connubium and commensality were factors that sustained caste sectarianism. In that struggle Ayyappan had the unflinched support of Sri Narayana who issued a message in support of his programme, that is

Whatever may be the religion, dress, or language etc. of the people there is nothing maleficent in intermarrying and interdining between them since they belong to one caste¹⁸⁶.

The Varna Dharma ideology had been inculcating the idea of caste and untouchability for centuries and it had been so solidified in the minds of the Indians that it was not an easy task to remove the idea or rather the sentiment from the social psyche of the Malayalis. The idea of oneness of all humanity and universal brotherhood as implicit in the Advaita philosophy of the Hindus could not be easily comprehended by the Hindu rulers of the Travancore and Cochin states. This made the elimination of untouchability a herculean task for leaders like Ayyappan. He had founded the Sahodara Sangham in 1917 and the *Sahodaran* magazine to spread the idea of universal brotherhood.

186. *Vivekodayam*, Special Number, January 1967, p. 1.

In his opinion all religions preached the lofty ideal of universal brotherhood and both the theists and atheists accepted it. The love of worldly pleasures and ignorance and superstitions impeded the way to attain that higher goal. In Kerala the traditions and beliefs of the Hindus insisted on unapproachability and untouchability that marred the progress or enlightenment of a large section of the population and the attainment of brotherhood. So following the dictum of Sri Narayana that “Men are one by caste” the attitude of high and low in the name of caste had to be eradicated for the attainment of brotherhood. Irrespective of caste and creed it was the duty of everyone who had the moral consciousness and patriotism, to endeavour for it¹⁸⁷.

He saw interdining as a means to achieve the destruction of caste system, that obstructed brotherhood. He ceaselessly discoursed on the need of it in the following manner. It was essential for the general welfare of the country. It was the best medicine to melt the petrified attitude of the people. Wealth and education were not sufficient means to attain this. The down-trodden were to be helped to attain progress by self help, and caste etiquettes that condemned them to a position lower than that of animals should be removed¹⁸⁸.

Ayyappan was reiterating that people should try to eliminate caste consciousness itself as a wider goal than the limited goal of removing disabilities alone. He was putting emphasis on the dictum “Ask not, say not and think not caste” given by Sri Narayana. The feeling of high and

187. *Sahodaran*, No. 1, 1 Kanni 1093 (ME), pp. 1-3.

188. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

low had to be given up and each community should aim at elevating the so called lower communities to its own level. Those who are working against casteism should first of all be free from caste consciousness. Loyalty to caste group should be replaced by loyalty to one's country, i.e., caste consciousness should give way to nationality consciousness. In his opinion caste was a superstition and an evil and interdining and intermarriage were the only means to bring an end to caste competitions and hatred in a country like India and make the Indian people one though not immediately but in the distant future¹⁸⁹.

The struggle for civic rights had a class character also. The untouchables in the feudal set up according to Varna Dharma ideology were the working class. So the removal of untouchability meant a class based requirement also. This aspect had been highlighted by Ayyappan. He wrote that the untouchables were the people who produce the food for the whole society and the money for the state exchequer¹⁹⁰. The so called high caste men who had to take a bath if polluted by them constituted a minority only. Their progress, lordship, ownership, leadership, jobs and power all depended on the sweat of a large majority of the untouchables. They were denied the freedom to use thoroughfares only for protecting the meaningless superstitions and evil practices of the minority of lords. The boards prohibiting their entry to public roads and places were erected with the money earned by their sweat¹⁹¹. The ban on

189. *Sahodaran*, Valsaraprati, 1103 (M.E.), p. 4.

190. -----, No. 10, 11, *Mithunam - Karkitakam* 1093 (M.E.), p. 147.

191. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-51.

the use of public tanks or thoroughfares was simply because of the 'sentiment' cultivated by customs. Such customs were to be destroyed, for it was the concern of all the communities. It was required to civilise the whole society of both the communities that created and suffered disabilities in the name of caste and untouchability. The abolition of untouchability was the birth right of the lower communities¹⁹². To achieve it religion should be made a personal affair and caste should be destroyed¹⁹³. For the reason that the basic substance of every being in this world is one, untouchability and unapproachability should be abolished, he held. He explained from the stand point of Advaita that

Ekam tat sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanthi (The substance that is *Brahman* is only one. It is interpreted in different ways by the Brahmana). The substance is one. The substance of an Izhava, a Pulaya, an Araya, a Brahmana, a Nair and the king is one. The substance develops spontaneously according to circumstances. We should give it a chance....¹⁹⁴

That is, the freedom to give expression to his talent in administration and governance, to develop his personality and to attain self realisation as a citizen. The practice of untouchability was agitating to any person of self respect. The educated and enlightened could not observe it without self

192. *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings* (hereafter *CLCP*) 12-13 December II, 1928, pp. 525-26.

193. *CLCP*, 30 July 1936, III, p. 425.

194. *CLCP*, 16 December 1931, II, p. 288.

humiliation. So argued Ayyappan and declared on the floor of the Legislative Council that,

The government should remember that now it is unbearable for certain communities to say that they are untouchables. It is my belief that there is nobody even in the palace who is by birth purer and higher than me. How can I bear if I am told that I am an untouchable!¹⁹⁵

By nature the ruler and the ruled are equal. So the ruler was no longer allowed to claim superiority on the basis of birth status. Untouchability was analysed on moral and political grounds and was found unjustifiable. Both the Indian speculative philosophy of Advaita and the western political philosophy of Natural Law idealise the equality of man. Morally and legally the principle that all are born equal is recognised. So no man can be an untouchable to another and it was on this moral and political ground that Ayyappan demanded the abolition of untouchability.

Ayyappan advocated intermarriage for several reasons. He found the restriction on it as irrational and ahistorical. It was essential for promoting friendship and co-operation among different communities. Sectarianism would be wiped out and political unity would become possible among them. Such a unity was essential for the success of democracy. It was essential for removing the disabilities of lower castes and the attainment of the welfare of the whole society. Ayyappan argued

195. *CLCP*, 30 July 1935, I, p. 200.

that religion, science, reason and experience all attested the fact that intermarriage was advantageous to man¹⁹⁶.

He advocated intermarriage as a solution to the communal differences which generated communal problems in India. Communal differences were given divine origin by the Hindus. Communal divisions and exclusiveness fostered communal loyalty and that caused the development of sectarian interests. Competition, hatred and conflicts were the inevitable products of such a condition. The mere argument that the country must come first and the community second is against social reality. It would not solve the communal problems. The rightful solution for communal problems therefore in his opinion is to allow the individuals of different communities to lead a mingled social life and thereby help to widen social consciousness of the individual beyond the limits of his own community and gradually even to destroy such limits. For that the taboo on interdining and intermarriage should be got rid of¹⁹⁷. Popularisation of inter marriage was a difficult job. What could have been successfully done to achieve the goal was to prepare the way for it by removing the taboo by law. That was achieved by Ayyappan by getting passed the Cochin Civil Marriage Bill that he introduced in the Legislative Council in 1931¹⁹⁸. It was ratified by the king and got a place in the statutes book (Regulation No. 21) as Cochin Civil Marriage

196. *Sahodaran*, No. 6, I, Chingam 1094 M.E., pp. 101-3.

197. *Yuktivadi*, XIII, No. 12, Karkitakam, M.E. 1117 (Ida), p. 368.

198. *CLCP*, 17 December 1931, II, pp. 362-63.

Regulation of 1935¹⁹⁹. The Act provided legal sanction for intermarriages between members of different castes and religions as well. A similar legislation namely the Travancore Special Marriage and Succession Bill was passed in 1941²⁰⁰.

The passage of the act is indicative of the change in social consciousness about caste. It was a great stride towards universal brotherhood by recognising the equality of different castes and one that recognised humanism as the greatest value in human life. It was the fulfillment of the message given by Sri Narayana in favour of intermarriage. By making marriage a fulfillment of the love of two individuals by the state, the act removed the caste barrier between individuals, promoted individualism and cemented the bond between the citizen and state. In this sense it was a leap forward in the march towards civil society and civic state.

The demand for communal representation in public service was mainly an aspect of the political struggle of liberation of the marginalised sections while it had a social connotation too. In the opinion of Sahodaran Ayyappan granting of jobs to the non-caste Hindus was not merely to reform those communities but to reform the whole society²⁰¹. They happened to be in that state not by their fault but by that of others. That section of the society had to remain undeveloped only because of the

199. *Sign Manual Copies of Acts of the year 1110 M.E.*, Book No. 24, Kerala State Archives Department Regulation 21 of 1110, pp. 1-4.

200. *TSMAP*, 20 April 1935, VII, pp. 1022-23, 1048, 5 April 1941, VIII, p. 1073.

201. *CLCP*, July - August 1928, I, 1928, pp. 719-20.

superstitions, the fancy for evil customs and the authoritarian position of the developed section²⁰². Communal representation in public service was raised not to secure jobs for all the members of the community but to prevent the loss which would be incurred otherwise by the lower communities if its members were denied jobs. The main object of the demand was to obtain participation in the administrative affairs²⁰³. Thus Ayyappan was pointing to the real issue at stake namely a share in governance.

In the opinion of Ayyappan communal representation was not antagonistic to nationalism, but would foster nationalism by eliminating communal discrimination by providing equality of opportunity for all in the government service. In a country like Kerala where sense of unity was based on communal loyalty, and officials were biased by communal affinity, communal representation by appointing only qualified hands and without jeopardising efficiency was the means to achieve national consciousness and equality of opportunity for all²⁰⁴.

Ayyappan pointed out that though it was agreed in principle that all communities were to be accommodated in the public service, in practice heads of departments were biased to recommend only their castemen. If the Government was not guided by a definite principle like communal representation to provide appointments to the under-represented communities, the latter would never be relieved of caste discrimination.

202. *Ibid.*, p. 720.

203. *CLCP*, 12 October 1928, II, p. 172.

204. *CLCP*, 20 February 1930, III, 1929-30, pp. 656-57.

If only chances were given to the depressed communities they could prove that they were equal to other communities in matters of efficiency and intelligence²⁰⁵. So equality of opportunity to self realization as a natural right was the underlying aspect of communal representation according to Ayyappan.

In a society where caste affinity was strong and administrative offices are monopolised by certain castes, the unrepresented castes would not get justice. The officials might be led by the compulsion of circumstances and by their caste requirements to show partiality. Even the judiciary may not be free from that possibility. So to assure administrative and legal justice to all communities all of them should have representation in all departments of administration²⁰⁶. In other words, the argument of Ayyappan that natural justice would be ensured to all only when all communities would get representation in administration.

According to Ayyappan communal representation was required till the communal system was eliminated. The ideal system of a casteless society could be achieved only through the elimination of caste differences after strengthening all the communities by providing temporary safeguards. Communal representation was such a safeguard. The ideals of equality and fraternity could be realised only if a balance of power was maintained between communities. A member of the lower community could not visit the royal palace even though nobody greater than him lived there²⁰⁷.

205. *CLCP*, 17 February 1931, I, 1930, I, pp. 603-05.

206. *Ibid.*, pp. 314, 314-16.

207. *CLCP*, 15 December 1931, II, 1931, p. 182.

Communal representation was thus to eliminate this kind of communally biased discrimination and to make the ruler approachable to all the citizens.

His allegation that nepotism and favouritism were usual practices in the recruitment to service was not without the support of facts and figures. In the department of police where the commissioner was the appointing authority thirty one appointments out of fifty three were given to Nairs in the year 1931. Of the twenty two appointments made in 1932 Nairs got seven. In the recruitment made last in the year 1933 of the thirteen constables selected ten were Nairs. This he pointed out in the Legislative Council while speaking on a resolution²⁰⁸. The figures of recruitment in the revenue department in support of the allegation of nepotism in recruitment was brought to the notice of the Council by another member. He pointed out that while the caste Hindus could secure 84% of the appointments the non-caste Hindus got hardly 9%²⁰⁹. So Ayyappan argued that in Kerala where caste was the centre of loyalty and not nation communal representation was an indispensable requirement to avoid powerful communities oppressing the powerless and to bring up powerless communities to the level of powerful communities²¹⁰.

Ayyappan opined that no particular community could claim

208. *CLCP*, 31 March 1933, pp. 1565-66.

209. *Ibid.*

210. *CLCP*, 23 March 1934, VI, 1934, pp. 1321-22.

monopoly of efficiency and eligibility. Qualitywise division of mankind into varnas and preparing a code of laws on the basis of that as done by Manu would be unsuitable to modern times. Such fatuous theory that only certain communities were intelligent and efficient would not make an appeal to rational mind²¹¹. In his own words,

Political power in this country means that from dewan to peon all are included in it. For the attainment of the common weal of the country a government machinery representing all sections of the people is required. If a condition that is satisfactory and fair for all has to come into existence, all the people should have representation in the administrative regime. It would not come if some sections are having more and some sections less representation²¹².

Ayyappan observed that for the betterment of the service also all communities should have representation in it. Even in the secretariat it must be so for the purpose of taking the blessings of the Maharaja to the people and for bringing the demands of the people to the notice of the Maharaja. It was also necessary to check intrigues which the officers may enter into²¹³.

Though the two issues of communal representation in service and removal of casteism would appear to be mutually contradictory, Ayyappan

211. *CLCP*, 3 August 1934, pp. 417-18.

212. *CLCP*, 1 August 1945, 30 July 1945 to 11 August 1945, p. 117.

213. *CLCP*, 3 August 1945, pp. 207-08.

could not envisage any ambiguity in the effectiveness of the former to achieve the latter. Only by having an effective share in the social, political and economic fortunes of the country for the unprivileged communities who were left out of them as a result of caste system the foundation of that system could be shaken. So there is much congruity in speaking of communal representation and elimination of caste²¹⁴. It seems that by removal of caste he meant to turn it into a non-entity in social and political life. What gave it an entity was privileges and disabilities allied to it. The hierarchy of caste set up was determined by them. Removal of them would mean the levelling of castes. Communal representation was advocated as the most suitable political weapon to effect that at one stroke.

He justified communal representation in public service as a means to foster national spirit among the people. He argued that for centuries certain communities enjoyed political power as a privilege as people remained unawakened. In the changed situation the people were politically awakened and they were not ready to allow the monopoly of power by a section and were demanding a share in it²¹⁵. When political power was shared by all by means of communal representation communal barriers would gradually disappear and a strong bond of social unity which is a prerequisite for national consciousness, would be achieved²¹⁶. To make

214. *Kerala Kaumudi*, 24 March 1963, p. 2.

215. K. Ayyappan, *Saddesiyam*, Ernakulam, 1965, p. 9.

216. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

nationalism a reality equality of opportunity was to be made a reality and for that communal representation is required²¹⁷.

Ayyappan held that the Indian civilization was one based on communalism and the primary duty of the state before the establishment of British rule in India was to protect Varna Dharma. So when the political system, devoid of communal aspect of the west was to be adopted for the country with necessary changes intended to correct or to completely destroy the evils of Indian civilization. For the time being, he suggested, it should be altered to benefit the country with an adequate amount of communalism, since that was the useful, rational and practicable process to be followed here²¹⁸.

Ayyappan pointed out that communal representation was only a means to get the opportunity for progress for all individuals in a country where caste difference and sense of inequality based on it were solidly rooted. In the absence of communal representation certain communities would not get the opportunity to do anything good for themselves or their country. Such a predicament had been created in the attitude of the people by caste differences. And for that reason a mere promulgation of right for all to enter government service and legislative council would not enable them to enjoy the rights. Rights so granted would remain in pronouncement only, if communal representation was not granted. His observation was that equality of opportunity without the safeguard of

217. Ibid. p. 15.

218. Ibid., p. 22.

communal representation would result in equality of opportunity to remain outside government service forever²¹⁹.

Acquiring full participation in governance by capturing a place in the legislature and executive was necessary to realise the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, for the marginalised people. Ensuring a place in the public service was only a part of the great struggle for that realisation. The Civic Rights Movement was only the first phase of the struggle and its immediate goal of a place in the public service was not fully achieved and the struggle was renewed in the beginning of the thirties of the twentieth century with added vigour and greater goals.

That the Travancore government had no intention to change its oligarchic nature was made clear by the legislative reform of 1932. By this reform the unicameral legislature was changed into a bicameral legislature with the lower house of Sri Chitra State Council. Property qualification for the electorate was retained. The scheme was framed and the rules were passed on the advice of Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer who was then the legal and constitutional advisor to His Highness²²⁰. Ramaswamy Iyer master-minded the whole reform to ensure the association and support of the elite class through the upper house with a high rate of property qualifications and provision for constituencies of *jenmis*, business magnates and industrialists. To contain the displeasure of the religious minorities nomination was provided for²²¹. By the

219. Ibid., pp. 55-56.

220. T.K. Velu Pillai, *Manual*, IV, pp. 323-24.

221. Ibid., p. 325.

constitution of an upper house of elites which was to support legislative proposals the voice of the Popular Assembly was made a non-entity. By nomination government could ensure its henchmen in this legislature. So for the time Ramaswamy Iyer deemed it better to provide a timocratic government for the Travancoreans without associating the people with it. All the while, when the legislative reforms were in the offing and the election of 1933 as per the Regulation II of 1921 was nearing, the three major communities of the state namely Izhavas, Muslims and Christians were demanding either adult franchise or a reduced property qualification or proportional representation to all communities²²² to check the predominant position of the Nair community in the Legislative Council. Since the Government was not willing to relent as affirmed by the proposed Legislative Reforms, the three communities formed the All Travancore Joint Political Congress (hereafter Political Congress) in December 1932 to press their demand for proportional communal representation through reservation²²³. Convinced that there was no scope for a dialogue with the government the Political Congress took the decision to abstain from the election of 1933²²⁴ as a political tactic. This is known as the Abstention Movement.

In a pamphlet issued by the Political Congress the people were exhorted to unite into one in the forward march to attain the goals of liberty, equality and peace. The word peace indicates that the movement

222. K.K. Kusuman, *Abstention*, p. 22.

223. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

224. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

wanted to maintain communal harmony in the state whereas the government encouraged communal discord by deliberately following a policy of concealed apartheid against the marginalised groups and the non-Hindus to preserve the polity as one of the lord's class of caste Hindus. Thus was precipitated the second phase of the liberation struggle. With the two sides taking opposing positions an open conflict between the two ideologies, namely a liberal democracy which stands for liberty, equality and fraternity and Varna Dharma that stands for inequality, discrimination and oppression that sustained a theocratic and autocratic government, assumed a new dimension.

The Abstention Movement was started by the Political Congress with the specific demand for either adult franchise or communal representation in the legislature. The marginalised group and the non-Hindus were no more willing to be satisfied with a few berths in the public service though that also weighed with the other demand. The Political Congress now aimed at the establishment of a democratic government in its full political sense. The government should be by the people and here is the relevance of the concept of communal representation.

Its rationale is fully represented in the writings and speeches of Sahodaran Ayyappan. He argued that representative government was necessary to make government democratic and responsible to the people. In a country where communal discriminations prevailed very strongly and chances of the depressed communities to be represented in the legislature were limited, safeguards to guarantee their representation in

the legislature was essential and communal representation was such a safeguard. Responsible government without such a safeguard would be dangerous to the depressed communities. That safeguard was to be retained, he contented, until when depressed communities would become capable of utilising their voting right in the proper way²²⁵.

It was in the context of limited franchise through property qualifications that Ayyappan was demanding communal representation in the legislature. Though the population of the depressed classes was high they lacked the necessary qualification of paying land tax as they were not having any proprietary right to pay land tax. So in a general constituency the chance of a depressed class candidate winning the election was rare. In such a condition in a country notorious for communal discriminations responsible government without communal representation would result in the perpetuation of such discriminations²²⁶. So, he observed, a democratic government in this country without communal representation would mean the mere supplanting of the super structure of the democratic set up as it prevailed in the European countries where caste discriminations are absent²²⁷.

Ayyappan advocated communal representation for the marginalised classes in the legislatures as a safeguard against the oppression of other communities by a community having majority of votes and to make

225. *CLCP*, 23 March 1931, I, 1931, p. 808.

226. *CLCP*, August 1933, Parts 1 - 11, V, 1933, p. 147.

227. *CLCP*, 23 November 1936 to 5 April 1937, IV 1936, p. 261.

democracy 'government by the people' in its real sense without copying the democratic system where people are not communally divided²²⁸. In the given context of the Cochin and Travancore states the lesser lord's class of Nair community enjoyed a majority of vote because of property qualifications and other norms of representation while all other communities were put in a most disadvantageous position in this regard. This would result in the majority rule (by votes only) of the Nair community over others in the name of democracy. If representative government without the safeguard of communal representation was implemented in these respective states where heterogeneous societies hierarchically divided existed, democracy without adult franchise would mean the oligarchy of the superior communities.

The stand of the Political Congress was vindicated when the election results came out. What they were afraid of was correct. While the Christian Community with a population of 16 lakhs got 10 seats the Izhava community of 8.69 lakhs got 3 seats, and the Muslim community of 3.53 lakhs got 3 seats, the Nair community having 8.68 lakhs could secure a majority of 36 seats²²⁹. The results could not have been different in the existing conditions. With the revenue department dominated by Nair officials manipulation in electoral rolls in a manner advantageous to that community was sure to take place²³⁰. The distribution of the population in the constituencies was so arranged that Hindus formed majority in

228. CLCP, 24 March 1944, Part II, XII, pp. 737-38.

229. K.K. Kusuman, *Abstention*, p. 44.

230. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

most of them to the disadvantage of the Christians and Muslims²³¹. The Izhavas too were in a disadvantageous position to muster their votes as they lay scattered over all constituencies²³². The Travancore government did not show the liberality and enlightenment to solve the problems posed by the administrative deficiency to ensure a fair representation for all. But experience was that the government always acted so only under political duress and it was for that reason Ramaswami Iyer tried to forestall the move of the Political Congress to appeal to the Viceroy²³³. No reform that would be disadvantageous to the privileged community was to be thought of by the government. The agitators intensified their movement following the election results by widening the scope of demands to the opening of the army to all communities, adult franchise and responsible government. Communal antagonism between the Nairs and Izhavas and between Nairs and Christians widened to an alarming proportion. In collusion with the Hindu Mission the Nair leaders tried to play upon the Izhavas the card of Hindu ideology to wean away them. At the Nair conference held at Thiruvananthapuram Travancore was proclaimed as "Hindu Kingdom and the Maharaja as the Maharaja essentially of the Nayers"²³⁴. To pacify and lure away the Izhavas the Hindu meeting at Konni in 1936 made an appeal to the government for opening the Hindu temples to all classes of Hindus²³⁵. SNDP Yogam at its annual meeting in

231. Ibid., p. 27.

232. Ibid.

233. Ibid., p. 37.

234. Ibid., p. 62.

235. Ibid.

1936 passed a resolution declaring that so long as the Izhavas continued as followers of Hinduism it was impossible for them to live with pride and honour and as such they should quit Hindu religion en bloc²³⁶. It was the cry of the humiliated and helpless down-trodden for a social / religious migration en masse since a geographical migration was not possible. The air was stirred with talk on the choice of religion for conversion. While the SNDP Yogam was unanimous on the decision to quit Hinduism, that is in reality the Varna Dharma ideology, the Izhava leaders were divided on the choice of the substitute. Before the choice falling on any other faith the caste Hindus found out a way to contain it. The Varna Dharma regime of Travancore relented to introduce administrative, legislative and social reforms granting social and political equality to a larger extent. Communal representation in the lower category of administration had been granted earlier in 1935 was extended to the legislature in 1936²³⁷. Following the resolution on quitting Hinduism by the SNDP Yogam the Travancore government opened all public roads, public tanks, public wells, *chatram* etc. maintained out of public fund to all classes of people irrespective of castes. This sequence of reforms climaxed with the Temple Entry Proclamation on 12 November 1936 that “... there should henceforth be no restrictions placed on any Hindu by birth or religion for entering or worshipping at the temples controlled by Us and Our Government”²³⁸. This last one meant the baptism of the non-caste Hindus that extended official recognition to the Panchamas or

236. Ibid.

237. P.K.K. Menon, *Freedom Movement*, pp. 367-68.

238. *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore*, IX, M.E. 1112, Trivandrum, 1937, p. 2.

Chandalas as Hindus. Politically it meant the granting of eligibility to full citizenship. All these reforms represented the victory of the popular agitations led by the Civic Rights Movement and Political Congress and the ideologies of Advaita and liberal democracy.

Yet the victory was incomplete. It was partial in the realisation of the great ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity of the two ideologies. Abolition of untouchability and a place in the executive still remained a far cry in Travancore. Cochin state was on the way to responsible government as early as on 4th January 1938 when the Maharaja announced some important administrative reforms including the transfer of certain departments to a minister responsible to the legislature²³⁹ and Parambi Lonappan a non-Hindu, that is a Christian could become the first popular minister in Cochin. In 1946 all but the law and order and finance portfolios were transferred to popular ministers. When in 1946 Ayyappan became the minister of public works department an *avarna* Hindu's elevation to political power with a place in the executive for the first time in Kerala, was materialised²⁴⁰.

In Travancore the case was different. After securing some important political and administrative concessions the Political Congress decided to dissolve itself and to join the Travancore State Congress founded in 1938 with the sole objective of acquiring responsible government based on

239. Prajamandalam Charitrarachana Samiti, *Cochirajya Prajamandalam*, Kottayam, 1985, pp. 61-63.

240. A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1970, p. 42.

universal adult franchise. Then the Dewan Ramaswamy Iyer under a pliant monarch was not willing to allow any deflation in his power. In his statement on the question of responsible government on the floor of the Assembly the Dewan pronounced that “... any form of Government other than that prescribed by this Regulation, viz., *the form of Government of His Highness the Maharaja through the instrumentality of the Dewan and the Dewan alone* (Italics mine) is outside the pale of discussion in this House”²⁴¹. That the Regulation cited was the brain child of Ramaswamy Iyer is to be noted here. In Travancore usually the Dewan acted as a de facto ruler as the de jure rulers acted upon his advice and direction as attested by P. Rajagopalachari, who served as Dewan of Travancore from 1908 to 1915 ²⁴².

It is an irony that the Dewan who was responsible for the expulsion of Swadesabhimani for expressing the same view in a different manner testified it before long. The ex-Dewan testifies that the Maharajas of Travancore were simply satisfied with an ornamental position, lacking in the initiative and will to look after the affairs of the state as dutiful and responsible rulers and acted as righthand men of the Dewan. The struggle for responsible government that continued from 1938 to 1946 and the ruthless suppression of it by the Dewan Ramaswamy Iyer²⁴³ corroborate the assertion of the ex-Dewan.

241 TSMAP, 2 February 1938, XI, p. 796.

242. M.J. Koshy, *Last Days of Manarchy in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1973, pp. 124-25.

243. See C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithamcore Swatantryasamara Charitram*, Trivandrum, 1972. Putuppally Raghavan, *Viplava Smaranakal*, Kottayam, 1994.

More than the spread of education that caused the influence of western ideas of democracy, it was the very consciousness that they had imbibed them that strengthened their political consciousness. It is out of this self consciousness that they opposed the importation of the Dewan and higher officials. An imported Dewan with large powers concentrated in his hands managing such a people wounded their self respect. It demanded an opportunity to display their intellectual capability in statecraft²⁴⁴. Added to it was the drain of wealth²⁴⁵. The impatience of an educated and economically prospering people was always there behind the political movements in Travancore. They were continuously demanding the expansion of legislative power to deal with all matters except those related to royal family and the British government²⁴⁶ and extension of franchise²⁴⁷. It was this growing political consciousness and economic nationalism that gradually gave shape to the demand for responsible government.

What the Dewan Ramaswamy Iyer did was to sideline a helpless Maharaja and to impose his will upon the people. He opposed any reform intended to achieve responsible government on the ground that the Travancore government was fully responsive; dyarchy was an utter failure in British India; it was not a substitute for full responsible government; it would violate treaties of 1795 and 1805 signed between the king of

244. *TSMPPAP*, 12 March 1924, pp. 217-18, 19.

245. *SMPAP*, 12 March 1924, p. 219.

246. *TSMPPAP*, 3 March 1926, p. 178.

247. *TSMPPAP*, 12 March 1924, p. 219.

Travancore and the British Emperor; with prerogatives vested with the ruler no responsible government was possible; and some speculated developments may follow on granting responsible government²⁴⁸. But the core of his arguments is nothing of them but his assertion that "That, sole responsibility (for the administration of the state as a whole) cannot be vested in any person other than the Dewan"²⁴⁹. Ramaswamy Iyer was not for the curtailment of any degree of power of the Dewan which was actually the essence of responsible government in demand. The Travancore State Congress never demanded the removal of the king or dispossessing him of his prerogatives and the abrogation of his treaties with the Empire. It was made clear by T.M. Varghese, a leader of the Travancore State Congress, and the mover of the adjournment motion in reply to which the Dewan made his statement. He clarified that the responsible government envisaged by his motion was a government run by ministers appointed from among the legislators who were responsible to the legislature and subject to removal by the Maharaja at his will and pleasure and without violating the prerogatives and power of the king, and dyarchical in character. The legislature should not have any rights to review the treaties and relation between the Maharaja and the Emperor. But there should be no authority like the dewan to represent the Maharaja or the people between them ²⁵⁰. It was for the same reason that the Dewan was determined to suppress the movement ruthlessly with the

248. *TSMAP*, 2 February 1938, P. 796-803.

249. *Ibid.*, p. 800.

250. *Ibid.*, pp. 804-07.

silent permission of the “Ponnu Thampuran” of the people. In fact in his eagerness to protect his own position and power Ramaswamy Iyer was protecting the Varna Dharma ideology against the ideology of liberal democracy. It was only after the resignation of Ramaswamy Iyer as the Dewan that responsible government was granted in Travancore. It marked the political triumph of the liberal democratic ideology over the age-old Varna Dharma ideology.

The Varna Dharma ideology was essentially a divisive force and it could never foster national consciousness. It was quite natural then that the Malayalis could not unite on the basis of one nationality. The Travancore and Cochin rulers had no national policy and they did not see the people as constituting one nation. For them the nation meant the caste Hindus and they conceived it as their duty to protect their interest. The people remained divided into caste Hindus, non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus, lords and tenants, privileged and unprivileged, local groups and calling groups within the castes. The concept of exclusiveness and purity and pollution solidified the divisive nature of the society. The caste based clannishness was also a divisive factor. Separate castes had separate art forms and festivals. As religious groups also the people remained divided. The sufferings of all the people had no uniform nature. In short the absence of fraternity never allowed the people to develop a national consciousness. The British occupation of the country also did not help the creation of it. Instead it appeared as a blessing for the down-trodden while even the lord's class preferred tutelage under it. The down-trodden could now breath the air of freedom, carry on the struggle

against the caste Hindus and lord's class and get recognition for their capabilities, talents and creativity. Though the Malayalis belonged to one geographical unit politically they remained divided into a number of units and even after British occupation they could not form one political unit. As the country was intersected by a number of rivers and backwaters parochialism was so strong that marriages did not take place within the caste between inhabitants of different localities. The poet Vallathol exhorted the people to get their blood stirred on hearing the name of Kerala. But in actuality there was nothing as a social tradition to be proud of for a hierarchically divided people. Even this celebrated nationalist poet was not free from sectarian sentiments ²⁵¹.

Things changed for the better during the hundred years from 1850 to 1950. The process of that change witnessed the disruption of the feudal set up and the partial destruction of Varna Dharma ideology and the evolution of a Malayali identity consciousness that took the shape of Malayali nationalism. The lofty ideal of human fraternity as contained in the writings of the spiritual leaders promoted social unity as a prerequisite for nationalism. Their fraternity concept was not of any particular caste or religious group and it was devoid of sectarianism. So the development of a rigid nationalism based on hatred never grew up among the Malayalis. Consolidation of particular castes and Hinduisation of non-caste Hindus and the unity of the non-caste Hindus and other religious groups against the privileged groups brought about a sober national consciousness.

251. Vallathol Narayana Menon, "Nayar Streeyum Muhammadeeyanum", *Padyakritikal*, II, pp. 31-39.

Malabar being a part of British India its people imbibed the growing national consciousness promoted by the nationalist movement. That too was a liberal and secular nationalism inculcated by the Moderates first and Gandhi later. In the Cochin and Travancore states the most potent factor that contributed to fraternity and national consciousness was the struggle against the discriminatory caste system. The struggle for social equality was a real nationalist struggle. The meaning of it is clear in the statement of Ramaswami Naicker. He asked, "Is the Brahmin's rule swarajya for the 'Paraya'? Is the cat's rule swarajya for the rat? Is the landlord's rule swarajya for the peasants? Is the owner's rule swarajya for the worker?", and he remarked, "The moment of equality of the subordinate social groups alone could signify the arrival of the nation"²⁵². The discourse of Sahodaran Ayyappan on communal representation gains relevance in this context. Nationalism cannot be imposed. It is to be evolved out of social amity and unity. The struggle in the Cochin and Travancore states against social discriminations emanating from Varna Dharma ideology and feudalism was in this sense national struggle. The presence of foreigners in the executive and public service and the foreign capital in the economy intensified the political and economic nationalism of the Malayalis. It is upon the Malayali identity that the Malayali Memorial was formulated with an intention to arouse the spirit of unity of the Malayali on secular and national basis. The implicit idea of the document was Travancore was for Travancoreans. Ever since the Malayali

252. K.N. Panikkar, "What Nationalism Meant to Gandhi and Nehru?" *The Hindu*, 22 February, Coimbatore, 1998, Sunday, p. 14.

Memorial the Travancore legislature repeatedly heard this sons of the soil theory developed on the three elements of self respect, economic drain and negation of opportunities. The victory of Nair sectarianism following the Malayali Memorial necessitated separate memorials of different communities and Travancore nationalism suffered a temporary eclipse. But it soon revived through support for the sons of the soil theory from legislators irrespective of caste and creed and finally converged into the demand for responsible government after the recognition of the equality of all in public service and legislature through communal representation for the marginalised groups. The struggle for responsible government in Travancore and Cochin thus assumed a national character.

The appeal the teachings of Sri Narayana and Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi had to the Malayalis across provincial and caste barriers, the success of caste organisations in bringing about unity within the castes by eliminating subdivisions, and in dissipating to a great level the clannish character of the caste, the influence of the liberal nationalism of the Indian National Congress and the influence of the socialist and communist movements on the down-trodden class across caste, creed and local barriers brought about the liberation of the Malayali from parochial and caste sectarianism and strengthened the Malayali identity that helped the formation of a homogeneous society. It was against this background that the idea of a united Kerala based on Malayali nationalism originated.

The linguistic identity was further strengthened by the growth of Malayalam language, a progressive literature and the progressive literary

movement. The Samasta Kerala Sahitya Parishad has to be taken as the manifestation of this identity. It aimed at the linguistic uniformity transcending a traditionally sectarian dialectical heritage. It made an attempt, to achieve a uniform script²⁵³ for the language since such a script was actually in vogue as is evident from the palm leaf manuscripts²⁵⁴. The demand for making Malayalam the medium of official transactions²⁵⁵ and making knowledge of Malayalam an essential qualification for recruitment in the public service²⁵⁶ in the Travancore legislature shows that the Malayali identity was gaining such a strength that it was taking the shape of Malayali nationalism that helped the formation of the linguistically based Kerala polity in 1956.

The temple entry proclamation removed the ritualistic stigma attached to the individual of a polluting community that blocked his way to citizenship of a civil society. It brought about the convergence of the *savarna* and *avarna* Hindus into a horizontally divided social entity. Equally or more revolutionary in nature were the measures taken by the Cochin and Travancore governments to regulate the system of marriage, inheritance and partition of property in joint families of the lord's classes and the undertenants as well. They, in fact, meant the emancipation of the individual who was submerged into the family, caste group and the social whole. In the feudal set up the individual had no opportunity to

253. Attoor Krishna Pisharody, *Samastakerala Sahityaparishad Moonnam Yogam*, Trivandrum, 1929, p. 1.

254. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

255. *TSM PAP*, 5 March 1927, p. 222 5 March 1928, p. 129.

256. *SMPAP*, 6 March 1924, Trivandrum, 1924, p. 126.

shine in the social or political or economic field. The law of primogeniture among the Namboothiri Brahmanas and the matrilineal system of inheritance and succession followed by the communities like Nairs, Izhavas and Vellalas kept the individual member of a joint family or *tarwad* in economic bondage since individual partition of *tarwad* property was not allowed. The marriage systems of polygamy, polyandry and *sambandham* could preserve loose family bonds while the *tarwad* fostered a clannish loyalty and limited social relations. The individual was identified with his *tarwad* which was the symbol of aristocracy. In a caste-oriented feudal society of the pre-colonial period such systems satisfied the need of maintaining an unchanging socio-economic set up. In the colonial context with the opening of new avenues of economic pursuit in the fields of commerce and industry, social reformers found them anachronistic. As already pointed out, the demand for change in the systems arose from various quarters. The eminent historian K.P. Padmanabha Menon, who served as a member of the Cochin Marumakkatayam committee appointed by the Cochin government, pointed out the demerits of the *tarwad* system founded on *marumakkatayam* as follows.²⁵⁷ The *karanavan*, the matrilineal head, of a *tarwad* had to maintain it with the fixed income from land notwithstanding the increase in the number of *ananthiravans* or descendents. The system had a vicious effect on both the *karanavan* and the *ananthiravans* as there was no scope for the individual's private earnings. Both of them became lethargic. It did not foster the qualities of self assertion and initiative, industry, and the sense of liberty and

257. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *Cochirajyacharithram*, Calicut 1996, pp. 782-85.

discrimination which are essential for success in commercial and industrial pursuits. In the absence of surplus income, capital accumulation was not possible. The *karanavan* was not bound to give education required for success in the new circumstances to the youngsters of the *tarwad*. The elders were not giving any guidance and encouragement to the youngsters. Relying on the economic theories of John Marshall, the economist, Menon asserted that the *tarwad* system failed to develop the sense of identity and natural love of one's family which are the incentives to perseverance and success in life. The fact that one could not make earnings for himself and bequeath it to his wife and children in the matrilineal system and that there was no opportunity to secure one's share in the family property and sell it discouraged him to work hard and accumulate wealth which could be utilised as capital. Menon's approach was typical of a Malayali mind that envisaged a system which gives ample opportunity and liberty for the individual to accumulate and invest capital and achieve economic prosperity and a patrilineal inheritance and succession in which natural love for one's family, that is wife and children, would be the guiding spirit. It was in response to such an attitude that a series of acts regulating and amending the law of marriage, inheritance, succession, family management and individual partition of *tarwad* property concerning various communities like Nairs, Izhavas, Vellalas, Malayala Brahmanas and Kshetriyas were passed by both the Cochin and Travancore governments²⁵⁸. In these regulations due consideration had

258. *Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore*, V, 1097-1100 M.E., Trivandrum, 1929, pp. 626-46; VI, M.E. 1100-05, Trivandrum, 1930, pp. 781 ff, pp. 1176 ff, VII, M.E. 1105-09, Trivandrum, 1934, pp. 53 ff, pp. 492 ff, pp. 588 ff. *The Acts and Proclamations of Cochin*, III, M.E. 1093-1108, pp. 98 ff, pp. 648 ff.

been given to the customs and requirements of the respective communities. *Marumakkatayam* as an institution was not abolished but was disrupted by removing some of the restraints on the individual. Individual partition of *tarwad* property, inheritance of a male member's property by his wife and children and the enforcement of monogamy as the legally valid marriage, were the essential features of these regulations. They emanated from the Malayali's changing attitude towards family, children and property. Malayali was moved by capitalist aspirations. Raising and investment of capital, economic liberty of the individual, patriarchal family with strong bonds as the unit of society, emancipation of the individual from clannish bondage, man's responsibility to wife and children and subordination of the individual to the state with state as the arbiter in matters of marriage, family and property are the ideas implied in these reforms. All these were not immediately achieved but they opened the way for the future realisation. All these ideas were antagonistic to the Varna Dharma ideology and were helpful to the formations of a civil society where the individual is to be a citizen of the state attending to callings he preferred. The legislation for compulsory registration of births and deaths²⁵⁹ was also to contribute to the move towards a civil state. So the reforms in marriage and inheritance could cause wide repercussions in the political, social and economic life of the Malayali in his march to modernity.

259. *Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore*, III, Trivandrum, 1928, p. 1159. *The Acts and Proclamations of Cochin*, I, M.E. 1058-1092, Ernakulam, 1938, Act I of 1081, pp. 381 ff.

The very term Varna Dharma is indicative of the economic concept underlying that ideology. Varna is conceived as the mutually determined economic and ritualistic status in the Kerala context. So class division and caste division are implicit in the Varna concept. In such a set up the Brahmanas the sole owners of land, were placed at the apex of the society with all privileges. All the communities below them enjoyed concessions and suffered disabilities corresponding to their caste/class status determined by the distributive system of the land, that is, the varying nature in their right on land. At the bottom came the labourers and slaves who has no right at all on land. Thus the society was structured in a hierarchical or pyramidal form determined to a great extent by the economic activities in relation to the land distribution. So a feudal socio-economic structure was ensured in effect by the Varna Dharma ideology. The social, political and economic changes of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century were at work in bringing about the destruction of the feudal set up.

But the humanistic approach to life had brought about some visible changes in the attitude towards wealth and its use. Sri Narayana put emphasis on the development of agriculture, commerce and industry. He held material progress as a prerequisite for moral and spiritual well-being of the people²⁶⁰. Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi wanted the people to work for their material progress²⁶¹. The rationalists stood for material

260. Sri Narayana Guru, "Advaitahajeevitham" in T. Bhaskaran, ed., *Sri Narayana Guruvinte Samporna Kritikal*, Kozhikode, 1995, p. 1.

261. Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi, *Mokshapradeepam*, Alathur, 1991, p. 200. *Ananda Sutram*, Alathur, 1987, pp. 76, 107. *Anandadarsamsam*, Alathur, 1992, p. 30.

prosperity and the enjoyment of worldly life in a moderate manner. They tried to spread the ideas of socialism and communism²⁶². Economic activity was seen as a profit making venture and wealth was conceived as a means to enjoy worldly life by the novelist Appu Nedungadi²⁶³. Thus feudal norms of production, distribution and enjoyment of wealth were losing their ground.

Starting of factory based industries and large scale plantations, introduction of wage system, the establishment of banks and export oriented production in Kerala were factors to be detrimental to a feudal economy. Opportunities thus provided for investment and profit making created a congenial atmosphere for the development of a capitalist economy. But capitalism as an economic doctrine could not find a place in the intellectual world of the changing Malayali. His sympathy lay with the oppressed classes.

Thakazhi expounded the cause of the labourer. Basheer championed the cause of all the humanity including the labourer, the beggar, the woman and so on. Kesavadev proclaimed himself as a writer committed to the cause of socialism. During the forties of the twentieth century appeared a few literary works with the avowed purpose of propagating anti-feudal and socialistic ideas. The poems of Premji belonged to this category²⁶⁴. How economic set up causes poverty and social evils like

262. K. Ayyappan, "Russiyil Manusiari Jantutulyarpolum", in *Yuktivadi*, VII, No. 4, Vrishchikam, M.E. 1111, pp. 111-15. P.P. Antony, "Dhanathinte Yathartha Rupam", in P.P. Antony, *Kusumathinte Krithikal*, Kottayam, 1989 p. 127, M.P. Varkey, "Russiyile Matam", *Yuktivadi*, I, No. 11, pp.364-70.

263. Appu Nedungadi, *Kundalata*, Calicut, 1987, p. XII.

264. Premji, *Raktasandesam*, Trichur, n.d.

prostitution was highlighted by O.M. Anujan in his poem. He also demanded the abolition of *jenmi* system²⁶⁵. K. Damodaran wrote a drama with the specific purpose of propagating anti-feudal sentiments among the peasants and agricultural workers²⁶⁶. These works tried to enlighten on how human life is shaped by the production and distribution system followed in a society. An effective poetic narration of the oppression the agricultural labourers suffered at the hands of the *jenmi* was successfully achieved by Changanpuzha with a message to abolish *jenmi* system²⁶⁷.

Socialism as an ideology of the oppressed humanity had begun to influence the Malayali social mind since the second decade of the 20th century. Swadesabhimani published a biography of Karl Marx and a series of articles on *Communist Manifesto*, the development of human society and socialism²⁶⁸. Sahodaran Ayyappan had shown much zeal to publish articles on the Russian experiment with admiration and justification besides write-ups on communist ideas²⁶⁹. The news daily *Thozhilali* which started publication to propagate socialism serially published the translation of the *Capital* for many weeks²⁷⁰. The political manifestation of this trend was the organisation of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party first and later the Communist Party in Kerala.

265. O.M. Anujan, *Malayalichi*, Palakkad, 1949.

266. K. Damodaran, *Pattabakki*, (1st ed. 1952), Kottayam, 1985.

267. Changanpuzha, *Vazhakkula*, Kodungallur, 1988.

268. N.E. Balaram, *Communist Prasthanam*, I, p. 37.

269. K.A. Subramaniam, *Sahodaran Ayyappan* (biography), Ernakulam, 1973, pp. 88,99.

270. N.E. Balaram, *Communist Prasthanam*, I, p. 87.

Socialists like Ayyappan and E.M. Sankaran Namboothiripad knew well that socialism was an unattainable goal in the near future and they advocated commercial and industrial progress during the intervening period. Ayyappan advocated state ownership and control of the means of production in industrial field and state control over the distribution of wealth²⁷¹. A planned economy was held as the ideal for the Malayali by Ayyappan²⁷². V.R. Krishnan Ezhuthacchan, who served as legislator and minister in the Cochin state also had advocated a planned long term political and economic programme for the country. He believed that the state has a greater role of seeking the common weal of the society than simply fulfilling the duties of revenue collection and the maintenance of law and order²⁷³.

The governments of Travancore and Cochin did not accept any modern economic doctrine as a policy and were trying to preserve the theocratic nature of the state. But the state was undergoing a silent transformation ever since its subjection to the British. This was true economically, socially and politically. The cooperative movement was a forceful factor that contributed to such a transformation. It was in 1914 that the Travancore government passed the Cooperative Regulation with an intention to promote the values of thrift and self help among the agriculturists, artisans and persons of limited means²⁷⁴. The movement

271. *CLCP*, 29 March 1933, pp. 1316-17.

272. *CLCP*, 17 December 1931, II, pp. 384-85.

273. V.R. Krishnan Ezhuthachan, *Cochikku Oru Abhivridhi Padhati*, Calicut, 1937.

274. *Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore*, III, Trivandrum, 1922, p. 810.

soon gained spectacular progress in both the Travancore and Cochin states²⁷⁵. Cooperative societies open to all could develop a democratic sense and social unity by bringing members of different communities together. Ideologically it formed part of socialism or the concept of a welfare state economically and democracy politically.

The legislators in both the states also were not generally guided by any particular economic doctrine. But their demands and the positions taken by them on different issues reflected the ideology they stood for. Conflict of rural agrarian interests with that of the rising industrial and commercial bourgeoisie was one aspect of the legislative debates²⁷⁶. Many of them wanted the development of cottage industries and large scale industries to utilise indigenous raw materials here itself and to boost the revenue from exportation²⁷⁷. For example cultivation of tobacco and beedi leaves for industrial requirements was suggested²⁷⁸. The demand to stop the practice of assigning lands to the Europeans and the appointment of foreigners in service was frequently raised²⁷⁹. Self sufficiency, economic nationalism and favourable balance of trade were the ideas represented by the legislators through their demands and suggestions.

275. *TSMPPAP*, 25 February 1924, Trivandrum, 1924, p. 12. *Census of India (Cochin)*, XIX, Ernakulam, 1944, p. 33.

276. *TSMPPAP*, 24 February 1926, p. 60. 25 February 1927, pp. 85, 107-108.

277. *TSMPPAP*, 10 August 1935, V, Trivandrum, 1936, pp. 464-69.

278. *TSCSCP*, 10 August 1935 V Trivandrum, 1936, p. 484.

279. *TSMPPAP*, 5 March 1928, pp. 130, 131. 7 March 1927, p. 258. 6 March 1924, p. 127. 5 March 1927, p. 222.

Irrespective of caste and creed the legislators looked at the state as a patron and guardian of the people. The depressed classes wanted the government to encourage education among them by providing fee concession, free noon-meal and employment²⁸⁰. Apart from Pulayas and Parayas the various communities like Arasans, Bharatans, Catholic Arasans, Kammalas, Saliyas, Vilakkatala Nayars and Nadars were demanding the same²⁸¹. The general demand was for compulsory education for all at the primary level. The Muslims also were demanding state encouragement of education among them and especially among their female members with scholarships²⁸².

Education was taken as a serious subject that demanded the state's special attention. Majority of members wanted utility oriented education to be patronised instead of the old type meant for pedantry. To promote self awareness the inclusion of history with all optional subjects was suggested by a member²⁸³. Education was seen not only as a means to enlighten but also as one to advance material life. Most of the members spoke on the introduction and spread of vocational and technical education with a view to further the agricultural and both cottage and large scale industrial development of the country²⁸⁴. Large majority of the legislators

280. *TSMPAP*, 25 February 1926, p. 94, 3 March 1926, p. 170.

281. *TSMPAP*, 3 March 1926, pp. 126ff.

282. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

283. *TSMPAP*, 10 March 1924, pp. 161-65.

284. *TSMPAP*, 24 February, 1926, Trivandrum, 1926, pp. 89, 92. 3 March 1926, p. 178.

always stood for secular education and opposed the introduction of religious instruction in schools²⁸⁵.

In different ways state patronage of the interests of all was sought by the members. The industrial and commercial bourgeoisie was demanding the construction of new roads and the repair of the old ones to increase the means of transport and communication. Extension of railway line also was sought²⁸⁶. For the interest of the ryots too improvements in transportation were demanded²⁸⁷. Distribution of *puduvai* lands among the depressed classes to meet their unemployment was demanded²⁸⁸. The Cochin state had instituted a separate department to look after the welfare of the depressed classes²⁸⁹. State aid in the form of reduction of land tax, distribution of old age pension for agricultural labourers above the age of 60 years, loans to farmers, the institution of land mortgage banks for that purpose etc. were other demands²⁹⁰. Financial assistance in the form of loans for the improvement of trade and commerce²⁹¹, medical aid to the poor in rural areas²⁹², poor houses

285. *TSMAP*, 16 November, 1933, Trivandrum, 1935, pp. 107, 156. 8 August 1945, XXVI, p. 1120. *TSCSCP*, 23 November 1933, pp. 31, 52, 53, 58, 67.

286. *TSMAP*, 25 February 1927, pp. 79-80, 85, 89.

287. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

288. *TSMAP*, 8 March 1928, Trivandrum 1928, p. 168.

289. *Census of India 1941*, XIX, Ernakulam, 1944, p. 46.

290. *TSMAP*, 4 March 1926, Trivandrum, 1926, p. 197. 25 February 1927, Trivandrum, 1927, p. 81.

291. *TSMAP*, 25 February 1927, pp. 79-80.

292. *TSCSCP*, 12 August 1936, V, pp. 607-08.

for the infirm and destitutes²⁹³ starting of birth control clinic to enlighten the people on the need of birth control²⁹⁴ in the face of the alarming growth of population in Travancore etc. are only examples of demands aimed at the patronage and protection of the people by the state.

While the foregoing description of demands and suggestions testify to the development of political consciousness of the Malayalis, it also points to their concept of the state's role in the economic development of the people. The principle of paternalism was considered as a strong aspect of the economic policy of the state. The finding is that the ideologues and the legislators as well envisaged a self sufficient and paternalistic state which can be given the epithet welfare state for the Malayalis.

Thus the intellectual awakening of the Malayali finally led to the formation of a polity national, secular and democratic in character, a society liberal and based on individual liberty and equality and an economy aimed at the welfare of the people even though the feudal setup was not completely destroyed.

293. *TSCSCP*, 29 August 1936, VII, Trivandrum, 1937, p. 583.

294. *TSMPPAP*, 26 July 1945, XXVI, p. 280.

CONCLUSION

It was during the rule of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram, generally known as second Chera period that Kerala acquired separate political identity. It was during the same period that the linguistic identity of the people of Kerala as Malayalis also evolved. During the Sangham age, that is during the early centuries of the Christian era roughly upto 6th century A.D. it was a part of Tamilakam. Colonisation of the southern part of India by the Brahmanas had begun during this time itself. They had brought with them to this part of the country the Vedas and *Upanisads*, the Epics and the *Puranas*, *Smritis*, and legends and myths. Having become already an exclusive group in Indian population as the priestly class they had systematically developed religious and scripture based socio-political theories establishing their hegemony in society. This hegemonical class claiming purity of birth, racial superiority - all myths - over all others, scholarship in scriptures, and divinity secured a privileged position in society from the rulers of the country. They secured lands for themselves and their temples from them. Thus they were placed at the top of the society with social and economic superiority. Through the practice of divination and performance of sacrifice for the well-being of the king and the kingdom they were able to assert command over the king. Being priests by profession they encouraged religious rituals and sacrifices, and inculcated superstitions and pseudo spiritualism to amass and secure power and fame.

By using the theory of varna of divine origin the Brahmanas had hijacked the lofty ideals of the *Srutis* and placed them in the attic. With claim of superiority for themselves, their very presence created a hierarchy in society. By denying knowledge of Vedas to all others and pretending to be divine they secured the psychic surrender of all others and kept them mentally and intellectually slaves. They created the myth that the universe exists because of gods and gods exist on the offerings given by the Brahmanas and that they alone are qualified to perform the propitiatory ceremonies. The religious texts of Vedas - the scriptural status of the Vedas also is a false claim of the Brahmanas as the priestly class-were made inaccessible to the non-Brahmanas by intellectual manipulation. With manipulative skill of priestcraft the Brahmanas misconstrued the sacred texts or interpolated them. The best example is the varna theory interpolated in the *Rg Veda*. They discouraged *jnanakanda* leading to liberation through the light of knowledge and popularised *karmakanda* of rituals, sacrifices and ceremonies to keep the human mind in darkness by making the believers believe that the physical world could be conquered by them. To subjugate the human world they formulated the Varna Dharma as an ethical, social, economic and political theory. The *karmakanda* theory did not serve its avowed purpose but helped to strengthen the second which worked well. Both *karmakanda* and Varna Dharma thus constituted an ideology through which the priestly class of Brahmanas attained the hegemonical position in Kerala. Sangham age witnessed the beginning of its process.

Sangham society was not a caste-oriented hierarchically organised one in the Varna Dharma sense. There were castes as professional groups without ritualistic status of discrimination. Professional caste did not annihilate the bond of fraternity and suppress individual liberty. Professional caste was not based on a pure-impure concept. The very presence of the Brahmanas introduced that concept. The Sangham society was not a sectarian society. Gender discriminations and the practice of untouchability and unapproachability did not exist. The celebrated poetess Auvaiyar was the product of the Sangham society. Sangham society was not one of birth status. Sangham literature did not expound any abstruse philosophy or theology. It represented the desires and aspirations of a rural folk. It is purely secular in character. The Brahmanas subjugated the free and simple minded people of the Sangham society by applying priestcraft mixed with ambiguous theological doctrines. The pagan mind was vitiated by the Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology. The indigenous creative geniuses did not accept the Brahmanical injunctions and interpretations. They protested against and questioned their ideology of social discrimination and *karmakanda*. They imbibed the essence of the Vedas and *Upanisads*. First Thiruvalluvar and later the Saivite saints preached universal brotherhood based on love and compassion for all beings and the unity of godhead. They denounced *karmakanda* for salvation and decried the status of brahmanahood by birth. Against that background Sankara preached *karmakanda* for the intellectually inferior and denied Vedic knowledge

to the Sudras. The protest of the indigenous pagan genius was a cry in the wilderness and *karmakanda* triumphed. Priestcraft ruled the social mind.

Till the disintegration of the Kulasekhara kingdom in the 12th century a full-fledged feudal set up did not develop in Kerala. The embryonic stage of such a development existed in the Sangham society. Land grants to the Brahmanas and their temples formed the nucleus of it. Conditions of the post-Chera period were germinative of a feudal set up upon which the hegemony of Brahmanas was completed with their acquisition of power of control over the means of production besides religious and political power. And a feudal civilization nourished by the ideology of Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* flourished in Kerala since the 12th century A.D. A hierarchically organised social structure with caste / class divisions, and governing power distributed among the king, landlords and caste councils, was an essential feature of this civilization. Sovereignty was not vested with any particular person or body but the Brahmanical theology with emphasis on Varna Dharma ruled the social mind and the political regime. It had an octopus hold on almost all activities and institutions of the society. Creativity found expression in literary activities, folk arts and the audio visual performance of *kathakali* and *tullal*. The main themes of the literature produced from 12th century to 19th century A.D. were eroticism and *bhakti* or devotion. The former is secular and humanistic while the latter is spiritual and superstitious in nature. Both can be characterised as romantic. One is concerned with

the basic level natural enjoyment of the animal and the other with eternal bliss in the unknown supernatural world. Neither of them adds to the betterment of individual or social life by mastering the environment or to help the elevation of man from the level of an ordinary animal to a consciously living animal. Brahmanical theology always suppressed the furtherance of self knowledge and the betterment of human life, and themes orienting towards that purpose could not be expected to develop in a world hegemonised by Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology. Eroticism and *bhakti* are palliative and stimulating to emotions but not to reason. Neither social nor environmental problems made any appeal to the writers. Creativity that leads man to progress remained rather at the lowest ebb. The notable historical change from the Sangham age to the 19th century was the rise of the Brahmanas to hegemonical position while morally and materially the Malayali society was stagnant. The capabilities of man to understand life in this world and the physical environment remained undeveloped. In the absence of managerial capability man turned to the other world concept as he was not satisfied with eroticism. Caste division with its monstrous characteristics of untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability was solidified during this period. Irrationalism, superstitions, social and political discrimination, clannishness, defeatism, cynicism, purity-pollution concept and exclusivity were the ideas embedded in the Malayali mindset. Since casteism and clannishness dubbed together, Malayalis formed a tribal like society in which the Brahmanas occupied a supertribe's rank. Usually among the monkey species as social groups the dominant male

members impose their lordship over the weaker members of the group. Though they are despotic in their leadership they are most active in the defence of the group on external threat. They forget their internal squabbles and cooperate to meet the challenge together, while competitive in normal times within the group¹. Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology helped the super tribe Brahmanas to occupy a dominant position in society without shouldering the duty to cooperate with the lower categories it created. Even within the community the core group of *vaidikans* exercised tyrannical powers over the subordinate members of women and junior males. The cooperation/competition pendulum that works even in a monkey social group was dead in the Malayali society. On the contrary monopoly of power and hegemony of the core group was maintained. The core group and the subordinate members were not serving the society in any positive manner. The people formed the subjects and remained a mob or crowd. A socio-economic and political set up controlled by the *vaidikans* never allowed the development of a civil society and civil state. Native Hindu rulers occupied a subservient position to the Brahmanas and strictly adhered to their injunctions. Only a change of rulers or an economic revolution could have brought about a change in that situation. The Varna Dharma ideology and its upholders kept man ignorant of his capabilities and thereby impotent. The Brahmanas showed no compassion for the fellow beings. In fact others were not considered as fellow beings. They never

1. Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape Trilogy*, London, 1994 pp. 181-82.

sought interaction with the subordinate social groups and the core group of *vaidikans* never did so with the subordinate members of the community. Being a blend of ritualism and ceremonialism *karmakanda* ideology could never imbibe or impart the meaning of Vedas. For the Brahmanas learning of Vedas meant learning them byheart to recite without knowing the meaning. It was stricture that none other than the Brahmanas should seek the meaning of the Vedas. Intelligence was not expected to work. So inquiry was not a problem. Intellect thus remained rusty.

While the establishment was perpetuated by the *vaidikans*, humanists and rationalists seldom dared to mention the universalism and humanism of the Vedas and Upanisads. The philosophy of Advaita shimmered in the legends without illuminating the social landscape. The humanistic tradition of the *The Kural* never disappeared. Legends and folk songs kept them alive.

People remained as the subjects of monarchs and feudal chieftains who took waging wars of conquest among themselves as a main responsibility and a mark of prestige. Governance meant the preservation of the status quo intact. Revenue collection was an important function of the state. Maintenance of law and order and the administration of justice were not the exclusive functions of the state. They were the responsibilities of the caste councils. Each caste was a subordinate social unit with its own caste rules and customs based on religious belief. This meant restriction to political sovereignty. Nair *taras* held a predominant

role in the maintenance of law and order and the strict observance of caste rules in intercaste relations. An organised judiciary and written code of laws were absent. In the administration of justice blood feuds based on the dictum of an eye for an eye were commonly followed. Trial by ordeal was another form. Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology failed to provide a civilized polity and society for the Malayalis. But it succeeded in preserving a primitive form of life for them.

Philosophy deteriorated into mysticism, cynicism and escapism. Escape from the bewildering momentary world to a world of eternal bliss, hatred for worldly life and attaining enlightenment through *bhakti* were the chief characteristics of such a philosophy advocated by the poetic trio of Ezhuthacchan, Poonthanam and Melpathur. They could not free themselves from the Varna consciousness and they gave a false construction to the *Brahman* concept. Soul was taken as a substance incessantly moving from one physical form to another and its communion with God was taken as liberation and the goal of human life, and the end of a circle of births and deaths in this world. A succession of the soul from body to body was attached to Varna concept based on purity-pollution discrimination. So the *bhakti* poets too were in the clutches of Brahmanical theology. Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* ideology acted as a detrimental force to the creative intelligence of man and made him intellectually emasculated. Its ideologues failed to understand the working of dynamic forces of human life and infuse dynamism into human thought and action. It succeeded only in keeping human beings at the level of animals.

It was against this backdrop that the westerners motivated by economic and religious interests came to this land. Ultimately this led to the occupation of the country by the British. The new political masters and the Christian missionaries supplied new ideas that could shed the rust of the indigenous intellect but without subjugating it entirely. The works of the missionaries and the freedom of thought and knowledge granted by the new colonial masters created an atmosphere congenial to the awakening of self consciousness, the sign of modernity, among the natives especially the hitherto marginalised and suppressed groups.

From this atmosphere emerged the spiritual leaders namely Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana and Brahmanandaswami Sivayogi who laid the foundations of modernity in Kerala. While Chattampi Swamikal and Sivayogi were attempting a rereading of the Hindu religion based on the authority of Indian philosophical tradition and religious literature they were rationally criticising and refuting the ideology of Varna Dharma as a concocted religious concept of the priestly class of Brahmanas. Theirs is mainly a destructive criticism of the theological concepts of the Brahmanas. Both of them upheld reason as the final authority in matters of belief. Chattampi Swamikal's critique of the Vedas and Christian faith was based on reason alone. He could not accept any irrational faith as a substitute for another and it was for this reason that he showed intolerance towards the missionaries for preaching against Hindu tradition. He criticised the irrational elements of Christian theology while holding Jesus and his moral teachings in high esteem. Sivayogi wanted the Hindus to discard all irrational practices in the name

of religion. He vehemently criticised the caste concept since it has no rational or biological basis. He saw reason as the main reason for the material and moral progress of the westerners and wanted the Hindus to live rationally. He let loose an uncompromising attack on the *Karmakanda* concept for these reasons.

Sri Narayana reconstructed the Advaita philosophy as a moral and ethical foundation of human life without criticising or refuting any theological beliefs or systems. He put man above religion or ideology and was attempting to better him. To him man is a part of his society and his life becomes meaningful when he lives usefully for himself and the society. So every action of the individual is to be guided by this value consciousness arising out of compassion. That is the sign of wisdom while ignorance manifests itself in selfishness. Without negating the ethos of the Hindu population Sri Narayana was trying to give a new orientation to Hindu social life. On the premise of a spiritual or idealistic philosophy he provided a secular and rational vision for a morally and materially advanced life for man the social being. He defined *bhakti* as the conscious adherence to the creative intelligence or consciousness in man which is the same world intelligence or consciousness by transcending the barriers between the individual and the society socially and enrich human life in this world itself. What he advocates is a rational and planned life for the individual and the society as well.

None of these spiritual leaders saw conversion to any other faith as a solution to the great problems of their times arising from Brahmanical hegemony. None of them advocated westernisation for the regeneration

of the society. But their ideas and ideals revived from the indigenous tradition were in tune with those imported through western education and Protestantism. So no conflict with Christianity or any other religion was necessitated. Theirs was a search for values acceptable to reason and not faith. They discovered them in Indian philosophy and tradition. They were preaching the ideas of universal brotherhood, equality and liberty which were the basic ideas of the two major religions of Christianity and Islam which got a wide following in Kerala. They were secular in outlook and tolerant towards other faiths. While Sri Narayana consecrated temples, that too was in a rational way. None of them advocated *karmakanda* for worldly or spiritual benefits.

The rationalists who were inspired by the western rationalists also discovered a comfortable ideological platform in the indigenous tradition in their search for values to enrich human life in this world. The Buddhist teachings and the ideas of Sri Narayana catered to their needs. They too were not advocating western ways as a means to deliverance. They accepted the moral teachings of religions essential for socialising man while denouncing the priestly class and priestly dominated religions, and romantic spiritualism as irrational and reactionary.

The litterateurs were reflecting on human life in its entirety. Advaita, Buddhism and Socialism are the ideologies that inspired them. They saw momentariness as the characteristic of the world and not as a frightening phenomena wherefrom an escape is to be sought to the other world. They were trying to make man conscious of this reality and the

need to mould his life in tune with it. All of them saw human life as a creation of human beings and advocated values necessary for enriching it. They did not negate the need of religion but opposed the priestly class and their dogmatism and oppression in the name of religion. Their primary purpose was to make man aware of himself and refute the caste-ridden feudal set up and values of discriminatory nature. Writers and critics as well reached a state of critically evaluating themselves and their role within a short span of half a century signalling the spectacular growth of Malayali mind which proved receptive to modern ideas. None of them was trying to exhibit pedantry in western literary concepts or to introduce undigested theories of western writers or thinkers in an abstrusive manner. They were not for simply aping the westerners. They did not require it as they were not suffering from poverty of ideas or problems. They were really inspired by the great mission of the writer to contribute, as value sector, to the progress of human life and to advocate social, economic and political reforms. While most of the writers were inspired and influenced by western literature they did not blindly imitate the western writers or plagiarise their themes but used their insight imbibed from them to analyse the problem of their own society. All of them without exception were concerned with the problems of their times and represented them in a simple, realistic and secular way. Basic problems of human life dominated their themes. They drew a promising picture of human life and devoted their pen to enlightening the people on bettering human life on this earth.

During the period under review the greatest problem in Kerala was caste. For all the discriminations in society were generated by it as a social institution of ritualistic character. It was the barrier to the general progress of the society. As an institution dehumanising man it was a challenge to humanity and human consciousness. So to humanise man and to socialise him man had to fight against it, which meant a struggle for the rights of man and citizen denied by caste identity. The political regimes in Travancore and Cochin states granted or denied rights and opportunities to people on the basis of caste identity. The ideological basis of the caste system was Varna Dharma and the native states were upholders of that ideology. With the change of political masters and new economic developments caste posed problems of a social, political and economic nature. They were also both sectarian and general. The main problem of the lower strata of society was the denial of civic and human rights. They were of a general character. Because of the solid caste identity of man and lack of social mobility mobilisation of people on a general basis or class basis to seek solutions to such problems was not possible. No political party of general character could have given effective leadership to a struggle for the fundamental rights of man because of the caste identity and the hierarchical division of castes. In other words no political party could have initiated a venture to forge unity of castes as a primary requirement for a political movement aimed at the attainment of human rights for all in the absence of caste equality. Problems of sectarian nature posed within the caste could not have been taken up as issues demanding political solution by political parties. So

the formation of caste/communal organisations was necessitated by the demands of the time. In fact Varna Dharma ideology was responsible for that. But the leaders and legislators who championed the cause of man with caste identity often rose above sectarianism. They were in actuality fighting against practices and institutions that perpetuated caste identity and the denial of civic rights. They never failed to display utmost tolerance and respect for others. Theirs was a great political struggle whether in Travancore or Cochin though of a caste/communal character for the cause of liberty, equality and fraternity without shedding a single drop of blood. It was also a struggle for the reform of caste/community from within. It was in fact a great revolutionary movement of a peaceful nature to secure citizenship and fundamental rights to man as part of a civic state, social freedom and equality and the reform of the feudal economy with government assuming responsibility for the welfare of the people, and one that was leading the Malayalis towards a new social formation and polity of a democratic character and an economy of a welfare state.

From the foregoing narration one can easily understand that the Malayali society was undergoing a moulting process. The Malayali was moving from subjective assessment of the world to an objective one, from illusion to reality, from God to self i.e., self-awareness, from fatalism to the concept of man as his own destiny maker, from seeking salvation in the other world to betterment of life in this world, from defeatism to confidence in man's efforts, from emotionalism to rationalism, from superstition to enquiry, from subconsciousness to consciousness, from

supernatural world to the humanistic world, from fascism to democracy, from discrimination to equality, from suppression to liberation, from sectarianism to brotherhood, from heterogeneity to homogeneity, from divisiveness to national consciousness, from exclusiveness to inclusiveness, from birth status to individual capability, from particularism to universalism and from the state of subject to citizen of a civil society and civic state. All these changes appear to represent a transition from a somewhat primitive state to modernity.

The explanation structured in the four chapters following the first one is independent of any theory. So the findings are not intended to put in any borrowed frame work. That does not mean that the observer has no standpoint. As claimed in the preface of this work the observation is made to detect the process of transition from tradition to modernity. Transition occurs to the self in its every aspect. It is not compartmentalised and it cannot be. The past is always present in the present and tradition and modernity are not juxtaposed. What is called tradition is present in modernity but it is overshadowed by what is modern. The self is there in transition meaning the change in the form and content of that self. To illustrate, the instance of caste is the best. Caste consciousness was there and it has not disappeared in the transitional period. But yesterday's caste and today's caste are different. Something of the caste vanished while something new emerged. What changed is the characteristics of caste and the approach to it. Caste consciousness which forms an essential part of Malayali self changed in content and form. To rely on theories produced by the western mind to

explain a change of this kind seems quite paradoxical. Western theories are based on western experiences. To apply such theories in toto to other experiences is irrational and what is rational is to accept what is common in the west and the area of study and that has been done in answering the question posed above.

Two well known sociologists, Max Weber and Talcott Parsons, of the West have explained what is modernity. No attempt is made here to blindly apply their formulations on modernity totally on the process of change explained in the foregoing chapters. To the extent that their observations help to understand the change in perspective their standpoint is accepted. What is common in their observation applicable to historical change in the particular society of Kerala has been accepted. To them particularism in relationships, birth status or 'ascription' as the criterion for holding job or an office, feelings or 'affectivity' governing relationships, diffuseness in roles, a low level of division of labour, dependence on agriculture, low rates of growth of production, largely local net works of exchange and restricted administrative competence are the features of a traditional society². The medieval Kerala society exhibited almost all these features. Opposites to all the characteristics mentioned are treated as modern. They are universalism, capability of achievement, neutrality or objectivity, role specificity, high level of speculation, development of commerce and industry, high rates of growth

2. Colin Leys, "Samuel Huntington and The End of Classical Modernization Theory" in Hamza Alavi and Theodore Shanin, ed., *Introduction to the Sociology of Developing Societies*, London, 1982, p. 333.

or production, wider networks of exchange and advanced administrative competence³. Rational conduct⁴ and an estateless individualistic and impersonal mass society⁵ are also held as the features of a modern culture by Weber. Impersonal or commercial relations in the relations of labour and governance⁶ also is taken as an attribute of modern civilization.

The salient characteristics (Operational values) of modernity agreed upon with conceptual and terminological differences of more or less importance by social scientists are the following : 1) A degree of self sustaining growth in the economy - or at least growth sufficient to increase both production and consumption regularly ; 2) a measure of public participation in the polity - or at least democratic representation in defining and choosing policy alternatives; 3) a diffusion of secular-rational norms in the culture - understood approximately in Weberian - Parsonian terms; 4) an increment of nobility in the society - understood as personal freedom of physical, social and psychic movement; and 5) a corresponding transformation in the model personality that equips individuals to function effectively in social order that operates according to the characteristics explained above⁷.

The foregoing description of modernity is of western scholars who experienced modernity through their observation of the Eurocentric

3. Ibid., p. 333.

4. William Hennis, *Max Weber Essays In Reconstruction*, London, 1988, p.27.

5. Ibid., p. 64.

6. Ibid., p. 65.

7. David L. Sills, ed., *International Encyclopaedia of The Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, Macmillan, 1968, p. 387.

developments. Modernity in the west as they saw it had its development since the Renaissance starting with 1300 A.D. That means modernisation of the west as the scholars observed was the result of six centuries by the beginning of the 20th century. So to assess the developments in Malayali society during a period of one century on the basis of explanation given by the western scholars in modernity would be quite presumptuous. The explanation given in this work is not based on the theoretical standpoint given by the western scholars. It is only an historical explanation without any theoretical reinforcement. But it seems quite interesting to take an over-all view of the developments through the theoretical perspective presented by those scholars to reach a conclusion since the developments took place in a colonial context in which a modern advanced civilization predominated over a medieval civilization dominated by primitive characteristics and marked a spectacular and unbelievable attitudinal change.

The process of transformation, mental and material, the Malayali society underwent was not at all westernization or its product. None of the ideologues or intellectuals in Kerala was an Anglicised native product. The Malayali mind that showed the calibre to assimilate and adapt was so creative that it drew its strength mainly from the native heritage without being succumbed to what is western. There is no denial of the fact that western education, literature, liberal democracy of the colonial masters and Protestantism greatly contributed to the value consciousness of the Malayalis. The services rendered by the missionaries of Basel Evangelical Mission, London Mission Society and the Church Mission Society in

bringing about a moral, mental and social awakening and the linguistic and material progress as has already been pointed out were great in shaping the process of modernity in Kerala. But the values sought by the Malayalis profusely came from the indigenous ideologies of Advaita and Buddhism. The view that the latter was an offshoot of the former as propounded by the Upanisads is to be well remembered here. They were not devoid of even the idea of economic equality exclusively known as socialism or communism. They embodied the values of liberty, equality and fraternity and the ideas of rationalism and secularism all required for a change from the attitude moulded by Varna Dharma and *Karmakanda* and their manifestations. The core of the great transformation of the Malayali society was the attitudinal change effected by these two ideologies aided by Protestantism, Islam, liberal democracy and socialism of Marxian and non-Marxian version. This attitudinal change can be explained as the great liberation from the purity-pollution concept the source of all discriminations and the contempt for women that generated gender inequality as instances.

Socially this liberation meant the Hinduisation of the non-caste Hindus, caste consolidation by eliminating subdivisions, consolidation of subordinate social units and the attainment of equality of faiths and gender equality. The hierarchical division of Hindu population changed into a horizontal division and thereby all subordinate social units got an equal position in the polity. Ritualistic status of caste suffered a set back though it was not completely wiped out. The feudal values of mutual obligations lost relevance and an impersonal relation between the employer

and worker and the ruler and ruled began to develop. Other faiths came to be treated on a par with Hinduism. Women were granted equality with men and thus were emancipated from so many oppressive restrictions. All these led to the emergence of a homogeneous/inclusive society of the Malayalis though the process was not yet complete.

Economically stigmatization of callings lost relevance and anybody endowed with qualities of initiative and enterprise could engage in different pursuits. Commercial and industrial pursuits became attractive even to the Brahmanas who were formerly restrained from such pursuits. Taboos became riddles. Irrespective of caste and creed people were yearning for commercial and industrial progress along with agriculture and were seeking a great role for the state in bringing about a planned and advancing economy.

Politically the people were moving from the state of subjects to a civil society and the state from a theocratic and oligarchic nature to a civil state. The process of social homogeneity prepared the way for the rise of a linguistic national state. Privileges and monopolies along with aristocracy were disappearing and the principle of equality of opportunity and rights ensured the participation of the masses in governance. Individuals irrespective of their caste and creed were now subordinated to one entity, the state, with a share in power.

Ideology was not a ladder to power but a dynamic of change and progress for the leaders and writers. It was a goal that acted as a guiding force. They thought objectively and ideology assumed a functional role

the society required. It was not being evolved from a dialectical process of strife. Already existing ideologies were being raised to the status of a goal in the struggle against the deterministic and mechanistic ideology of Brahmanical theology namely Varna Dharma *Karmakanda* that was in operation in all realms of life and to which Malayali was enslaved resulting in superstitions and retarded state of society. It was not actually the ideology that mattered but values. Ideologies enshrining values of liberation of man from dormancy and unconsciousness of time, change and reality became catalytic in modernising the Malayali. Among them Advaita and Buddhism found greater acceptance with the Hindu population which were innocuous and unassailable to non-Hindu population. The strong bond of the innocuous ethos that never conflicted with the values sought for and their universalism might be the reason for their appeal.

The new values sought were to change man's attitude towards his relation with fellow-men and the environment. New values meant new structuralisation of mind or attitude and it meant changes in the structure of family, society, economy and polity. The new ideologies demanded changes in social, economic and political structures. Thus the attitudinal change meant the structural transformation of Malayali life.

A total destruction of the tradition was not sought by the new ideologues and they never advocated violence as a means to achieve their goals. They were constructive and positive in their approach to the problems of their day. Nihilism or cynicism was not in the air. The institution of the legislature in both the native states seems to be one reason for it. Whatever defects were there in the functioning of the

legislature it acted as a safety valve to the accumulated and suppressed rancour of the oppressed which would otherwise have led to a communal holocaust and violence. The awareness of the erstwhile master class since the ideologies of Advaita and Buddhism were part of the cultural heritage common to them and their subjects, also contributed to the peaceful nature of the transformation. Over a period of three scores of years since the consecration of the 'Izhava Siva' by Sri Narayana the struggle for liberation went on in a peaceful, constitutional and gradual manner for the attainment of liberty, equality and fraternity of all based on secularism and rationalism. The indigenous ideologies themselves acted as the source of all these ideas. For the marginalised groups it was a freedom struggle socially, economically and politically against the internal masters. The bourgeoisie of negligible significance and the large number of commoners joined hands in that struggle as the ritual status under-weighed their class status. That freedom movement cannot be under-estimated as caste politics. It was a great struggle of the marginalised groups for liberation from the oppressive ritualistic and feudal values under-pinned and sustained by Brahmanical theology. It was in fact a struggle against the hegemony of the *vaidikans* and its defenders the Hindu monarchs. So the caste Hindus, the lord's class, also had to join the struggle. The entire society of the Hindus from Brahmanas to Pariahs and the non-Hindus was involved in that struggle. This fact added to the greater magnitude of the struggle. It was a peaceful revolution of the Malayali from tradition to modernity. Like all revolutions it failed to achieve complete elimination of tradition. Some elements of

tradition antagonistic to modernity like caste loyalty and religious loyalty in a changed manner as a by-product of that revolution still survived.

Yet the struggle was leading the Malayali society to modernity bearing almost all the characteristics ascribed to it by Weber and Parson and as summed up in the *International Encyclopaedia of The Social Sciences*. The magnitude of the movement towards modernity in Kerala is wider than that of the western world in the light of the fact that it was almost a primitive mind that was moving towards modernity within a short period of hundred years without having a background of commercial and industrial revolutions. This was made possible on the indigenous ideologies that conscientized the people on the awareness of the self and the cognition of the objective realities of this world with a humanistic touch that restrained extreme individualism. Self awareness means here the liberation from the external world, the supernatural world, dogmatism, slavishness to ideology and the concept of high and low based on purity - impurity consciousness on one side and the assertion of the self over external world, to allow creativity to burgeon. That means to make man rational and creative to create himself without denouncing his emotive aspirations. Modernisation is an eternal process that elevates man further and further from his animal character and that makes him more and more consciously dependent on his own creativity. The Malayali entered upon this process during the period under review and he came off to the stage of history.

GLOSSARY

Adharma	-	Unrighteousness
Adhyāpan	-	Teaching the Vedas
Adhyayana	-	Learning Vedas repeatedly
Ānanda	-	Bliss
Ānanda Mata	-	Religion of bliss
Anantharavan	-	A nephew and descendent in the matrilineal family.
Anchal	-	Postal department
Antharāljatis	-	People who occupy an intermediate position in the scale of Malabar castes.
Apphan	-	Younger son of a Brahmana couple.
Ārāt	-	An important ceremony of taking the image of the deity on procession to bathe on the last day of temple festival.
Aramana	-	The house of a lord.
Ashtangamarga	-	The eightfold path of the Buddha.
Avarna	-	A Hindu outside the varna fold.

Bhadradipam	- An important religious ceremony started during the time of Marthanda Varma and performed twice in a year in the Sri Padmanabha temple.
Bhagavati	- Goddess - Female deity.
Bhakti	- Devotion to god.
Bhāna	- Conditional mode or luminescence of the Brahman.
Brahmajnāna	- Knowledge of the Brahman.
Brahman	- The impersonal spirit, that is the ultimate truth or the final cause of the universe, absolute and eternal.
Chāttupattukal	- Songs to protect the god from evil eye.
Chekon	- A Thiyya martial artist or soldier.
Cherumapad	- The distance a Cheruman had to keep away from a Nair.
Cit	- The form of the universe.
Devabhāsha	- Sanskrit, the language of the earthly god Brahmana.
Devadāsi	- A woman dedicated to temple service.

Dharma	- Righteousness. Duty. Law.
Dvija	- The twice born.
Gandharva	- Celestial musician. A sort of semi god.
Gosha	- Pardah
Hiranyagarbha	- A religious ceremony of the king entering into a golden cow or lotus shaped golden vessel and exiting accompanied by the chanting of Vedic hymns, performed by the Travancore kings as a preliminary to coronation.
Jenmi	- Sole owner of the land who is normally exempted from payment of tax to the government.
Jnānabhumi	- Land of knowledge
Jnānakānda	- That portion of the Veda which relates to the knowledge of the spirit.
Jnānin	- One who has attained the knowledge of the spirit or light.
Kaccam	- Code of law or conduct.

Kaliyuga	- The fourth age in which Varna Dharma is ruined according to the Hindu concept of time.
Kandukrishi	- Crown land.
Kannuttupāttu	- Singing song to propitiate gods for protection from evil eye and accidents.
Kāranavan	- The male head of a matrilineal joint family of the Hindus.
Karma	- Religious ceremony. Duty. Action.
Karmabhumi	- Land of sacrifices and rituals.
Karmakānda	- That part of the Sruti which relates to ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites.
Kathakali	- An audio-visual dramatic performance by actors who stage a story through facial expression and signs.
Kudipaka	- Blood feud.
Kudiyān	- Tenant.
Kurippukal	- Notes.
Kulaguru	- The guru of a family.

Kuruti	- A religious ritual of sacrificing fowls or goats and offering blood to propitiate god.
Māhātmyam	- Glory or greatness.
Manas	- Mind
Mandala	- Division or book of the Rg Veda.
Manojaya	- Mind triumphing over mind.
Manolaya	- Mind absorbing mind.
Mantravātam	- Science of sorcery
Maryāda	- Moral value.
Māya	- Illusion.
Melchārthu	- Deed of lease over and above a previous tenant.
Mlechcha	- Barbarian. Non-Hindu.
Moksha	- Salvation
Moosamboori	- The eldest son of a Brahmana couple.
Muni	- Recluse. Hermit
Nāduvāzhi	- Chieftain of a small principality.
Nālu Tali	- Four councils of the Brahmanas.
Namboothirimatam	- Hinduism as interpreted by the Brahmanas.

Nāvettupattu	- Song to protect the child from evil eye.
Nityachilavu	- Department of ways and means.
Pakuticutcheri	- Village office
Panchaseela	- The five principles of Buddhism.
Parivakai	- Cavalry
Perumal	- God. The title of the Chera ruler. One who was selected as ruler for 12 years by the Brahmanas in Kerala.
Phalithangal	- Jokes.
Pranavam	- The vital force in the universe. Brahman.
Prathigraha	- Giving gifts.
Pula	- Pollution caused by the death of a relative.
Purusha Sukta	- That section of the Rg Veda which describes the Supreme Soul of the universe. R.V. X-90.
Rekshapurushan	- One who was selected as ruler by the Brahmanas in Kerala.
Sabha	- Association.

Sadangās	- The principal limbs or work auxiliary to the Vedas.
Sāmanta	- Chieftain of a principality.
Samāvarthanam	- The return of a Brahmana boy to his own house at the age of eleven after completing his studies in the house of the guru.
Sambandham	- The marital relation of the younger son of a Brahmana couple with a Nair woman without any obligation of a husband or father.
Sanghabalipāttu	- The ritualistic song of the Brahmanas on auspicious occasions.
Sanketam	- Holy precincts of a temple considered inviolable.
Sāstra	- An order, command, precept, rule etc.
Sati	- The custom of a Hindu woman committing self immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband.
Savarna	- One belonging to any of the four varnas of the Hindus.
Sat	- Content of the universe.

Satkarmi	- A Brahmana who performs the sacred duties of his varna.
Satram	- An inn
Smārthavichāram	- Trial of a Brahmana woman accused of adultery.
Smriti	- The whole body of codes of law as handed down memorized or by tradition. Traditional precepts or legal texts.
Srāddham	- An oblation to the manes of deceased persons.
Swaroopam	- Kingdom or principality ruled by a dynastic family.
Tālikettu Kalyānam	- A ritualistic marriage ceremony of tying the wedding ornament round the neck of a girl by a boy.
Tapas	- Penance.
Tarwad	- A Hindu matrilineal joint family.
Thampuram	- Master
Thiyyapād	- The distance a Thiyya had to keep away from a Nair.
Thottampādi Poojikkuka	- Worship by singing hymns of praise.

Tirumādampu	- The ceremony of wearing the holy thread by the king.
Trivarnikan	- Member of the first three varnas. The twice born.
Tullal	- An audio-visual art performance which was very popular in Kerala.
Turiya	- Transcendental condition.
Uliyam	- Compulsory free service to the government.
Upanayanam	- Investing with the Brahmanical thread.
Vairagya	- Detachment
Varnāsrāma	- The dharma of the varna and the four stages to be followed in life.
Viruthi	- Land granted rent and fee free. A fief.
Yāga	- Sacrifice
Yajana	- Offering sacrifice.
Yājana	- Conducting sacrifices for others.
Yoga	- The subjection of mind to mind.

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