WOMEN IN COLONIAL MALABAR

THESIS SUBMITTED TO SREE SANKARACHARYA UNIVERSITY OF SANSKRIT, KALADY FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

SAVITHA.K

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
SREE SANKARACHARYA UNIVERSITY OF SANSKRIT
KALADY, 683574
2009

Dr. M.T NARAYANAN
READER IN HISTORY
SREE SANKARACHARYA UNIVERSITY OF SANSKRIT
KALADY

CERTIFICATE

This to certify that the thesis entitled, **WOMEN IN COLONIAL MALABAR** submitted by Savitha.K, Research Scholar in the Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady is a record of bonafide research carried out by her under my supervision. It either has not in part or as a whole previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree or Diploma.

Dr. M. T.NARAYANAN
Supervising Teacher

Department of History
Dt.
S. S. U. S; Kalady

DECLARATION

I, Savitha. K, Research Scholar, for the Ph.D. Degree of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, hereby declare that the thesis **WOMEN IN COLONIAL MALABAR** submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History is my original research work. I further declare that this thesis has not been submitted to any University or academic body for the award of any Degree or Diploma.

Savitha. K

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I express my sincere thanks to my supervising teacher Dr. M.T. Narayanan for extending every possible help to do research on this topic. Without his affection and moral support it would not have been possible for me to complete this work.

I am very thankful to Dr. S. Sivadasan, Professor and Head, Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady. He has helped me a lot to carry on my research work. I owe a special debt to Prof .S. Ramachandran Nair, former Head of the Department, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Sri. Jaiprakash Raghaviah, Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR, New Delhi, Dr. Manjula Poyil, Dr.Sreevidya.V and Smt.Usha.C.K, they inspired me to indulge in research activity. I am also indebted to my teachers, Dr. K. M. Sheeba, Dr. J. Omana, and Ani Tresa Ephrem for their constant support and encouragement.

I am grateful to the Librarians and staff of Directorate of State Archives Thiruvananthapuram, Regional Archives of Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulum, Kozhikode, Kerala History Association Library, Ernakulam, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala University Library Thiruvananthapuram,

Calicut University Library, Kozhikode, Kerala Council for Historical Research Library, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Thrissur and Appan Thampuran Smaraka Library, Thrissur for providing me every facility to do my research.

I put across my gratitude to all my friends who were always ready to help me to carry on with the research. I would like to express my sincere gratefulness to P.T. Thomas of Padasala, Alakode and Sadhu for the moral support given to me at every stage of the work. Jinimon, my companion both in research and in life has been a constant inspiration throughout my research.

I express my sincere thanks to Avenue Graphics, Alakode for typing the dissertation with patience.

SAVITHA.K

CONTENTS

		Page No
	ACKNOWLEDGMENT	i - ii
	INTRODUCTION	1 – 24
CHAPTER I	SOCIETY IN PRE-BRITISH MALABAR	25 - 58
CHAPTER II	CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH POWER IN MALABAR	59- 97
CHAPTER III	MODERN EDUCATION AND WOMEN	98- 136
CHAPTER IV	THE SOCIO- ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION	137 - 171
CHAPTER V	ANTI - COLONIAL MOVEMENT AND WOMEN	172 - 223
	CONCLUSION	225 – 245
	GLOSSARY	246– 252
	SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	253 – 277

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKCC	:	All Kerala Catholic Congress
AICC	:	All India Congress Committee
AICSP	:	All India Congress Socialist Party
CPI	:	Communist Party of India
CSP	:	Congress Socialist Party
ERGST	:	English Records Government Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram.
ICHR	:	Indian Council of Historical Research
INC	:	Indian National Congress
JKS	:	Journal of Kerala Studies
JVPC	:	Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Pattel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya Committee
KCSP	:	Kerala Congress Socialist Party
KPCC	:	Kerala Provincial Congress Committee
KPMS	:	Kerala Pulaya Maha Sabha
KSA	:	Kerala State Archives,
ME/KE	:	Malabar Era, Kollam Era

NAI	:	National Archives of India
NSS	:	Nair Service Society
RAE	:	Regional Archives, Ernakulam
RAK	:	Regional Archives, Kozhikode
SJPS	:	Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam
SNDP	:	Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam
TSA	:	Tamilnadu State Archives, Egmore
TTNC	:	Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress
YKS	:	Yoga Kshema Sabha

INTRODUCTION

Women studies have emerged as an important area of research in humanities and social sciences since the last decade of the twentieth century in Kerala. The developments in theoretical and methodological approaches and a new generation of disciplines including women studies have come to the forefront of academic researches. They come under a prominent historical category, which generate a new spirit of enquiry in its various aspects. The subordinated position of women in society has created an empty space in history that has not been discussed due to many reasons. Though men and women are inseparable and integral parts of humanity and society her contributions, importance, role and history were ignored until recent past. The present study is an attempt to reconstruct the history of women in colonial Malabar in the background of their participation at different levels of socio-political and economic activities.

Malabar district lies between 10^0 15′ and 12^0 18′north latitude, and between 75^0 14′ and 76^0 52 east longitude. It is bounded on the north by South Canara; on the east by Coorg, Mysore, Nilgiris, Coimbatore and on the south by the native states of Cochin and Travancore. Malabar was the only region in Kerala that came under the direct rule of the British. More than a century and a half (1792-1947), the British rule affected the life of the people of

Malabar directly or indirectly. It has not been properly accounted for in the annals of history even after independence. Mostly the women were the victims in the colonial period as a result of the prevalent patriarchal social structure which was sustained by colonialism and a stigma was attached to them. Due to the subjugating and exploitative nature of colonialism women were more cruelly silenced and further realms of their exploitation were opened up. The thesis tries to expose the colonial past of the Malabar women in a historical perspective. The researcher has taken into consideration the inter-relationship of women with the agrarian economy and society.

The study unfolds the history of women in colonial Malabar using available data. The historical studies hitherto have ignored the problems raised in the body of the research and the researcher has attempted to include the same. The research enquires into the lack of representation of women in the colonial history and tries to reconstruct a history of women in that period. The objective of the research is to expose the nature of colonial intervention into the male-dominated feudal society and the subsequent problems faced by women. Male-centered historiography has blotted out women's role in the making of history. The research problem put in the body of the research tries to answer the questions, including, what is the general pattern of the course of

changes that effected in the life of women in Malabar?, what is the mode of involvement of women in the society of Malabar?, which women participated in the anti-colonial movement?, why women participated in nationalist movement? Has it fulfilled the wider goals that women envisaged during these movements? If it was not attained what are the reasons? Here the term 'Women' is used to refer a single entity irrespective of caste, creed, religion or social status, though their affirmative expressions would have surfaced in diverse ways.

Women studies have brought to prominence the involvement of women in social and political movements which in turn contributed to the development of feminist theories. Feminism is a discourse that involves various movements, theories, and philosophies, which are concerned with the issue of gender difference. It advocates equality for women with men, and campaigns for women's rights and interests[1]. It is said that the history of feminism can be divided into three phases[2]. The first wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second was in the 1960s and 1970s and the third extends from the 1990s to the present.[3] Feminist theories

---

1 Cornell, Drucilla , *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex, and Equality*,p.136
2 Humm, Maggie, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, p.278
3 Anne Scott Sorensen (ed.),'Three Waves of Feminism: From Suffragettes to Girls', in *Gender Communication Theories and Analyses: From Silence to Performance*, p. 24.

emerged from these feminist movements.[4] It is manifested in a variety of disciplines such as feminist geography, feminist history and feminist literary criticism.

In order to describe the patriarchal control, the feminists have explained several approaches. Important among them are liberal feminist approach, radical feminist approach and social feminist approach. The liberal feminism argues that gender roles constraining women to household superintendence were based on legal subordination of women. It was advocated that women should be empowered with civil and political rights and educational facilities. However, the concept of women's place at home was not challenged. According to radical feminists, nothing short of a complete sexual revolution can help the restructuring of the society. The biological differentiation of women, the institution of marriage and family were seen to perpetuate masculine control over female fertility and thereby helping the preservation of a patriarchal system[5]. The social feminist approach is derived from the Marxian perspective and finds the roots of female subordination embedded in the private ownership of the means of production. This viewpoint holds that domestic work produces only use

---

4 Chodorow, Nancy, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*, p.236
5 *Ibid*

value and not exchange value[6]. Various groups of socialist feminists argue that women's oppression is based on unpaid housework, which must be considered as a productive activity. Women in their role as housewives invariably contribute to the reproduction of social relations and provide domestic labour.[7]

Postcolonial feminists argue that oppression relating to the colonial experience, particularly racial, class and ethnic oppression has marginalized women in postcolonial societies. They challenge the assumption that gender oppression is the primary force of patriarchy. Their object was to make portrayals of women of non-Western societies as passive and voiceless victims and the representation of Western women as modern, educated and empowered.[8] Postcolonial feminism emerged from the gendered history of colonialism; colonial powers often imposed Western norms on colonized regions. In the 1940s and 1950s, after the formation of the United Nations, former colonies were monitored by the West for what was considered "social progress"[9]. The status of women in the developing world has been monitored by organizations such as the United Nations and as a result, traditional

---

6 Humm, Maggie, *op. cit.*, p. 279

7 Deepa Mathur, *Family and Work*,p.136

8 S. Mills, 'Postcolonial Feminist Theory', in Jackson, Stevi (ed.) *Contemporary FeministTheories*,p.176

9 *Ibid*

practices and roles taken up by women—sometimes seen as distasteful by Western standards were considered a form of rebellion against colonial oppression.[10] The postcolonial feminists today struggle to fight gender oppression within their own cultural models of society rather than through those imposed by the Western colonizers.[11]

The recent developments in the postcolonial feminist theories view cultures imparted by colonialism are often vastly different and should be treated as such. The colonial oppression may result in the glorification of pre-colonial culture, which, in cultures with traditions of power stratification along gender lines, could mean the acceptance of, or refusal to deal with, inherent issues of gender inequality.[12] It could be described that the feminists have reacted against both universalizing tendencies in Western feminist thought and a lack of attention to gender issues in mainstream postcolonial thought.[13] Third-world feminism has been described as a group of feminist theories developed by feminists who acquired their views and took part in

---

10 Kramarae, et,al, *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*, p.746

11 Bulbeck, Chilla, *Re-orienting Western Feminisms: Women's Diversity in a Postcolonial World.* p. 282.

12 S. Mills, *op,cit.*, p. 98

13 *Ibid*

feminist politics in so-called third-world countries[14]. Although women from the third-world have been engaged in the feminist movement, Mohanty Chandra Talpade and Sarojini Sahoo criticize Western feminism on the grounds that it is ethnocentric and does not take into account the unique experiences of women from third-world countries or the existence of feminisms indigenous to third-world countries.[15]

Colonialism is certainly one of the enduring concepts in modern history. It is associated with the occupation of a foreign land, it being brought under cultivation with the settlement of colonists. Western historical tradition, however, places the date of colonial phenomenon at the time of geographical discoveries; real colonial adventure began with the explorers of the fifteenth century. The expansion of colonialism owes to the discovery of distant lands in the West Indies, followed by the installation of trading posts along the routes of Asia and Africa.[16] In a wider sense colonialism is a state sponsored social practice in which foreign territories are exploited for human as well as natural resources. It is a part of global capitalist expansion at an early stage

---

14 Mohanty Chandra Talpade and Sarojini Sahoo 'Introduction', in Mohanty Chandra Talpade(ed.) *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, p. 49

15 *Ibid*

16 Melvin E. Page, *Colonialism An international Social Culture and Political Encyclopedia*, p. XXI.

when the non- western world functioned primarily as a source of material and labour or as a human warehouse.[17] Thus, colonialism is a system of domination, exploitation, and under-development of one society by another.[18] So common was this settlement and domination pattern in human history that the very term 'colonialism' occasionally has come to signify any sort of domination or assertion of control by one human group over another, often achieved by trickery and usually involving illegitimate means.[19]

Colonialism has taken many different forms and has given rise to diverse effects around the world. This can be measured exactly by studying, first, about its relationship with two terms, 'capitalism' and 'imperialism'.[20] Denis Judd observes, "No one can doubt that the desire for profitable trade, plunder and enrichment was the primary force that led to the establishment of the imperial structure."[21] Judd argues that colonialism was first and foremost part of the commercial venture of western nations that developed from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[22] 'Colonialism' is some times used interchangeably with 'imperialism', but the terms mean different

---

17 George Caste, *Post Colonial Discourse An Anthology*, p.503
18 Bipan Chadra, *Essays on Colonialism*, p.V
19 Melvin E. Page, *op. cit.*, p.XXI
20 John Me Leod, *Post colonialism*, p.7
21 *Ibid*
22 *Ibid.*

things. Imperialism is an ideological concept that upholds the legitimacy of the economic and military control of one nation by another. 'Colonialism' however is only one form of practice which results from the ideology of imperialism, and specifically concerns the settlement of one group of people in a new location.[23]

Although many earlier civilizations had colonies the motive behind the colonization initiated by imperialist powers were different from that of the former. The imperialists perceived their relations with the colonies to be one of a central 'imperium' in relation to a periphery whose nature is that of marginal and barbarian culture. Apart from these, a number of crucial factors also affected the construction of the post-renaissance practices of imperialism.[24] Edward Said offers the following distinction: "imperialism" means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory, colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory.[25]

---

23 *Ibid.*, pp.7-8
24 Bill Ashcroft, *Key Concepts in Post -colonial Studies,* p.46.
25 Quoted from *Ibid.*,p.47

Both colonialism and imperialism involve forms of subjugation of one people by another.[26] Thus, colonialism is a predatory system of capitalist states and hence it is a modern category which exercises social dominance with their technological superiority. Colonialism is a particular historical manifestation of imperialism, specific to certain places and times.[27] In its general character, imperialism assumed a racial intellectual and spiritual superiority on the part of the newcomers. Colonialism, which functioned in terms of territorial expansion or acquisition of wealth, demanded the capturing of political power over the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands. And it has utilized multi-faceted strategies including financial aids, military assistance, friendship treatises, etc. to ensure their economic motives. Economic relationship was at the core of the system and the unequal relations of power which colonialism constructed.[28]

European capitalist penetration into India began with the arrival of the Europeans in the sixteenth centaury. Portuguese established a factory at Calicut in 1500 and conquered of Goa in 1506, more than four centuries ago. The English East India Company was founded in 1600, the Dutch East India

---

26 Robert J.C Young, *Post Colonialism An Historical Introduction*, p 15

27 K.N Panikkar, 'Colonialism, Culture and Revivalism' in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 31, January – February, 2003, p.5

28 R.P. Dutt, *India Today*, p.8.

Company in 1602 and the French Company in 1664. The British established their direct territorial rule in India, beyond the trading settlements, as they started outposts of conquest from the middle of the eighteenth century. The Battle of Plassey in 1757 and its consequent results paved the way for the establishment of British power.[29]

Because of colonial British rule, India was transformed by the end of the nineteenth century into a typical colony. It was a major market for British manufacturers, a big source of raw materials, foodstuffs and labour at low wage and an important field of investment of capital.[30] The establishment of a colony imposed a special kind of situation on the subjects, a colonial situation as Balandier writes:

> The most general and obvious of these conditions are the domination imposed by foreign minority, 'racially' and culturally distinct, upon a materially inferior majority in the name of a dogmatically asserted racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority, the bringing into relation of two heterogeneous civilizations one technologically advanced, economically powerful, swift moving and Christian by origin, the other without complex techniques, economically backward, slow moving and fundamentally 'non-Christian'. The antagonistic nature of the relations between the two societies owes to the instrumental role to which the subject society is condemned and the need for the dominant society, if it is to maintain its position, to rely not only up on 'force' but also upon a whole

29 Bipan Chandra, *op.cit.*, p.1.
30 Bipan Chandra, et.al, *Freedom Struggle*, p.15

> range of pseudo-justifications and stereotyped patterns of behaviour.[31]

The colonial acquisitions had multiple dimensions which paved the way for the understanding of colonialism. Hence enumeration of just the characteristics is not enough. The colonial situation must be examined in "its entirety and as a system".[32] Moreover, since the colonial situation is always changing, a crucial analytical dimension is the historical one.[33]

Gandhiji's explanation and critique of colonial rule were essentially cultural. The British were a trading nation who had come to India in search of markets. Moreover, they had been able to consolidate their rule by brainwashing their subjects into thinking that their way of life and thought were inferior to those of their rulers.[34] The four hundred million Indians comprising one fifth of the human race have been subjected to foreign rule for two centuries.[35] Colonialism was a catalyst in many fields, not the least in the social and the cultural; the political domination was a discernible reality. So was the manner in which Indian economy was subordinated to the global market. The main argument is that, colonialism disarticulates the pre- colonial

---

31 Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa*, p.52
32 *Ibid.*
33 *Ibid.*
34 Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, p.82.
35 R.P Dutt, *op,cit.*, p.1

economy and subsequently reintegrates it into world capitalism.[36] The hegemony of colonial rule manifested itself in many fields.

The colonialists removed indigenous sources of economic growth and power and replaced them by imperial agents and network.[37] This deprived Indian entrepreneurs and business persons of a chance to lead a process of national regeneration through economic development. It also had severe welfare and distributional effects in the traditional sector by imposing foreign competition on handicraft workers and forced commercialization on agriculturists.[38] It is a fact that British colonialism subjugated Indian economy to Britain. This delineated the colonial structure in all its three aspects of domination through trade, industry and finance.[39]

The Indian economy and social development were completely subordinated to British economy and social development.[40] The

---

36 Hirasingh, *Colonial Hegemony and Popular Resistance. Princes, Peasants and Paramount Power*, p. 44.

37 Bhawan Josh, *Struggle for Hegemony*, p.22

38 On a long historical view, two types of agriculture commercialization have been most pervasive in moulding the productive activities of the working peasantry of eastern India, These depended on commercialization of the late 18th and 19th centuries during which Indigo was the leading commodity and subsistence commercialization of late 19th centuries during which Jute was the leading commodity, Sugata Bose, *The New Cambridge History of India, Peasant Labour and Colonial Capital: Rural Bengal Since 1770*, p.44 and see also B.R. Tomilson, *The New Cambridge History of India, The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970*, p.12

39 Bipan Chandra, et.al, *India's Struggle for Independence*, p.92

40 Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, p.16

subordination of the colony's economy and society and linkage or integration with world capitalism or the world market was a crucial determining aspect of colonialism in India.[41] During the 1760s when Britain was developing into a leading developed capitalist country of the world, India was being underdeveloped into becoming the leading backward, colonial country of the world. In fact, the two processes were interdependent in terms of cause and effect. The entire structure of economic relations between India and Britain involving trade, finance, and technology continuously developed India's colonial dependence and under-development.[42]

The structure of contemporary Indian society has been shaped by two hundred years of colonial dominance.[43] Considerable social change occurred in India because of the imposition and maintenance of British rule. As in all colonial situations, the primary change-producing force was the colonial power itself.[44] The institutions, policies, and programmes of British colonialism were the intrusive exogenous forces that altered existing patterns of social action. However, it must be recognized that much of the changes

---

41 Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggles for Independence*, p.16
42 Bipan Chandra,*Essays on Colonialism*, p.16
43 Hirasing, *op.cit.*, p.1
44 'Social change' is a term used to describe variations in or modifications of any aspects of social process, social patterns, social interaction or social organization, Laxmi Devi,(ed.) *Encyclopedia of Social Change Conceptualization of Social Change.* (Vol). p.2

were not caused directly by a British decree but were the result of the indirect operation of the colonial situation.[45] Indian society experienced a qualitative structural transformation during the British rule, which led it on to a new and different path of development. The British rule initiated basic changes in social physiognomy of Indian society; though it was meant to subserve its own interest.[46] During the colonial period, Indian society experienced the introduction and growth of new and modern means of transport, communication and educational system.[47] Moreover, the colonial rule created new opportunities that resulted in the advancement of the fortunes and status of individuals and small groups, in the circulation of elites, in the development of new social classes and in the creation of new patterns of voluntary associational behavior.[48] The opportunities included new vocations in Government sector for those who acquired English education. Modern education diffuses more opportunities for new patterns of social and economic behaviour related to the modernizing process generated by colonial rule.

---

45 Ian J. Kerr, 'Colonialism in later 19th century India: Concerns and Concepts', in *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. IV, 1998, p.147
46 A.R Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p.VII
47 *Ibid.*, p.VIII
48 Ian J. Kerr, *op.cit.*, p.149

As far as the women were concerned the colonial rule re-in forced the values of a male-dominated society and thus it became more oppressive and exploitative. It also generated awareness among the women to oppose colonialism and made their political entry possible. Gayathri Chakravarthi Spiwak is right in asserting that the uplift of the marginalized people was possible only through their political entry.[49] This aspect is all the more relevant in this study.

The history of women is a disregarded field of research and it is limited to scholarly engagements. A few studies have enriched social history of modern Kerala through researches in the perspectives of women studies such as the works of C.S. Chandrika, J. Devika, Saradhamoni, G. Arunima, and V. Sreevidya. It is a fact that, the historical researches and scholastic interference in the history of women are even now in infancy and waiting for new results, especially in the socio-economic aspects.

C.S. Chandrika's *Keralathile Sthree Munnattangalude Charitram* (History of Women's Movement in Kerala) is an attempt to narrate the history of agitations of women in Kerala. Nevertheless, the work keeps silence on the details of early uprisings in Kerala, her feminist theoretical affiliation being

---

49 Gayathri Chakravarthi Spiwak, 'Can Subaltern Speak?'in Bill Aschroft(ed.) *Postcolonial Reader*,p.367

limited to the historical outlook of the work. *There Comes Papa: Colonialism and Transformation of Matriliny in Kerala, Malabar, C. 1850- 1940,* by G. Arunima, examines the historical background of the abolition of matriliny in Kerala and its consequences. This work also focuses on the changes in family organization and property relation with insights into studies of sexuality, gender and caste. Arunima examines only the details of matrilineal system that existed among the Nair community of Kerala. *Matrilinal System in Malabar* by P V Balakrishnan also examines the system that existed in the Nair community of Malabar. The work is notable for new ideas and information regarding the subject but it confines itself to observation and narration. Sreevidhya V. in her thesis *Women in Labour Process, Production Relation and Social Change: A Study of North Malabar* has examined the labour process and social change in Malabar. However, these works do not examine the changing identity of women in colonial Malabar. All these works have not taken into consideration the emerging identity of women in the social sphere of Malabar.

The researcher has adopted a critical as well as analytical methodology to explain the problems put in the body of the study. The research employs fresh evaluation of sources, drawing the benefits of conceptual insights and methodological sophistication embodied in the recent historical researches.

The thesis is divided into five chapters giving equal importance to introduction and conclusion. The introductory part of the thesis provides an outline of the research work, which opens with a discussion on the importance of the study and methodology adopted in the research. It makes clear the scope, aim and purpose of the research and analyses previous works relevant to the present topic. Through the introduction, the researcher explains the contemporary relevance and examines the theoretical aspects of colonialism, feminism and its relation to the present research.

'Society in Pre-British Malabar' is the first chapter of the thesis, which deals with the social conditions and its peculiarities during this period. The last quarter of the eighteenth century was a landmark in the history of Malabar because this period witnessed the Mysorian invasion, its dominance and collapse. By the Sreerangapattanam Treaty (1792) Malabar came under the possession of the English East India Company and that laid the foundation of British rule in Kerala. This chapter examines the social background of Malabar in general and the position of women in the traditional feudal society in particular.

The second chapter 'Consolidation of British Power in Malabar' examines the nature and method of expansion in an indigenous society like

Malabar. British colonial expansion in the first half of the eighteenth century in Malabar was not a matter of pre-conceived pattern adopted by the British Government. Being a commercial enterprise, the aim of the English East India Company in this period was to make it a profitable enterprise and to exploit the colonies for the benefit of its shareholders. Nevertheless, even during the initial period the engagements of the Company were not merely trade, but a combined effort of trade, diplomacy and war.

In this period, even though territories were brought under direct control of the Company, they paid the necessary customs and local duties in several cases to the prince- regent of respective regions. Their position was close to a tenant who enjoyed political power such as collection of taxes, fortification and maintenance of forts in the territories acquired. Thus colonial expansion, which was pursued by the British, was a continuous policy, which combined trade and diplomacy with war and political control of the territory around their trade posts.

'Modern Education and Women' is the third chapter, which examines the importance of western education in the life of women in Malabar and the subsequent process of social change. The economic consequences of colonial agrarian system resulted in the social mobilization, which paved the way for

the development of political awareness and social awakening. The Basel Mission, the missionary agency in Malabar, played a seminal role in women's education.

With the advent of British rule in Malabar, especially, with the initiatives of Christian missionaries, the necessity of education came into the forefront of social discourse. This chapter intends to examine the educational process and progress in Malabar and its impact on the socio-political scenario of British Malabar. The traditional education fostered the ideology of the upper castes and was meant to preserve the status quo of the traditional social order. The advent of the Europeans in Kerala, especially in Malabar, drastically changed the educational scenario.

'The Socio-economic Transformation', the fourth chapter, discusses the pace of social change and its features. Colonialism is an attempt to collect resources from an indigenous land to maintain and acquire economic power of the homeland. Britain's contact with Malabar began in the early decades of the seventeenth century when the ships of the English East India Company started to cruise to the Malabar Coast in search of pepper and other spices. The British came here for trade and went into politics to preserve their trade. By the end of the eighteenth century, they made themselves masters of

Malabar. Malabar was under the direct control of British rule for not less than a century and a half and an association that lasted so long was bound to leave its impact on the socio-economic and political life of Malabar. The traditional society of Malabar underwent transformation in the socio-economic sphere during the colonial period. The transformation was a gradual process like other social changes in history. A society dominated by the stagnant elements of medievalism and feudal institutions like caste and customary laws now faced a serious threat from the historical forces released by the west.

The fifth chapter, 'Anti-colonial Movement and Women ' examines the nature and significance of the anti-colonial resistance movement and women's involvement in it. The native women in Malabar took much pain in this task. The historical necessity and the sufferings were the motivating force, which pushed them into the forefront of the freedom movement. The agrarian rebellions and uprisings were the crucial incidents in which they participated hand in hand with the men. The resistance movements worked mainly at two different levels, against centuries- old feudal system and its degenerated values and against imperial domination. Through the rise of the oppressed people like the working class and the peasantry, the fall of the feudal and colonial powers had become part of history. This chapter attempts to explain

these resistance movements in Malabar and the role of women in these movements. The Conclusion tries to answer the questions raised in the body of the research and is the result of the inquiry into the whole subject.

The sources available in the form of archival records, memoirs, travelogues, autobiographies and reminiscences of the leaders of national movement are the primary sources of the research. In addition, the *Factory Records of the English East India Company* reveals the commercial and administrative activities of the Company in Malabar. The *Tellicherry Consultations* is a set of records related to the discussions held between the Zamorins and the Company. The British period has produced many official and unofficial documents and reports, which constitute an important material for studying the colonial past of Malabar. They include the *Reports of Joint Commissioners* of 1793 and the report of Francis Buchanan during 1800-1801 known as *A Journey from Malabar through the Country of Mysore, Canara and Malabar,* William Logan's *Treaties and Engagement and other Papers on British affairs in Malabar.* C.A. Innes *Malabar Gazetteer* produced during the period of colonialism depicts the geographical settings of Malabar, socio-economic condition, populace, agriculture, industrial development, educational activities, administration, land revenue etc. It also gives a clear picture of the

early institutions like *sambandham,* Joint family system, etc, which existed in Malabar during this period. In addition to these, there are many primary and secondary sources collected from different parts of Kerala from the private collections of the participants and leaders of the national movement in Kerala. The records preserved in Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Calicut are valuable sources for the study.

It is an attempt to trace the historical process through which the women in Malabar broke the traditional fetters of the feudal society. The colonial intervention enabled them to become aware of their inferior status and to realize that they have a role to play in the transformation of society. It served as a kind of political education. It was for the first time that the women in Malabar realized that they had a role of to play in the historical process. Nevertheless, the social and political upheavals brought to light the basic fact that the colonial powers demanded their subjugation. The anti-colonial struggles proved to be liberating as far as the women were concerned without which they would never have reached the centre stage of history. In fact, the innumerable struggles that followed the colonial subjugation were crucial for women.

CHAPTER I

SOCIETY IN PRE-BRITISH MALABAR

The traditional society in Malabar was caste-centered and social relations were determined by the customs and practices imposed by the higher castes. Before the Mysorean invasion, the *Naduvazhis* and petty chieftains controlled the polity of Malabar and they were also the custodians of the entire social system. The present chapter intends to examine the salient features of the society in pre-British Malabar and the status of women in it. It is a fact that the lack of sources providing information regarding women of the lower strata of society creates significant vacuum in history. It creates certain limitation to unveil the history of the formation of traditional society and women's role in it. Without considering the undercurrents of the social relations with added emphasis on the position of women in the society it would not be meaningful.

The period under discussion is the eighteenth century; during which 'Mysorean interlude' gave a serious blow to the existing social order[1]. Even though they introduced so many reforms, the society and its caste-oriented character continued for long.[2] During this period, the social system in Malabar was based on caste and kinship.[3] The society was divided on caste basis and arranged in a hierarchical order, from the sacred to the profane. At

---

[1] William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, p.399.
[2] C. K. Kareem, *Kerala under Hyder Ali and Tippu Sulthan*, pp.133-234.
[3] A. C. Mayer, *Land and Society in Malabar*, p.25

the top of the traditional hierarchy were the Brahmins. The *Jathi Nirnayam* attributed to Sree Sankara mentions the 72 principal castes of Kerala comprising of 8 sub-divisions of Brahmins, 2 *Nanajathis*, 12 *Antharalas*, 18 *Sudras*, 6 *Artis*, 10 *Pythias*, 8 *Neechajathis* and 8 *Purajathis* [4]. In Malabar, the primal race distinctions can be traced in the broad divisions of Brabmin, Nair, Thiyyan, artisan and the aboriginal tribes.[5] Among these, the Brahmins stood at the apex of the social ladder. The sacred thread worn across the shoulders distinguished them from others[6]. There were several groups like *Nambidis*, *Elayad* etc. Among them the *Embranthiri*, had succeeded in later times in securing or being thought fit to assume the name of *Namboothiri* and there was yet another class, the *Mussat* or more properly the *Unilparisha Mussat*, who was privileged to eat with *Namboodiri*, but did not intermarry with them nor were they entitled to perform *Yagams*[7]. In Kerala, the Brahmins were also known by the term *Namboodiri*. The caste group consisted of landed aristocrats, priests and scholars. Generally, they performed the rituals and offerings in the Brahmanical temples. They constitute a very small percentage of the population of Malabar. The concepts of purity and pollution were

---

[4] Velayudhan Pannikkassery, *Keralam Pathinanchum Pathinarum Nuttandukalil* (Mal),p.59.
[5] C A.Innes, *Malabar*, p.95
[6] *Ibid.*,p.59.
[7] P. Bhaskaranunni, *Pathompatham Noottandle Keralam* (Mal),p.360

notable evil practices that existed in Malabar.[8] The internal divisions or the sub-castes within Brahmins had strong influence on other castes too. The dominance of the Brahmins in the society enabled the perpetuation of the caste system based on birth and pollution [9]

The Nairs rank after the Namboodiries in Malabar, and they occupy the same position in the native state of Cochin and Travancore[10]. They enjoyed a high position and status as the militia of Rajas and due to their social relationship with the Namboodiries through *'sambandham'*. The Nair caste consisted of several sub-castes.[11] Traditionally the Nair was a warrior and non-cultivating tenant. They attained pre-eminence among other castes and tribes and organized the country on military basis. The rulers divided their country into *nadus* and placed them under Nair chiefs, in return for

---

[8] The Namboodiri Brahmin was the solar centre of the distance pollution system. A Nair must keep seven feet away from him, Ezhava (Thiyya) 32 feet, a Cheruman 64 feet and a Nayadi from74 to 124 feet. In turn, the various distances between the lower castes were deduced by simple subtraction the Ezhava must keep 25feet from the Nair and the Cheruman 32 feet from Ezhava. Castes like Nayadies were not only untouchables but unseeable also .The Viswakarma was supposed to stand24 feet away from the Brahmin accordingly. Therefore, he stood eight feet ahead of an Ezhava and 17 feet behind the Nair. See J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India: Its Nature, Function, and Origins*, p.80

[9] William Logan, *op.cit.*,p.116.

[10] F.Fawcett, *Nayers of Malabar*, p.185.

[11] Robin Jeffery's points out that occupationally there are several subdivisions among Nairs, Nayors (leader or soldiers) Menons (generally writers or accountants) Menochis (Superintendents), Moolils (Chiefs), Pada Nairs (fighting men), Kurups, Kaimal, Panickers, Muthus and among the low caste Nairs, mention should be mare of Chaliyan, Veluthedan and Kottakkatthan etc. Most of the Nairs followed the matrilineal *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance, based on matrilocal joint family called the *Tarawad*. See for more details, Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908*,p.15.

service were given free land and other privileges.[12] Gradually Nairs became so powerful that "no king of Malabar has the power to make contracts which are prejudicial to the interests of the landlords, noblemen or Nairs".[13] Women were given prominence in the Nair *tarawads* and landed property was inherited through female lines. A woman was free enough to receive and reject a husband as she wished. It is said that Nair women had two-three or even more husbands at a time[14]. To be sure, not all the sections of the people were comfortable with these customs.

Next to Nairs in the social rank were the Thiyyas (Ezhavas)[15]. Their main occupation was toddy tapping. Nevertheless, like the Nairs some of the Thiyyas also received military training. Some of them were known as warriors, who used the title *'Chekon'*. Thiyya was a polluting caste for the Brahmins and they were not permitted to enter or worship in the temples of Nairs or Brahmins. Hence they maintained several folk gods and goddesses in their own *'Kavus'* and shrines for worship.[16] During this period, the majority

---

[12] Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar,* Vol.II, pp. 68-69.
[13] *Ibid.,*
[14] Velayudhan Pannikkassery, *op.cit.*,p.61
[15] *Ibid.*,p.66.
[16] K. K. N. Kurup, *Aspects of Kerala History and Culture,* p.41.

of the Ezhavas were tenants or *Kudiyans* of Namboodhiri or Nair landlords who exploited their labour to its maximum.

In the lower stratum of the caste hierarchy remained the artisan groups like the Kammalars and the untouchable castes of Pulayas, Cheruman and others.[17] The Pulayas led a wretched life in acute poverty and slavery. They toiled day and night in the soil and the privileged classes of society exploited their fruits. They were even exchanged and sold like chattels and were attached to the land. The condition of low-caste people below the Ezhavas was pathetic and the Pulayas, the Parayas and such other castes that struggled at soil were economically thwarted by the exploitation of the Brahmins and became bonded labourers. Apart from the hierarchical division of the Hindu community, another independent group that existed in Malabar society was the Mappila[18], (Muslims) who are followers of the Islam. Their ancestors were the descendants from the Arabs, who were traders and enjoyed an absolute monopoly over Malabar trade until the advent of the

---

[17] The word 'Pulayan' is derived from 'pula' meaning 'pollution' while Cherumar may denote that they were sons of the soil, see for more details V.R. R. Dikshitar, *Some Hill Tribes of Malabar,* p.129

[18] The name *'Mappila'* is a transliteration of the Malayalam *'Mappila'*. The transliteration has taken several different forms, the most common being *'Mappila'* and 'Moplah'. The origin of the term is not yet settled, but it appears to have been a title of respect. In its partial form, *'Pilla'*, it is found among *'Nayars'*. It was a common honorific title for Christians in middle Kerala, and this usage continues to some extent to the present. Recently the term has tended more and more to an exclusive name for Kerala Muslims. See for more details, Rolland E Miller, *Mappila Muslims in Kerala.*,p.30.

Portuguese.[19] When the Portuguese came and ousted the Arab traders from the Malabar Coast, they migrated to the hinder lands of south Malabar and started agriculture and petty trade. They constituted about one fifth of the population of Malabar during this period.[20] The Arabs might have had a friendly approach to the natives of Malabar, as the real intention behind their arrival was trade. The novel social system, which embraced everyone irrespective of caste and creed, must have attracted them. Under these circumstances, people might have responded to Islamic missionaries in a way that was more amicable. Even prior to the advent of Islam in Malabar, Christianity had influenced its society and many natives were converted to that religion. The advent of the Portuguese and the Dutch helped the growth of the Christian community in Malabar.

Making the social structure more complex, the Hindu society of Malabar at this time presented a dark picture of social disintegration and moral decadence, with its feudal system, caste division, oppressions of the low castes by the high castes, matrilineal kinship system, sexual degeneration, immodest way of dressing by women and other abhorrent practices and customs. The age-old customs and practices that were perpetuated in Malabar

---

[19] K. K. N. Kurup, *op.cit.*, p.43.
[20] A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, p.278.

denied to women many amenities of life. The lack of rigidity and social exclusion of the lower caste women entitled them more freedom than the higher caste women.

During this period, what was prevalent was the *Marumakkathayam* (matrilineal) system. It was a practice of inheritance through female line.[21] Under this, a son did not have the right of father's property. It was inherited by the latter's nephews. There was no permanency in the marriage system, and no recognition of relationship between husband, wife and children. A cluster of joint families was known as *tarawad*.[22] The members of the *tarawads* could trace their lineage from a common ancestress. The father had neither right nor responsibility towards the children who were brought up in their mother's *tarawad*. The common notion is that under this system, women held a high status as the property was inherited in their name, and they had the right to choose their husbands as many times as they could. Nevertheless, if we make a scrutiny of this system it would be seen that the so-called women's high status was a mere misnomer. Though the form of inheritance was in the

---

[21] Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes in South India*, Vol.VII, p.36.

[22] 'tarawad' comes from the word 'tara' that means neighborhood. Tara comes from the parcel of ground around a sacred tree, which stands near Bhagavati temples, Hilde Ramaker, 'Change and Continuity in a Matrilineal System', in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol.V,1982, p.105.

female line, the males particularly influenced the family system, as they became the guardians of the *tarawad* property.

The system of marriage was hypogenous and polyandrous. It had two important forms, viz *Talikettukalyanam*[23] and *sambandham. Talikettukalyanam* was performed before the girl attained puberty.[24] In Malabar among the Thiyyas, *Talikettukalyanam* was generally known as *Pandal Mangalam.*[25] This performance meant a sort of initiation into womanhood, as it was a sort of social sanction to dispose of the girl to any man whether she liked him or not. This ceremony has remained an issue of controversy, which was interpreted as a mock marriage, token marriage or real marriage.[26] It was convenient to prevent the partition of property. The ceremony was somewhat analogous to what a *Devadasi* underwent before she began her profession. A type of quasi-religious sanction was given to this fictitious marriage, which was a cloak to concubinage.

---

[23] The Malayalam word, *Talikettu Kalyanam* is made up of *Tali, Kettu,* and *Kalyanam. Tali* is a tiny gold ornament shaped like a leaf of a banyan tree, *Kettu* means tying, derived from the word *Kettuka,* to tie, and *Kalyanam* stands for any auspicious event, Puthen Kalam S. J, *Marriage and family in Kerala,* p.35

[24] C. A. Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer,* p. 236

[25] Puthen Kalam, *op.cit.,* p.46.

[26] T. K. Gopala Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk,* p.135

The actual marriage was known as *sambandham*.[27] The woman continued to live in her *tarawad* even after the marriage; the husband would visit her only at night and would leave in the morning. The children were brought up in the mother's *tarawad*. The senior male member of the *tarawad* known as *Karanavar*[28] was the guardian of the children. Among the Namboodiri Brahmins, only the eldest son of the family could marry from his own caste. The other sons solaced themselves by visiting the Nair women. The law of primogeniture was their practice and *sambandham* with Nair women was convenient for them. In those days, land was the main form of property and vested in the hands of Rajas, Namboodiri Brahmins, petty chieftains and Nair *tarawads*.[29] In order to prevent the partition of this property the *Sanbamdham* form of marriage was practiced.[30]

The rich Nair *tarawad* favoured the *sambandham* of their women with Namboodiries.[31] The Nair women though they wished or not had to satisfy the wishes of the Namboodiries. The theory justifying this system is that the

---

[27] *'sambandham'* is the socially recognized alliance constituting matrimony among martilineals. The word means alliance or binding together, *sambandham* is the generic term for marriage, which has local verities and varying incidents. For instance, there are three different forms of it- Pudamuri, Vidaran Kayaruka and Uzhan porukkal, Puthen Kalam., *op.cit.*, p.73.

[28] The eldest male member of a matrilineal family who manages the affairs of the joint family, S. Ramachandran Nair, *Social Consequences of Agrarian Changes*, p.172.

[29] See for more details, *Report of the Malabar Land and Tenures*, 1884.

[30] P. K. Balakrishnan, *Jathivyavasthithiyum Kerala Charithravum*,(Mal.) p.341.

[31] O. Chandu Menno, *Sarada*, (Mal.) p.29.

Namboodiries being direct descendants of God, their *Sanbandham* with Nair women is considered sacred and divine. If the Namboodiri is pleased, God is pleased and the family that gets the opportunity to please him is blessed with eternal affluence and happiness. The Namboodiri's right to enjoy any Nair women is therefore divine and denial of this to him is denial of God's right.[32] The Namboodiries believed that the *Sudra* women need not have chastity. The religious text like *Haritha Samhita,* which was written to provide comfort and prestige to the Brahmins, upholds that "She who renouncing her own husband, desires for the company of another man is to be known as *vrishali,* a *Sudra* woman does not become a *'vrishali'*[33]. Such religious texts sanctioned the authority of the Namboodiri Brahmins to use the *Sudra* women to pacify their sexual desire.[34] The *Sudra* women were not supposed to cover their breasts in front of respectable people. The power of the Namboodiri Brahmin was so great that when he picked a woman with whom he wanted to live, she was often forced to terminate her other relationships. The Namboodiries could form temporary connections with the Nair women and leave them in search of other women.[35] These women had very little voice in selecting their husbands. They considered it a prestige to have *sambandham* with

---

[32] C. K. Kareem, *op.cit.*, p.174.
[33] Manmathanath Dutt, *Haritha Samhitha Original Text with a Literal Prose, English* (tran.), P.280.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha,* (Mal)p.194.

Namboodiries despite his old age and looks. The *sambandham* form of marriage was polyandrous. Sheik Zainuddeen says that, "Nair ladies will have two or four or more husbands. The date and time of each will be fixed previously and there is no quarrel on this issue."[36] If the 'Nair lady is beautiful', many Namboodiries live with her. The ever-increasing numbers of them increase her respectability in society.[37] Buchanan states, "The Nair women formed the closest intimacy with many persons and were proved of reckoning among their favoured lovers many Brahmins, Rajas or other persons of high birth".[38] Women were used as pawns in the property game and little importance was given to their personal feelings.

Divorce was a simple affair. No sort of formality was necessary to dissolve a *sambandham*. The non-acceptance of the usual presents on *Onam, Vishu, or Thiruvathira,* on the part of the women or the non- sending of those presents on any of the above occasions on the part of the man was considered a justifiable ground for the dissolution. Sometimes because of the feuds between the *tarawads* for property, the women of a particular tarawad were

---

[36] Sheik Zainuddeen, *Tuhafatual- mujahiddeen, Eng.* (trn.) pp. 72-73.
[37] L. A. Ananda Krishna Iyer, *Cochin Castes and Tribes,* p.139.
[38] Buchanan, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.95.

asked to put an end to the *sambandham* with the other family though she really had a liking for the said person.[39]

The customs had laid down many restrictions on the Nair women. It allowed a man to cohabit with a woman belonging to a lower caste. The same custom prohibited the female from exercising a similar liberty. This was called *Anuloma* and *Prathiloma.*[40] According to the usage, a women consorting with a men of low caste was found guilty of *Prathiloma* and consequently ex-communicated.[41] Moreover the women in north Malabar were prohibited from having *sambandham* with the males of south Malabar[42]. They were not even supposed to cross the river Korappuzha that was the boundary between north and south Malabar.[43] Whereas male members were free from such restrictions and could have *sambandham* with any Nair women irrespective of the fact whether she belonged to the south or the north.

---

[39] O. Chandu Menon, *op.cit.* p.40.

[40] Marriage between a man of higher position and women of lower position is called *anuloma.* In the reverse case; of women, marrying beneath her position is called *parathiloma.* L. A. Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*, p.59.

[41] O. Chandu Menon in his Malayalam novel, *Sarada* depicts how the *Karnavar* disinherited one of the female members as she married low caste men. Also, see *Malabar Marriage Commission Report,* Para.17.

[42] North Malabar means the taluks of Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbanadu and Wynad in the District of Malabar, South Malabar means the other taluks in those districts.

[43] F. Fawett, *op.cit,* p.189.

The Nair women lived in the privacy of their homes. Though women in south Malabar were allowed greater freedom compared to those of north Malabar, the male members of the *tarawad* controlled them. They had no power to express their opinions other than through their *Karanavar* and husband. Women were not allowed to talk freely with the men folk and were not supposed to talk loudly. Women were usually not tutored. Very few girls belonging to rich *tarawads* were given education by engaging private tutors.[44] Being without education, moral training or real knowledge of the world, many women spent their time in gossiping with their friends.[45]

It is believed by many native authors that the Nair women were economically independent, and never regarded her husband as a lord or master, as there was no material reason for her to do so. However, women were not economically independent. She had to depend on the *Karanavan* for all the financial support. If it was not her husband, it was her *Karanavan,* whom she had to obey and regard as her master. Even if the property was inherited in the female line, it was the *Karanavar* who managed the entire

---

[44] Lalithambika Antharjanam, *Atmakathakkoru Amugham* (Mal),p.126

[45]See for more details of the pitiable plight of women even in higher castes the autobiographies of the prominent leaders like V.T.Bhattathirippad, *Kannerum Kinavum*(Mal), Kanippayyoor Sankaran Namboothirippad, *Ente Smaranakal,* (Mal),E.M.S Namboodirippad,*Atmakatha,*(Mal)etc.

property. The sentimental pattern of the matrilineal tarawads required that women should be the guardian of her own children, and could not expect their husbands to guide or educate the children. In the case when the husband was a Namboodiri Brahmin, the children could not touch or dine with the father out of fear of causing pollution, though pollution did not come in the way of sexual relationship.[46] Though the *Kaarnavar* paid little attention to educate her children or troubled them with his autocratic behavior, she had very little voice to oppose.[47] When there was poverty, women were the worst affected. The food was given to the male members while the women ate only what was left behind. Cherukad, a noted Malayalam writer, recalled in his autobiography how his wife had very little to eat after providing food to the male members of her *tarawad*.[48]

The condition of the Namboodiri women was also not better. The Namboodiri women were subjected to severe restrictions in the family life. The male dominated rules and customs imposed on women were cruel, if not ridiculous. E.M.S. Namboodirippad says, "The very birth of a female child cast a shadow of melancholy over the members of the Namboodiri family, but the birth of a male child was a matter of jubilance to all. Male child got better

[46] Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travencore,* p.181
[47] O. Chandu Menon, *op.cit.*, p.29.
[48] Cherukad, *op.cit.*, p.440.

treatment than the female; it generated a feeling among the latter that they had only an inferior status in the family."[49] Kanippayyoor Sankaran Namboodiripad also narrates the deplorable state of affairs under which the Namboodiri women had to live. He observed:

> While two Namboodiri children pick up a quarrel, elders would blame both, but if the quarrel takes place between a male and a female the elders always accuse the female. In a very young age itself, the Namboodiri female become conscious of the fact that they do not have the same status as that of the male and their position is one degree below the latter. Like other women of other castes, Namboodiri women cannot go for festivals, *Pooram* etc. They would not even express a desire to that effect.[50]

The Namboodiri women were commonly known as *Antarjanam*[51] or *Akathamma* (mother living indoors), an appropriate name as after puberty they rarely seen outside.[52] They must not look on the face of a human being of the male sex except their husband and when compelled to travel they are invariably accompanied by a crier in the person of a Nair women called a *vrishali,* who warns off male travellers by a long drawn shout of *'nhayi'*. Besides this, they are protected by their large radian umbrellas *(marakuda).*[53]

---

[49] E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *Atmakadha,* (Mal.) p.32.
[50] Kanippayyoor Sankaran Namboodiripad, *Ente Smaranakal,* (Mal.)p.155.
[51] Women belonging to Namboodiri Brahmin community, literally the one who lived inside, G. Arunima, *There Comes Papa, Colonialism and the Transformation of Matriliny in Kerala, Malabar C 1850-1940,* p.XI.
[52] P.K. Balakrishnan, *op.cit.,* p.346.
[53] William Logan, *op.cit.,* p.127.

The Namboodiri women were kept under strict seclusion. As only the eldest Namboodiri could marry from his own community, other male members of the Namboodiri *illams* [54] entered into *sambandham* with women of other castes. A large number of Namboodiri women had to remain unmarried, as there were not enough male hands in that community.[55] The life of these innocent women was unimaginably deplorable. Even those women who had the rare fortune of getting married by *Illathumoosses* could not be partners of a happy wedded life always, for a *Mooss* had to observe several duties and functions typical of a Namboodiri, therefore at times, these married women had to wraith over even for a glance of their husband.[56]

Disallowed of the benefit of education, the Namboodiri women lived in the bog of ignorance and superstition. The very dressing of these women was enough to make them the object of ridicule. A loincloth, which hardly went below the knee with several twists and turns alone, was used, but left the breast uncovered. The life of a widow was severe and remarriage was not allowed.[57] The unmarried Namboodiri women were guarded against

---

[54] *Ibid*

[55] K. K. Kusuman, 'V. T. Bhattathiripad and Social Transformation of the Namboodiris', in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. , p.191.

[56] Lalithambika Antharjanam in her Malayalam novel *Agnisakshi* depicted the poor condition of a Namboodiri woman who was married. The heroine of the novel was not allowed to read and was compelled to live a life of seclusion.

[57] V.T.Bhattathiripadu, *Kanneerum Kinavum*, (Mal.), p.146

entering into illegitimate liaisons. Those who committed adultery were to undergo a trial known as *'smarthavicharam'* [58] and if proved guilty they were ex-communicated. When the chastity of Namboodiri women was suspected the Namboodiries living in the neighborhood were to be informed of it by the head of the house. Failure to do so will spoil the reputation and ruin the social status of the family. The Namboodiri leaders of the locality visit the house of the suspected women and first try to ascertain the genuineness of the charge through a *Dasi* (female servant).[59] This preliminary enquiry of the *Dasi* by the local headman is called *Dasivicharam.*[60] If the local headman was convinced of the alleged offence by *Dasivicharam* they ordered for an immediate transfer of the women to a separate shed called *Anchampura.* Thereafter she was completely cut off from all free movements in the family. Immediately after this, the local headman would submit his report to *Smartan,* the president of the village council, about the evidence of the offence. The case then had to be referred to the local Raja by the *Smartan* for the royal sanction to hold the *Smartnavicharam.* Against his judgment, there was no appeal[61]. On receipt of the complaint the Raja, the judicial head of the Namboodiri in caste matters,

---

[58] An inquisition in the context of illegal sexual misconduct of a Namboodiri women, by a caste council headed by a *Smarthan,* A. M. N. Chakiar, *The Last Caste Inquisition: A victims Reminiscences,* p.XIX. (Revised edition of Malayalam version *Avasanathe Smarthavicharam*)

[59] William Logan, *op.cit,* p.124.

[60] *Dasivicharam* means the questioning of female servant of the suspect.

[61] K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.,*p. 107

used to give his permission or order, this permission was called *Nittu* (royal writ) by the Zamorins of Calicut.[62] The trial council consisted of two *Mimamsakaras* or Namboodiries well versed in caste laws, *Akakoyma* and the King himself, later his deputy, usually a *taluk* or village officer.[63]

The regular trial commenced with the examination of the accused. The rule was that the *Dasi* should stand at the door of the *Anchampura* during the whole period of the trial.[64] The enquiry continued from day to day and in some cases, it lasted for months or even years. Members of the committee of enquiry were to be fed during the entire trial at the expense of the accused. The laborious examination continued until the accused admitted her guilt or until it was indisputably proved that she was innocent. In early times, cruel devices such as letting of rats and snakes in to the women's apartment were practiced in order to extort her confession.[65] Even innocent women at times admitted the charges on such occasions.

In order to preserve the purity of the caste, even the nearest and dearest relatives used to report the act of his wife, mother, sister or daughter

---

[62] P.R. G. Mathar, 'Smartha Vicharam Among the Namboodiri Brahmins of Kerala',in *Journals of Kerala Studies*, Vol.II, part III, September 1975, p.7
[63] L. A. Anatha Krishna Iyer, *op.cit*, Vol.II, p.211
[64] T. K. Gopala Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p.245
[65] P.Bhaskaranunni, *op.cit.*, p.468

to the authorities. They believed that unless the accused was excluded from the caste, neither they nor the guilty would get salvation. Over and above they also believed that the world itself was doomed if an unfortunate woman of their caste went astray. So the trial was considered inevitable for the good of all.[66]

The sentiment of the suspect was much respected. Neither the *Smartann or* the *Mimamsakar* nor the Raja's deputy sat in her presence.[67] Every question had to be put to her through the *Dasi.* Until the offence was definitely proved, she was treated with courtesy. No harsh or cruel word was ever used and the whole enquiry was conducted by a series of close but gentle interrogations. The moment the accused confessed her guilt and disclosed the name of persons with whom she had sexual relations, she would be brought out of *Anchampura* and was cross-examined very minutely on time, place, circumstances and personal identification marks of her paramours in detail. In case she was found innocent, the members of the caste council who conducted the *Smartavicharam* would seek her pardon. She was then readmitted to the caste along with the family.

---

[66] K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala,* Vol.II, p.117
[67] *Ibid.*

The persons accused by the women were never permitted to disprove the charge against them but the women herself was closely cross-examined and probabilities were carefully weighed. All co-defendant Namboodiri men had the right to refuse the allegation and had the right to be admitted to the boiling-oil-ordeal as administered at the temple of Suchindram.[68]

Anantha Krishna Iyer says:

> It then remains for her paramours to indicate their character on pain of excommunication. Two courses are open to them to exculpate themselves either undergoing the ordeal of boiling oil or of weighing. [69]

The accused Namboodiries in north Malabar took the ordeal of the nearest *Bhagavathi* temple and those of south Malabar proceeded to Chengannur and Suchindram.[70] When the guilt was proved, a date would be set apart for the announcement of the sentence. At this night, the verdict of *smarthavicharam* would be announced, which is called *Swarupam chollal.* The *Smartan* submits a report of the trial to the local Raja. On receipt of it, he orders for the ex-communication of the accused woman from the caste. Each local Raja or the territory chieftain was the judicial head of the Namboodiries in each territorial division. For instance, the Raja of Chirakkal and Kottayam,

---

[68] K. K. Pillai, *The Suchindram Temple*, p.308
[69] L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*, p.213
[70] K.K. Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.308

and the Zamorin of Calicut were the arbitrators of the Namboodiries' *smarthavicharam* and caste duties in Malabar.[71]

Gopala Panikkar writes:

> On receiving the proclamation of the judges, they fix a day for its due execution, she is taken near a tank set apart specially for the purpose; and a temporary ceiling is put up from the top of which a specially selected person (usually a servant of the household) reads aloud the proclamation.[72]

After reading the proclamation, the accused women would take bath and remain under the palm leaf umbrella, which she used to cover herself. Now the umbrella would be destroyed, as she was no longer worthy to carry it. The *Dasi* who accompanied her always would also be ordered to leave her. She was also to divest herself of the brass bracelets worn on her arm.[73] Thereafter the people denoting their contempt for the shameless element driven out of society treated her as an outcaste. This enquiry is a most expensive affair. During the whole course of the trial, which often takes great length of time, the master of the house has to feed the committee of enquiry and as a result, suspected families are generally ruined whether the enquiry ends in favour or

---

[71] P.R.G.Mathur,*op.cit.*, p354
[72] T.K. Gopala Panikkar, *op.cit.*, pp.245-46
[73] K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, p.112.

against them.[74] After this, even the members of her family leave her and consider her as dead. Henceforth she became an outcaste and would no longer be called *Antharjanam* but a *Sadhanam*[75].

After the sentence has been pronounced, the excommunicated adulterer was taken to a scheduled locality far away from the village she lived. Either she was lodged in a house; otherwise, a house was built of mud walls and bamboo roofing. With door and lock and with no opportunity to have any sort of intercourse with any one, she was given one measure of rice with necessary accompaniment daily for the rest of her life. She is also prevented from touching tanks, wells, etc.[76]

William Logan says:

> In Malabar women thus driven out go where ever they like. Some are looked after by their seducers, some became prostitutes; a few are taken as wives by the *Chettis* of Calicut and a few find homes in institutions specially endowed to receive them.[77]

From the above description it is clear that the Namboodiries gave due importance to the chaste conduct of their women. Generally, the male

---

[74] V.Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol.II, p.274.
[75] See for more details of *smarthavicharam*, A. M.N. Chakyar, *op.cit.*
[76] K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, pp.114-15.
[77] William Logan, *op.cit*, p.179.

dominated society used the weapons of chastity to control or suppress women[78].

Another dreadful custom known as *Mannapedi* or *Pulapedi*[79] was observed during this period. In the rainy season (July-August), the Pulayas gave much fear to the women folk of higher castes due to a strange social custom that prevailed in Malabar.[80] It has to be noted that only the foreign travellers have referred to the custom of *Mannapedi* or *Pulapedi.* According to this custom if a slave like Pulaya, Paraya, or Mannan happened to see a high-caste women alone after dusk, she would lose her caste and would have to go with him. It was enough if the Mannan or Pulayan threw a stone or a stick at her or called out that he had seen her.[81] The existence of the custom was a source of threat to the prestige of the privileged classes in Kerala, like the Brahmins and the Nairs.[82]

Durate Barbosa, an Italian traveller, first referred to the custom in his book *A Description of Castes of East Africa and Malabar* Barbosa says:

---

[78] *Ibid*

[79] Mannapedi, literally, this meant fear of the respective communities Pulayan, Parayan and Mannan, M. Gangadharan (ed.) *Making of Modern Keralam, The Land of Malabar, The Book of Durate Barbosa,* Vol.II, p.68.

[80] K.K. N. Kurup, *op.cit.*, p.42.

[81] Elamkulam Kunhan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, p.411

[82] R.N. Yesudas, 'Pulapedi in Kerala', in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol.II, Part-I, March 1975, p.42

> These lower caste peoples during certain months of the year try as hard as they can to touch some of the Nair women. At best, they may be able to manage it, and secretly by night to do them harm. Therefore, they go by night amongst the houses of the Nairs to touch the women, and these take many precautions against this injury during this season. And if they touch any women even though no one sees it, and though there shall be no witness she, the Nair woman, herself publishes it immediately crying out and leaves her house without choosing to enter it again to damage her lineage.[83]

The woman had to follow him even if he shouted from the top of a tree, which stood at a distance or from the surroundings, *'Kante' 'Kante'*, (saw) that is, he had seen the women.[84] If the women cried out, she was only giving herself away.[85] In order to save herself and her relations, she had to follow the person who saw her or hide herself in the house of same low caste people. Barbosa says, "And what she most thinks of doing is to run to the house of some low people to hide herself, that her relatives may not kill her as a remedy for what has happened; or sell her to some strangers as they are accustomed to do."[86]

One cannot even imagine that in such a caste-ridden society a Nair female would willingly go to attend festivals in the *Pulapedi* season to allow her to be seized by the lower castes. The family which the women affected by

---

[83] Durate Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, pp.142-43
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] R.N. Yesudas, *op.cit.*, p.52
[86] *Ibid.*

the Pulaya excesses would lose their caste. If she returned to her house, "very often such instances would completely destroy the families concerned too".[87] In such a caste-ridden society, no Nair desired to lose his caste. Likewise to till the soil there were numerous Thiyyas, Pulayas, Parayas and other castes, who considered the cultivation of land as their duty. *Mannapedi* or *Pulapedi* was abolished in Travancore, by an edict in 1696.[88] However, in Malabar the custom continued until the commencement of the British rule.

The immodest way of dressing was a common practice of women during this period.[89] According to the Hindu custom all the women except Brahmins were prohibited from covering their bosoms. Ibn Battuta, who in the fourteenth century remained more than eight years in this part of the country, gives interesting details of this mode of dress.[90] The Brahmin women covered their body by using cloth from neck to toe but sometimes the accompanied Nair women were not allowed to cover their upper parts of the body. The covering of body by the lower caste people was considered as a great irreverence.[91] The customs and practices on the dressing of women folk were based on the existing social system, which was determined by the higher

---

[87] Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.42
[88] *Ibid.*
[89] Karthyanikutty Amma, *Thirumunbinoppam,* (Mal.),p.18
[90] Ibn Battuta, *Travelodge* (Malayalam Translation), p.74
[91] P. Bhaskaranunni, *op.cit.*, p.63

caste Hindu ideology. In this respect, the religious practices were totally against the interest of the women in Malabar.

In this period, a girl who had attained puberty was considered impure and had to sleep apart for three consecutive nights until a purifactory bath was taken on the fourth day. In Malabar the puberty rite is called by two names viz, *Thirandukuli* or *Vayasariyikkal.*[92] For three days, her mother or elder female relatives bath her at home and the washerwomen receive change of cloths every day. On the forth day women friends and relatives take her to a tank in a sort of procession. As soon as the news about the attainment of puberty by a girl spread in the neighborhood, Hindu families of the same caste nearby make sweet cakes and snacks and take them as presents to the girl. Relatives too, including marriage relations, have to do this. Among the Nairs, the second day after the girls become mature, a feast consisting of sweet cakes and snacks has to be given to the relatives. For this, neighbors and relations supply the cakes and snacks. On the third day, invited guests have to be given "*Palkanji*" (milk gruel). On the fourth day, after the girl goes through a purifactory bath as mentioned above, a grand feast is given to guests. All Hindu communities imitated the Nairs in this ritual and celebrated

[92] C. A. Innes, *op.cit.*, p.174

the puberty attainment ceremony in a grand manner as possible. It has to be noted that this custom did not exist among the Namboodiries and other sects of the Brahmins.

The Hindus believed that evil spirits haunted the body of the women in their periods. The haunting spirit of puberty and menses was called *Chettathi,* supposed to be the elder sister (*Chetta*) of Mahalakshmi. Connecting *Lakshmi* and *Chetta* must have been a later invention. *Chettathi* forebode of the evil and the inauspicious and was a portent of danger. Therefore, the girl in menses kept an iron knife by her side to ward off danger. All the purifactory rites were for guarding the girl from the attack of evil spirits and for evicting *Chettathi* from her body. This is clear from the song of Mannan or Vannnan,[93] which is an exorcism to drive away the *Chettathi* from the body of the girl in menstruation.

During the period of menstrual pollution, the woman was prohibited from touching milch cows, or the outskirts of the granary[94]. Even her shadow was supposed to be injurious for fruit-bearing trees, like the jack or coconut and she had to avoid going near them, her husband had to avoid her for fear

---

[93] Both were washer men and their services were indispensable to the higher caste in certain purifactory ceremonies when they have to present clean clothes.

[94] See for more details of menstrual pollution , P.V. Jagadisa Aiyar, *South Indian Customs*

of impotency.[95] The segregated girl did not wear any ornaments and the orthodox did not allow the girl even to clean for three days. The prohibition was stricter for the third day. She was in a state of ritual impurity when nothing was to be done to arouse the evil spirit haunting her.[96]

Among the matrilineal Hindu families there was a strict custom known as *Pulikudi*. The first delivery of a married woman should take place in her father's house.[97] For this purpose, a small party of her relatives would come to fetch the girl from her husband's house in the seventh month of pregnancy. A few other guests also would be invited to the house. Then the pregnant girl was made to drink a preparation of tamarind juice that was supposed to do her good and would lead to an easy and safe delivery. After this, a feast would be given to the guests; and then the pregnant girl would be taken to her paternal home for her confinement.

The Northern ballads or *Vadakkanpattukal* in Malayalam give a beautiful description about the pitiable conditions of women in Malabar. The prevalence of *Marumakkathayam* system of inheritance, the economic prosperity attached to Muslim community of Malabar and many other

---

[95] Puthenkalam, *op.cit.*, p.61.
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] C. A Innes, *op.cit.*, p.168.

customs and practices mentioned in the Northern ballads support their later composition[98]. "For the alleged offence of not giving the usual pansupari (chewing materials) on his visit to Thiyya *thandan's* house, a Nair chieftain who was good swordsmen put the *thandan* to death with his sword. The *thandan's* wife wailing loudly ran to the *Naduvazhis* (ruler of the locality) residence to prefer a complaint to him but she got no relief from the *Naduvazhi.*"[99] This seems to have been the state of affairs in Malabar before the British administration was established.[100]

Slavery, one of the most inhuman institutions in history appeared in different forms during this period in Malabar. The slaves belonged to the lowest castes like Pulaya, Paraya, and Cheraman. They were not only untouchables but unapproachables also.[101] The lowest castes were agricultural labourers and they had lost their self-respect and self-confidence in the age of long suppression by the higher castes.[102] They were born and brought up mostly on the agricultural fields. They were an inferior race and were regarded merely as agricultural instruments in the hands of the landlords and

---

[98] Chalanat Achutha Menon, *Ballads of North Malabar*, pp.140-41

[99] C. A Innes, *op.cit.*, p.168.

[100] K. R. Achyuthan, 'The Social Spectrum of Kerala' in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol.IX, December, 1982, p.152.

[101] Abbe J. A. Dubbis, *Hindu Manners, Customs and ceremonies*, pp.63-65 and also see Adoor K.K Ramachandran Nair, *Slavery in Kerala.*

[102] Abbe J. A. Dubbis, *op.cit.*, p. 66

their masters who supplied them with houses on their estates and worked them in a way little better than that in which they utilized their stock.[103] The practice of transferring of slaves was also existed in Malabar[104]. Buchanan mentions three modes of transferring of slaves. The first by *Janmum*, or sale, where the full value of the slave is given and then propriety is entirely transferred to a new master, who is in some measure bound by his interest to attend to the welfare of his slave. A young man with his wife will sell for from 250 to 300 fanams (panam-local coinage). Two or three young children will add more *panams* to the value of the family. The second manner of transferring the labour of slaves is by *Kanam* or mortgage. The proprietor receives a loan of money, generally two-thirds of the value of the slaves. He also receives annually a small quantity of rice to show that his propriety in the slaves still exists; and he may reassume these properties whenever he pleases to repay the money borrowed for which in the meanwhile he pays no interest. The third manner of employing slaves is by letting them for *pattom* or rent. In this case, for a certain annual sum, the master gives them to another man, and the borrower commands their labour, and provides them with their maintenance. The annual hire is eight *panmns* for a man and half as much for a woman. These tenures are utterly detestable; for the person who exact the

[103] T. K. Gopala Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p.153.
[104] Abbe J. A. Dubbis, *op.cit.*, p. 63

labour and furnishes the subsistence of the slave, is directly interested in increasing the former and diminishing the latter as much as possible. In fact, the slaves are very severely treated, and their diminutive stature and squalid appearance show evidently a want of adequate nourishment.[105]

The lower caste women were severely treated by the landlords. Good looking and healthy women both married and unmarried, belonging to these castes were molested by the landlords.[106] There also existed an illegal practice. After the marriage of a young peasant, it was customary to offer his bride to the landlord. This is known as *Adyarathri Avakasam* (Right for first night).[107] In Malabar, women were allowed to marry any person of the same caste. There was no fixed rule as to where the slave couple lived after marriage. In some places the husband lives in the wife's hut; in some other wife comes to live with the husband. Slaves following the matrilineal law of inheritance followed the former practice. To the people who did not have anything to inherit, this just meant that they were the slaves of masters who followed that system of inheritance. If the women come to live with her husband, she worked for her husband's master as long as she lived with her husband. In

---

[105] Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, pp. 370-71

[106] See for more details of Janmi's oppression and sexual harassment to women folk, Ponkunnam Damodaran, *Kathunna Kannukal*(Mal.), pp.3-12

[107] A. K. Poduval, *Karshaka Samara Kadha*, (Mal.), p.31.

the event of the latter's death she was sent back to her own master.[108] The male Pulayan who lived in his wife's hut went to work for his own master. The owner of the wife could not command his service.

It is a fact that the woman in the pre-colonial Malabar suffered discrimination from the patriarchy. The ritual status and rigidity of the customs and practices were more active among the higher castes than the lower castes. The ideologies of social discrimination were derived from casteism. It was static and unbreakable; any attempt to cross this border lines was considered a serious offence. The ruling power also was under the control of this power structure. Therefore, they sanctioned all decisions of the custodians of the order. The Mysorean invasion was a novel experience in this regard. They critically examined the social system with their concepts and ideology and introduced a set of reform measures. The orthodox caste-oriented society discarded these reforms because the reforms were able to shake the foundation of the existing social order.

The Mysorean occupation, though short lived, paved the way for several changes in Kerala society, especially in Malabar. The traditional life of Malabar underwent radical changes with the social reforms of Tippu Sultan.

---

[108] Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.371

All medieval institutions with their peculiar characteristics received a rude shock with the coming of the Mysoreans and were soon toppled down. K. M. Panikker describes the effect of the Mysorean rule on the society of Kerala in these words. "The social set up that existed from time immemorial was destroyed by the Mysorean rule".[109]

The society in pre-British Malabar had a separate identity in Kerala. In the traditional society, the social institutions and social relations were based on caste system. Even though Malabar was a fragment of Kerala, in many ways it was different in forms of costumes and practices. Some unique features of social costumes and traditions, especially among the Thiyyas and other proletarian castes were a point of difference. Nevertheless, the rigidity of the caste system, pollution and rules of purity was more or less same in all parts of Kerala. The concept of pollution and purity used by privileged higher caste was a means of oppression and social stratification.[110] In this regard, women, without any difference as lower caste or high caste suffered a lot.

---

[109] Quoted in C. K. Kareem, *op.cit.*, p.221

[110] S. V.Ketker, *History of Caste*,Vol.I,pp.121-22

CHAPTER II

CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH POWER

IN MALABAR

The expansion and consolidation of British power in Malabar in the first half of the eighteenth century was not on a predetermined pattern. Being a commercial enterprise, the aim of the English East India Company in this period was to make it a gainful endeavor and to take advantage of the colonies for the benefit of its shareholders. However, even during the initial phase the activities of the Company were not confined to trade but also to expand its power through war and diplomacy. The absence of a competent centralized political authority in Malabar was the hallmark of the eighteenth century which made this region a centre of mutual conflicts between local chieftains and it provided enough space to the foreign intruders into the political body of Malabar. The foreign political powers had crept into the secured places in the political arena and stayed disguised as merchants and became active when chaos reached its zenith. The English East India Company gained an upper hand over their counterparts in trade and adopted multifaceted strategies to gain the over- lordship of the Company, through a number of treaties, administrative restructuring, generous financial assistance, military support, mediation and creating conflicts which paved the way for the emergence of new socio-political and cultural patterns in the subjugated regions. This chapter tries to expose the process of political consolidation of the British and subsequent changes effected in the life of

women in colonial Malabar. It is an attempt to trace the history of the domination of the British, their administrative and legal measures and its impact on the society as a whole and women in particular. This chapter concentrates on the structural change in the power relations and subsequent efforts to rearrange the existing social relations. Along with it, due effort is taken to examine the changes in the status of woman in Malabar in the background of European contact.

There is lack of seminal studies on the position of women in Malabar, almost all following a pattern of Euro-centered analysis. Even the word 'woman' reflects a male-dominated society. It comes from old English 'wifman', wife +man.[1] But the Malayalam words – *Ann* and *penn* (purush, stree) reflect an environment where two separate entities existed. Man and woman were independent in their respective spaces, and areas of interdependence had been clearly demarcated. This was a time when they enjoyed unquestioned authority in their social roles. There were highly respected women scholars, priestesses and social reformers. The worship of mother goddess is still prevalent, which had instilled in society a sense of adoration for mothers, though the dominant culture and power structure might have degraded women to suit their interests.

---

[1] *Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol.IV.p.468

Such a concept is absent in the European mental makeup. Incessant wars and invasions were the formative agencies in Europe. Industrialization and geographic explorations enabled them to dominate the world and women stamp it with their outlook.[2] The first traders from Europe were criminals released from prisons for the purpose of strenuous voyages across the vast oceans.[3] They were unaware of a multicultural and permissive society and so imposed their laws and regulations, and culture and education on the colonies. Almost self-sufficient village communities succumbed to European invasion and their stagnant economies became alive once again. Although colonialism had its own contradiction of construction and devastation in an old social order, the society, which sustained to survive, had conserved many of the medieval institutions.[4]

The English East India Company faced opposition from other companies in its monopolistic trade. The political condition that prevailed in Malabar was favourable to the intervention of foreigners. The English East India Company had to compete with other European powers in Malabar for the establishment of trade monopoly, especially in spices. Their commercial rivalry was very strong in Malabar so that the Dutch, the French and the

---

[2] Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*,p.13

[3] See for more details Sanjai Subramanyam, *The Career and Legend of Vascodagama*

[4] K.K.N. Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change: Role of Malayalam Literature*, p.45

English struggled to gain supremacy over each other in diplomacy and strategy. One of the earliest instances of the English relation with a Kerala kingdom was when Captain Keeling arrived at Kozhikode in 1615 and signed a treaty with *Samuthiri*.[5] He was allowed to open warehouses at Ponnani and Kozhikode.[6] Malabar was abundant in spices and because of its increasing demand in the European market the English Company started a factory at Thalasseri by 1694.[7] The very establishment of the factory at Thalasseri brought out its commercial rivalry with other European powers like the French and the Dutch. Without conducting a major battle against any one of the native chieftains in Malabar, the Company succeeded to protect their interest and its influence in Malabar.

Instead of a direct confrontation with the Dutch, the shrewd diplomacy of Robert Adams, the chief of the English trade on the Malabar Coast, supported the *Samuthiri* to re-capture the ceded territory by providing huge financial assistance. Besides, Adams supplied financial assistance, arms and ammunition and even sent troops under the English flag. For this timely assistance, the *Samuthiri* permitted the English to build a warehouse at

---

[5] The text of this treaty is given by Francis Day in the *Land of Perumals*, p.177

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] The time of the establishment of the trading post is uncertain. Logan assumes that it happened around1694/95 or later, at any rate before 24th October 1699. William Logan, *Malabar* Vol.I,p.341

Chettuva and keep a person there to buy pepper.[8] The Dutch destroyed the warehouse immediately in order to secure the pepper trade and they captured Chettuva. However, the English assistance was fully recognized by the *Samuthiri* and on several articles of trade the English were exempted from paying customs duties. The English found that the supply of war materials was a profitable trade, while it was a good way to secure the favour of *Samuthiri* . Because of this policy of financial assistance and supply of military stores, the *Samuthiri* was considerably indebted to the English Company.[9]

In this contest local rivalries also played a role[10]. A local chief of Tellicherry was in rivalry against the Company, which ended by a treaty in which he admitted that "At Punhole (Punnole) and other places belonging to me, if anyone save the Honorable Company, buy pepper to deal in, you can seize and take it."[11] The second provision says "On the pepper which the Honorable Company may buy and convey from my country, no duty need be paid."[12] This agreement was aimed at a policy of monopoly of the trade in pepper along with the tax free trade. As the French Company had also been

---

[8] William Logan, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and other Papers of Importance Relating to British affairs in Malabar,* p.3.(here after *A Collection of Treaties,)*

[9] *Tellichery Consultations* 1727-28, Vol.III, p.86.

[10] A Portuguese manuscript cited in *A Collection of Treaties* mentions Corongotto Nair as the local chief.

[11] *Ibid.*,p.5

[12] *Ibid.*,p.6

negotiating for a factory at Mahe (near Thalassery) since 1718, the English were more eager to protect their trade interests through mutual agreements. To withstand the competition of the French, the English further negotiated for trade privileges with Kolathiri, the king of Kolathunadu. The royal grant given by him to the English denied the trading right of others save the privileges already granted to the Dutch Company in Kolathunadu.[13] The royal agreement with Kolathunadu stated, "If any other European or any other stranger came to this country, the English Company can in our name, punish, prevent and drive away."[14] The English knew that such a grant from a king whose authority was increasingly circumscribed by the power of the junior and collateral princes would not serve their purpose. Therefore, they obtained another confirmation of these privileges from the prince regent and governors of two local chieftains.[15] In the following year, the English obtained another grant from the southern regent of Kadathanadu, the hereditary governor of Kolathunadu, excluding all other Europeans from the trade in pepper and cardamom.[16] The agreement of Kolathiri granted the English Company some kind of political responsibility "to punish, to prevent, to drive away" other interested foreigners from the trade except the Dutch. In Kadathanadu, the

---

[13] *Ibid.*, p.6
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*, p.7
[16] *Ibid.*, p.13

southern regent permitted complete trade monopoly with effect from January 1726. This endeavour to monopolize the pepper trade was the first stage of the British colonial expansion in Malabar.[17] They have to counter other imperial powers like the French and the Dutch in their effort to consolidate their power.

However, the Company had no sufficient administrative and political power to enforce its authority. When the French started a factory at Mahe they offered a higher price for pepper.[18] It was often smuggled to their warehouse and even native chiefs were not exempted from the desire to do so. Therefore, it became a necessity for the English to keep down the price of pepper by a mutual agreement with the French at Mahe.[19]

The further expansion of British power was based on the policy of substantial financial assistance to the native rulers, which had been simultaneously adopted, with the acquisition of monopoly of trade through agreements. The political atmosphere was also much favourable to the

---

[17]According to Francis Buchanan 15,000 kantis of pepper were produced in the Malabar in the years 1764/65. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in Malabar 8,000 kantis of pepper per year were harvested in Malabar, of which 4,000kantis were from Kottayam. The most productive pepper gardens were situated in the principality of Kottayam. See for more details Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar,* Vol.II,p.530

[18] In 1725, on the Malabar coast , the French captured Mayyazhi, which was renamed Mahe after the French general who was victorious here.

[19] *A Collection of Treaties and Engagements,* pp.15-18

English as there was a tussle between the Kolathiries and the Ali Rajas of Kannur in which the former requested the assistance of Somasekhara Nayak II of Ikkeri, the ruler of Bednur, to subdue the latter. These military affairs created an urgent need of money and military stores to the prince regent. He requested through the Raja of Cochin for Dutch help. His intention was to hand over the Island of Dharmapattanam to the Dutch, which would be detrimental to the English trade. The English feared that it would bring the Dutch very close to their factory and decided to help the prince regent. The prince who met the chief at the English fort at Moylan granted in his own handwriting several privileges to the English.[20] This grant denied the right of trade or establishment to the Dutch and the French in the pepper territories like Iruvanadu and Randattara. The English were also given the right to hoist their national flag in these places if encroached by other Europeans.

In order to establish their power in the initial phase they resorted to various measures. For this purpose they adopted the strategies of financial assistance, military support and mediation in local conflicts which enabled them to gain superiority. The financial assistance was made with a view to contract trade monopoly and other privileges in Kolathunadu and to check the establishment of the French and the Dutch supremacy. But in 1732, the

[20] *Ibid.*, pp.15-16

Canarese invaded the northern portion of Kolathunadu. An agreement with the Kolathunadu prince made them the sovereign masters to the north of the river Balliapattam. By February 1735, the Canarese army under General Gopaljee had pitched their camp at Dharamapatam. The General wrote to the English that the Island would be the property of the Company as he had only intended to invade the territory of Kottayam. After this, the company immediately arranged for the absolute possession of the Island from the prince. The royal writ of the prince with his 'good will and pleasure' transferred the absolute right of the Island to the Company. Before obtaining this title of possession, the English obtained permission from the king of Kottayam to hoist their flag, to possess and to fortify the Island to safeguard it from the Canarese intervention. Therefore, by strategy and diplomacy the English executed their policy of territorial expansion in Malabar by fishing in the troubled waters.

The French at Mahe chalked out a confederacy for expelling the Canarese with *Vazhunnor* of Badagara, Kottayam and the English. However, such a confederacy was not acceptable to the English, as they desired the exclusion of the French from such attempts. The English record states, "When we are actually contriving their overthrow, saviors of the greatest treachery

and deceit, but humane policies are not always governed by open and fair dealings".[21] The possession of the Island was considered as a major success of the English East India Company and the chief reported to Bombay:

> The situation of this Island by being in the centre of the pepper countries, surrounded with rivers which afford a proper conveyance, for bringing it promises a better security to the trade, than any other place, exclusive of the advantage that may be made through its becoming the immediate property of our Hon'ble Masters, and encouraging a resort to people to settle there who in all times may be useful in defending it.[22]

While exploiting the political situation in Malabar, the British were trying to expand their power over Kolathunadu. Simultaneously attempts were made by the English to reconcile with the Canarese interests in Malabar.[23] The British colonial policy of expansion had begun to function in Malabar even during the first half of the eighteenth century as a matter of commercial necessity and political exigency created by the territory in which the factory was situated. The British settlement at Malabar Coast marked the beginning of the gradual subjugation of the country, initially by western ideas of trade and economy but increasingly also in political and administrative

---

[21] *Dairy* 10 March 1735, p.63
[22] *Letters from Tellichery*: 1734-36, Vol.IV, Stephen Law to Bombay, 17 November, 1735
[23] *A Collection of Treaties*, pp.31-32

regard, which ended in the territorial appropriation of the country by the British. Furthermore, the British were largely able to drive back the influence of other European powers, above all the Dutch and the French.

An excellent opportunity was provided by the Mysorean invasion of Malabar to set the grip of the Company on the local Rajas and chieftains.[24] The attempt of Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan by conquering Canara and Malabar and trying to subjugate Cochin and Travancore was to cover both flanks of the Carnatic and thus squire the English eventually out of south India. The English, who had realized this serious threat to their security, took early steps to canvas support from local rulers, and make alliances with a view to counter the expansion of Mysore and if possible overthrow the power of Haidar Ali and Tippu.[25] At the time of the siege of Thalasserry fort by the Mysore forces the local chieftains rushed with their troops to rescue the British soldiers. Being one of the contending political powers for supremacy in Malabar politics the Company officials were eager to maintain their friendship and with the help of the chieftains the Company forces repulsed the attack of Haider Ali.

---

[24] K.M. George. *The Malayalis the People, Their History and Culture*, p.325.
[25] Government of Kerala, *Kerala Through the Ages*, p.68.

Tippu Sultan, continued the hostile attitude towards the company and after defeating the Malabar chieftains one by one he occupied their territories. In the war that ensued between the Company and Tippu Sultan the chieftains as 'friends' and 'allies' of the English supported the Company. The chieftains expected that in return for their support to the Company in the war against Tippu Sultan, they would be restored to their ancestral kingdoms. The Company recaptured all the principalities overrun by Tippus's army, but refused to restore the kingdoms to former chieftains. The treaty of 1792 legalized the British claim on Tippu's territories in Malabar and Cochin.[26]

Because of these agreements with the English, the native rulers were forced to pay exhorbitant revenue with a singular purpose of getting the right of their age-old privileges. Many of them failed to pay such huge amounts. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Company had to realize the arrears nearly of Rs.4, 50,000 from the total revenue of something more than Rs. 14, 0000.[27] On these arrears the Company charged a penal interest at the rate of 12 percent for the first 8 days, 24 percent for the next 20 days and 36 percent for the next 30 days,[28] In the whole history of colonial administration,

---

[26] See for more details of the provisions of Sreerangapattanam Treaty, *A Collection of Treaties,* pp.39-46

[27] William Logan, *op.cit.*, Vol.I. p.505

[28] *Ibid.*

it would be difficult to find a revenue policy more merciless than this adopted for the conquered province of Malabar. It shows the inhuman nature of colonialism and their merciless exploitation.

Before the Mysorean occupation, the Nairs of Malabar, enjoyed a high status, and did not pay any revenue to the native rulers. The holdings belonging to the temples (*Dewaswam*) and Brahmins (*Brahmaswam*) were also exempted from taxation during this period. The British were not the first outsiders with a radically different cultural tradition to conquer India. But significant changes that affected the lives of ordinary people first came with the British rule. Traditional Hindu society was 'decentred' and previous challenges from foreign invaders had allowed it to remain so. The local chieftains collected rents and dues and demanded obeisance but did not interfere with the social order. But the British, pursuing commercial aims, introduced new relationships.

However, the Mysorean Government brought all landed properties under assessment and the Company conveniently followed the same.[29] In settling the revenue agreements, they had reflected some of the valid claims of former chieftains. For example, the revenue agreement regarding the

---

[29] *A Collection of Treaties,* part II, No.XIII,30 July 1792, p.158.

country of Kottayam was made with the Raja of Kurumbranad.[30] Ultimately this mistaken revenue settlement led Pazhassi Raja into an open revolt against the British.[31] Such revolts of disgruntled chieftains in Malabar destroyed the tranquility of the province for several years. The increasing discontent and dissatisfaction paved the way for renewing revolts in Malabar.

After the British had taken control of Malabar in 1792, by the peace settlement of Sreerangapattanam, they intended to provide the recently won province with institutions capable of government according to British standards. In this they were partially able to fall back on the structures that had been created in Malabar by Haidar Ali and Tippu Sultan. The primary aim was to turn the province into a prosperous source of income [32] The British paid little attention to traditional structures in Malabar, which they considered to be outdated, and their disregard aroused the displeasure of both the population and the Rajas.

Colonialism viewed Indian society in ethnic terms and based its strategy of control on an elaboration of administrative practices and political management on such divisions. Caste and communities not only became

---

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] See detail in Richard's report regarding Kotiote Rebellion, 19 January 1798 and correspondence regarding to the Pazhassi Rebellion 24 December 1800-1806.

[32] Pamela Nightngale, *Trade and Empire in Western India1785-1806*,p.113

categories to comprehend reality but also weapons in the colonial arsenal to ensure the perpetuation of political power. India, in this view, was constituted by a conglomeration of warring groups, held apart by the intervention of colonial rule.[33] It is observed that collaboration was very important in the establishment of imperial authority.[34] What determines that a country will eventually be colonized and when it will be decolonized is the collaborative mechanism. Colonization occurs when the initial collaborative mechanisms fail, but colonial rule depends on new forms of collaboration whose subsequent failure determines when colonialism is to be dislodged.[35] In this regard, colonialism is viewed as an alliance between imperial and local forces, an alliance which is dictated by the small number of "the men on the spot", and the tendency by the imperial factor to economize its efforts which were nonetheless meager.[36]

One of the most important aspects regarding the establishment of administration in Malabar was the British government's intention to direct

---

[33] K. N. Panikkar , 'In Defense of 'Old' History' *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. 29, No. 40 , October. 1, 1994, pp. 2595-2597

[34] B R Robinson and J Gallagher see the establishment of colonial power in terms of the failure of collaborative mechanisms which calls forth the establishment of new ones. See their book, *Africa and the Victorians,* New York, 1961. Eric Stokes attempts to summarize the thesis of this book in his *Traditional Resistance Movements and Afro-Asian Nationalism: the context of the 1857 mutiny rebellion", Past and Present,* 1970. See also R Robinson, *Non-European foundations of European imperialism: sketch for a theory of collaboration,* and Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century,* Cambridge, 1968.

[35]Robinson, *op cit.,* p. 62

[36] Stokes, *op cit.,* p. 165

along well-ordered paths the affairs within the province which they viewed 'as anarchic'.[37] The Company's view that the Malabar Rajas would not continue for long as independent was only a statement of this changed policy. The system of appointing a Board of Commissioners vested with the powers to establish the temporary scheme of eternal administration, which might operate until the Governor-in-Council should possess a permanent system in India by the Company.[38] It was very useful for the Company to ascertain the conditions of the new acquisitions and to design the system of administration to suit the financial betterment of the Company. The system of appointing a Commission was a new measure, which served as an instrument to fulfill the colonial ambitions of the Company.

A chief characteristic of this policy was to regard the Malabar rulers in the sense of Bengal Zamindars, i.e. to strip them of their sovereignty and to seal with them appropriate treaties on tax.[39] The aim of the treaties was firstly, to refute all claims to sovereignty made by the Malabar rulers and to ensure their long-term dependence on the Company, secondly, to guarantee their tax collections by restoring the strength of Malabar's economic production

---

[37] Margret Frenx, *From Contact to Conquest*,p.99

[38] B.B.Misra. *The Central Administration of the East India Company*, 1773-1834, pp.141-42

[39] Pamela Nighitingale, *op.cit*,p87

through its primary good of pepper, and thirdly, to create an administrative and legal structure.[40]

However, the Rajas were not willing to give up their sovereignty to the British that easily. In their first set of negotiations with the British they assumed that they would be regarded as allies of the British, and therefore insisted upon being returned their principalities. In the end, however, the Rajas were forced to give in to British demands: Furthermore, the British endeavoured to countermand a large part of the Malabar Rajas' basis of legitimating by depriving them of their traditional rights underlining their sovereignty. For example, they forbade the Rajas to accept gifts from the people at the festivals of Onam and Visu and in doing so they struck at one of the fundamental pillars for the basis of legitimation within the redistributive system. The Raja of Kadathanadu refused to forfeit his right to collect tax to the Company, since this constituted one of the most important sovereign rights in Malabar.[41]

The Company viewed pepper in terms of revenue and forbade the benefits of a high market price to its new subjects in Malabar. Even after becoming the administrators of a province, the Company was following the

---

[40] Margret Frentz, *op.cit,p.*100
[41] *A Collection of Treaties,* p.187

earlier policy of traders who purchased in a cheap market and cherished the concept of monopoly. If the commodities, including spices, had been given the market price, it would have indirectly helped the flourishing of agriculture and gradually brought considerable revenue to the Company. However, it was still clinging on to the old policy of mercantilism even in a new era of colonial expansion.

Regarding the civil administration of Malabar, the first significant administrative act to be passed by the Commissioners were the guidelines for the new government of what was known as the 'Malabar Province' on 11 March 1793. At the head of the government was the 'Supervisor' (or General Magistrate) to whom two Superintendents were assigned. The administrative structure of the newly organized government was an attempt that the Company had made in Bengal Province. B.B. Misra says, "The appointment of supervisors none the less was an important landmark in so far as it made a beginning in the reconstruction of the revenue records, which in turn furnished positive evidence of the need to take over the direct management of revenue." [42]

---

[42] *Ibid.* p.113

In spite of this attempt to fix the revenue at least for a period of five years and ensure a recurring income from the province, the Company faced a difficult situation in Malabar and its subjects were put to miserable condition. The main reason for such hardships was the revenue policy of the Company, which was motivated further by colonial ideas. Their revenue policy was mainly aimed at not only to collect more revenue but also to fix their authority over Malabar.

Analyzing the levels of administration introduced by the British, it has to be noticed that they did not take into account the structures that had developed previously in Malabar, apart from the retention of their names. The old *desams* were brought together into larger administrative units, the *amsams.* [43] In this way the figure of just over two thousand *desams* was reduced to 429 *amsams* by the middle of the nineteenth century.[44] At the head of the *amsams* were *adhikaris,* administrative officials, who were appointed by the British government. The British frequently recruited employees from the numbers of old *desavazhis* and *naduvazhis,* who had lost their privileged position due to the new British administration.[45] The primary function of the *adhikaris* was to collect taxes for the British. They were thus the most important people in

---

[43] William Logan, *Malabar,* Vol.I,p.490

[44] *Ibid.,*p.89

[45] E.K.Santha, *Local-Self Government in Malabar1800-1960,*p.6

British eyes for passing on information to the population and for carrying out orders. In return the *amsadhikaris* were afforded the status of powerful men and were more feared than respected by the local people. The British always strove to satisfy the *adhikaris* so as to receive their loyalty and subordination, The British also benefited from using them as 'middlemen' in communications with the local population; the *adhikaris* were well acquainted with the land and its people, which meant that administrative costs could be kept low and that pressure would not be put on the already limited finances of the British.

Another major step was the establishment of their Head Quarters at Calicut. One of the purposes of this institution was to impress the locals with the establishment of a system that guaranteed those rights and property.[46] In cases of dispute the population could choose whether to turn to this court or to the Rajas for judgment. The British, however, reserved the right to amend judgments made by the Raja in those cases where the parties concerned were not satisfied with the result.

In 1792 when British took over Malabar they conceived the idea of leaving the administration of justice in the hands of the rajas. As part of it seven local courts were established in different parts of Malabar including

---

[46]*Joint Commissioners Report*, CLVI

Cannannore, Palakkad, Thirur and Ponnani in July 1793.[47] An important step in advance was made in the separation of judiciary from the executive administration. The district was divided into two districts judgeship of north and south Malabar with head quarters at Thalassery and Kozikode. In the north district there are a subordinate judge's court at Thalessery and district munsifs's court at Vatakara, Cannannore, Kuthuparamba, Nadapuram, Payyoli, Quilandi, Taliparamba and Thalassery. In the south district there were sub-courts at Calicut, Palakkad, and Ottappalam and district munsif's courts at Alathur, Chowgat, Manjeri, Parappanangadi, Pattambi, Ponnani, Thirur,and Perinthalmanna.[48]

Village headmen (adhikaries) were empowered under the village Courts Act of 1889 to try petty suits where the value of the cause of auction did not exceed Rs.20/- and the system of trial by Bunch Court under section IX of the same act was in force in certain areas. But the Village Courts were not popular, and did not appreciably lighten the burden of the civil courts. More than a quarter of total numbers of suits in the Madras Presidency in 1903 were

---

[47] C.A.Innes, *Malabar*,p.384
[48] *Ibid.*,p.385

filed in the village courts; but in Malabar the proportion was only one-eleventh.[49] The volume of litigation in the Malabar district was immense.

Litigation was luxurious activity and the accepted explanation of the constant report to the courts in Malabar was the general prosperity of the district and the immunity from famine. Other causes were the complexity of the existing land tenures and the inevitable dispute as the value of improvements on the termination of *kanam* or other demises. Intimately connected with the civil courts , the Registration department had equally heavy work, and of all the documents presented for registration in the presidency in the latest years for which figure are available no less than one sixth were registered in Malabar.[50]

The effect of Malabar Wills Act, 1898 which placed the testamentary deposition of self-acquired property by persons subject to *Marumakkathayam* law on secure basis, was beginning to make itself felt, the number of wills registered in 1901-02 being more than double those registered three years before. The Malabar Marriage Act1896 for the registration of *sambandham* is on the other hand almost a dead later and since the passing of Act 1898 husbands

---

[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.,p.359

have been able to make provision for their wives and children without registering their *sambandhams*.

All village magistrates had the usual powers in petty cases arising in their jurisdictions but rarely exercised them. Panchayat courts which had been established in several villages under the Madras Village Court Act of 1888 were also sometimes invested with criminal powers. Such Panchayat courts replaced the court of the village magistrates and the election to the court is open vote and members elect their own president. All *thahasildars* had second class powers but they tried only cases which were transferred to them for disposal by the district and divisional magistrates. The district magistrates, divisional magistrates and the treasury deputy collector had the usual first class powers. The jurisdiction in these courts followed the Code of Bengal. Within these seven local judicial administrations, the British also employed local people as policemen and court administrators.[51] The employees had to swear an oath that they would meet their obligations and not abuse their positions to make financial gain in any way.[52]

With the establishment of British courts and the orientation of jurisdiction towards Anglo-Saxon customs, local law was almost entirely replaced by codified law. Traditional institutions were consequently ignored

---

[51] T.K.Ravindran, *Malabar Under Bombay Presidency*,p.8

[52] This oath was known as *muchalka*

and replaced by the British system without any thought as to whether this would be suited to the customs of the region.[53] The British government found it impossible to bring about 'law and order' to their satisfaction, since the new system was not efficient enough in British eyes—the population trusted neither the courts nor their staff and the operation of the system entailed very high costs for the Company.[54]

A modification was made to the Civil Code in October 1797; this was partially designed to keep in check the growing influence of the Rajas, while at the same time establishing British supremacy and enabling a reduction in the expenditure of the Company.[55] At the end of 1797, civil servants and tax assistants who had been sworn in were employed across the entire district.[56] The British regulations made in the initial years following the takeover of administration did not actually enjoy any real success, but they did lay the foundations for a modern legislature based on the Western model.[57]

In ancient time the *Naduvazhis* and the *Desavazhis* supported by their armed Nair retainers maintained law and order. With the Mysorean invasion the system broke down and in 1801 the irregular and undisciplined *sibbandi*

---

[53] T.K.Ravindran, *op.cit*,p.24
[54] T.K.Ravindran, *Institutions and Movements in Kerala History*,p.85
[55] T.K.Ravindran, *op.cit*,p.85
[56] William Logan, *op.cit*,p.522
[57] T.K.Ravindran, *op.cit*,p.62

crops were disbanded and their place was taken by force of 500 armed policemen raised by Captain Watson, mainly for the purpose of collecting the revenue. During the time of the Pazhassi rebellion their number was increased up to 1200. This force was disbanded in 1810, and since that date the Malabar police have followed normal lines of development. By the regulation II of 1816 the police force was renrwed. The Mappila rebellions which had periodically disturbed normal life of the district since 1836 compelled the British authorities to take serious steps to prevent the disturbances.

The Malabar rebellion of 1921 showed that the existing Malapuram Special Police was too small, inadequate and ill-equipped to quell armed disorder of a serious and widespread character. The special force was disbanded in 1921 and the Malabar Special Police, six companies strong and organized and trained on military lines was constituted. The Special Police was armed with 303 Magazine rifles, Lewis guns and grenades and was equipped with motor transport and hospital arrangements. Later the MSP became the synonym of brutal oppression and notorious for uncountable cruelty.

Imprisonment was not a common form of punishment in olden days, and jails were a British innovation. The central jail at Cannannore was built in

1869 on the association block system with accommodation for 1062 prisoners. This jail received long-term convicts from South Canara. There were special wards for juveniles and women and an up-to-date hospital and a school for youthful offenders. The introduction of law and order system and a network of judicial courts on universal jurisprudence was a special feature of British rule in Malabar. The new legal system and its machineries included police and supplementary laws.

With the introduction of an administrative structure characterized by British conceptions changes and breaks occurred in the traditional structure of society. One of the most striking examples of these changes was the restructuring of the Nair *tarawad.* The British did not recognize their major function and importance within society; they stripped the Nairs of their political freedom, their right to share in decision-making and also their economic independence. As a result the Nairs were denied their traditional responsibilities, i.e. the management of the land and its people, and the leadership and implementation of local self-administration. The British also mistrusted the family organization within the Nair *tarawad.* The women within the *tarawad* were hit especially hard: due to legislation introduced by the British they were only allowed to hold the post of *karanavati* if a court acknowledged their right to have this position. Furthermore, the

authorization to hold this post could be taken away from them at any time.[58] The *tarawad* was not actually destroyed in physical terms, but they were broken as a political, social and ritual unit through the fundamental redefinition of its appearance and functions.[59]

The British policy—marked on the one hand, by persistent ignorance of existing social structures in Malabar and on the other hand by visions of a state modeled on European bureaucracy—increasingly countermanded the traditional structures in Malabar, which had already been undermined by Mysorean occupation. This ultimately resulted in the widespread elimination of handed-down traditional structures within the systems of society and state in Malabar, and in their replacement by more British forms of state control. Yet it was not only the changes forced by British policy but also its methods which found little favour with the local population. This is exemplified in the dissatisfaction caused by the British restructuring of administration. The aim of British policy was to achieve greater control over the land and its people while also attaining the most effective economic exploitation possible in the form of trade monopolies and tax collections—and all this at the lowest possible cost. Therefore, in the course of negotiations with the British, the

---

[58] G. Arunima, 'Multiple Meaning: Changing Conception of Matrilinial Kinship in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Malabar' in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.33, Issue 3,1996,pp.283-307 www.jstor.org

[59] P.V.Balakrishnan, *Matrilinial System in Malabar*,p.187

Malabar rulers must have detected that the concessions which were wrested from them were intended to weaken their position and to strengthen that of the British. Some Rajas who did not consider it acceptable for the British to slowly take away their rights of sovereignty took a stand against them.

The political consolidation of British power was a landmark in the history of Malabar. The colonial expansion as elsewhere in the world badly affected the life and culture of the local population. The colonial policy was not aimed at the development of the subjugated people but was led by their profit motives. They looted indigenous recourses indiscriminately and taught the people how to become loyal to their colonial masters. Women irrespective of caste and religion suffered its consequences. The restructuring of social fabrics created new anxieties, which were not properly accounted for by the ruling colonial authorities. At the time of the British conquest of Malabar it had a social structure evolved through the centuries following a tradition of delineation of power. There had been a considerable increase in the population of peasants and large tracts of land were brought under cultivation. There were various power centres with military, administrative and judicial responsibilities. The existence of a large number of territorial units enabled the people to manage their own affairs without much

intervention from above. The rigid caste structure was a law in itself till the increasing trade and commercial activities drew the people into a vortex of change. Those who were at the height of political hierarchy had nothing to do with the economic activities at lower levels. As William Logan notes, there was neither land revenue in Kerala nor any revenue collecting mechanism prior to the Mysorean invasion.[60] It was Tippu's officers who made the 'Rajas' responsible for their own collection of revenue.

It is interesting to note in this context that the bestowing of powers or responsibilities on the head of the state, and in turn, on the heads of households had played a crucial role in restructuring the cultural and social élan of families, at least, families directly involved in running the affairs of society. It saw the rise of male authority within the households themselves. In households which had been following matriliny with women exercising a certain power it marked a profound change. By the middle of the nineteenth century the authority of women came to an end.

Arunima observes:

> The steady singling out of the *Karanavan* or the eldest male in the *tharavad* as the figure to make settlements with the Company in the early decades of the nineteenth century created a 'sexual contract' between the state and men. . . . The colonial state, treating 'headship' as

---

[60] William Logan, op.cit.,p.600

> a gendered right available normatively to men altered the existing equation of right among the matrikin.[61]

The British introduced an elaborate administrative system in Malabar to extract the revenue. In the context of a decentralized local governance, the responsibility of collection was vested in the hands of Joint Commissioners appointed by the British government. It has to be noted that the administration did not confine itself to the collection of the revenue. It penetrated the whole social structure as well.

With the introduction of legal procedures modeled on the practices in Britain, even a brief survey of the treatises and engagements would reveal the extent of colonial influence. For instance, in a proposal signed by the Commander-in-Chief of Tellichery in 1761 it was stated that "all persons, civil and military, as well as soldiers, white and black shall have their moveable effects and domestics preserved without molestation, and the English are to but safeguard for the security thereof as they may desire-granted, understanding it to mean wearing apparel and household furniture"[62]. Another article of the same proposal allowed "all the private inhabitants, both white and black, that shall be found to have possessions of lands and tenants

---

[61] G. Arunima, *op.cit*,p.122

[62] *A Collection of Treaties*, p.27

are to be suffered to enjoy them quietly with liberty to each of them to remain or remove as they think proper."[63]

Later we find a number of legislations directly affecting the management of households, like the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Act 1887 and the Wills Act 1898. It is to be noted that these legislations reflected the changing social values. Every affair of the society tended to be brought under a centralised legal framework. It can be argued that these changes, though not directly liberative, brought every individual including the women, to the limelight of social transformation. In such caste and social groups where matrilineal practices were followed, much of women's rights and status they enjoyed were curtailed. But this trend was reversed when joint families broke up as evident from the presence of women in social movements everywhere.

The British rule curtailed more and more the traditional power relations within the household through inflexible legal principles. The eldest male of the household was invested with supreme authority. As has been observed, "It resulted in the most significant changes in matrilineal kinship under colonial rule."[64] Earlier women could establish separate branches or household. It was possible because they had access to their own separate

[63] *Ibid.*,p.31
[64] G.Arunima, *op.cit.*,p.137

revenues and properties. They had properties set apart for themselves. But the British intervention totally changed this situation depriving women of their distinct rights to the property.

Another significant impact of the colonial rule was the change in property rights. The uppercastes who had enjoyed almost a monopoly over landholdings found themselves confronted by Thiyyas and Mappilas. These communities could now possess landed property whereby they had increasingly become ineligible social forces. They could now engage in land trade. Therefore, it inevitably follows that social discourse would be possible on a large scale. The courts provided a common platform where the question of property, family and authority could be discussed. It had repercussions in the whole society towards the formation of the individual. Society became more and more porous to allow fresh ideas and concepts to percolate among various strata.

Along with these changes there is another factor which played a significant role in the consolidation of colonial power. It was the spread of education among the masses with the traditional village school giving way to government schools and colleges. The British administrators aimed to create

a civil society through education. As Lord Minto, Governor General, from 1807 to 1812 observed,

> The ignorance of the natives, arising from the want of education, is generally acknowledged. This defect not only excludes them as individuals from the enjoyment of all those comforts and benefits which the cultivation of letters is naturally calculated to afford.[65]

It is also necessary to discuss the reason why the Malabar Rajas were not treated as tributaries. In fact they were relegated to the position of revenue farmers. At a later stage, they were deprived of this right to collect revenue and pensioned off. On the other hand, the Rajas of Travancore and Cochin were allowed to exercise administrative functions.[66] The most important reason for this was the absorption of Malabar into the Mysorean dominions. In fact, the social and political fabric of Malabar was destroyed beyond repair by the Mysorean conquerors. The Nair nobility had been dispossessed. Almost three decades of anarchy had created a wide gulf between the old claims and actual realities of the situation.[67] At this juncture in the interest of trade the Company was finally led to exercise its sovereign rights in Malabar. The northern Rajas, the most important pepper producers, were told bluntly

---

[65] N. Rajendran, *op.cit*, p.275
[66] *Ibid.*
[67] *Ibid.*

that all the rights of sovereignty which Tippu had exercised were transferred to the Company, and that henceforth the Rajas could act only as agents of the company.[68]

The women in colonial Malabar during the period of British political consolidation faced serious threats from different quarters of the society. The harassment of the male-dominated society and the anarchical political situation further increased their problems. During the period of Mysorean invasion the women and children were the largest victim group affected by the causalities of war. The policy followed by the Mysorean invaders to conquer their enemies was brutal and illegitimate. The later developments also shows that the local rulers and colonial authorities had not paid due attention to the matters of women and their social position. Some of the larger households, like the Vengayil and Kalliattu, were the beneficiaries of this search for monarchs since the settlements gave them almost absolute authority over land. At a later stage, as Arunima has shown, it became important to settle with 'male' authority within the households themselves whereby the earlier fluidity within matrilineal households where women

---

[68] Michel H.Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India1757-185*, p.142

could succeed to headship was brought to an end by the middle of the 19th century[69]

The activities of Christian missionaries also are a matter of heated discussion among the scholars owing to the stakes and intention behind the social restructuring initiatives of the missionaries. Under the colonial regime the efforts of Christian missionaries did not make any serious attempt to better the position of women. The colonial administrative reforms and procedures to bring the rulers under their direct control was not a matter of appreciation because their motive was not to perform a better rule in this colony but to acquire maximum benefit. To expect such a policy from an imperialist commercial firm is absurd. The local rulers had their own agenda of social action which was directed by the ageold customs and practices because they were conservative Hindu rulers and the pillars which support the degenerated social system. The European colonial domination had been a decisive epoch in the social life of women in Malabar. The women's space was determined according to the caste relations and practices within the feudal structure. The European world view and their social life made drastic changes

---

[69] G. Arunima, 'Multiple Meanings: Changing Conceptions of Matrilineal Kinship in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Malabar', in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 33, 3, pp 283-307.

in the status and life of women. As the Europeans came from a monotheistic society they could not understand the plural culture and its internal structure. The foreign domination of Malabar in different periods strengthened the moves to transform the society on western lines.

The characteristic feature of Malabar as elsewhere in India was an agrarian economy. The society remained as settlement units and received its structure along social customs and practices. These units later came under local power centers and as such they were in sense larger households. These households had provided enough space for women to function in society. The various chieftains and their families in Malabar had a tight control over the agricultural resources. Kottayam in Malabar was foremost in the production of pepper, Kolathiri and Arakkal and Chirakal families had established trade relations with Arabs and they were the nerve-centers of the economic activities in Malabar. The womenfolk in these royal families were influential inside their families as well as outside. Almost all royal families were interconnected through female lineage. But the Europeans were far superior with their modern outlook and production relations. In course of time they became the dominant force with numerous treatises and engagements with local rulers.

The union of colonial exploitation and reactionary custodians of

degenerated social systems made lethal consequences in the life of native women in Malabar. The pitiable plight created during this period was not able to be overcome easily. Colonialism provided better opportunities to men to dominate over the female by the teaching that men were superior to women in all spheres of social life and it continued even during the early phase of the twentieth century. The history of women during the period of colonial expansion is the history of the transforming phase of women in Malabar. The land became a readily saleable commodity. The introduction of cash crops like coffee tea and rubber and increasing value of Kerala's ancient spice and coconut trade steadily monetized the economy.

As they became a dominant force in the region they tried to probe into its cultural history in order to manage their affairs smoothly. Thus they conducted regional studies countrywide and formed a Gazetteers Department. It was in these circumstances that they tried to prepare district-wise Manuals. These Manuals reflected the colonial outlook which mostly depended on the ruling classes of the time. Naturally, much of the life and culture of the downtrodden classes as well as women were left out. As mentioned elsewhere the de-centred power structure, cultural identities and customs and manners had allowed every strata of society certain freedom which was quiet unknown to the Europeans.

The advent of British power in Malabar paved the way for the drastic change in socio-political and economic spheres. They gradually stopped the trade and occupied the status of administrators of the region; instead of profit from trade they realized that revenue farming is the safest and profitful endeavour in Malabar. For the maintenance of power and prestige they introduced a number of measures which included administrative re-organization, law making and maintenance of law and order system, policing, network of courts and modern militia, hospitals and schools etc. on western standers. The entire concept of crime and punishment were re-defined and everything legalized on the basis of rule of law. Thus the political consolidation completed and the local chieftains and native rulers were either suppressed or yielded and British paramount power was established. There were emerged numerous sites on women issues but they were centered on the depiction of eulogy or mourning of women's position in the society and denying them complex personalities and agency.

CHAPTER III

MODERN

EDUCATION AND WOMEN

Education is a powerful instrument and a form of investment that enforces a large number of responsibilities to the recipients and helps them to explore hidden potentialities and it is one of the most effective ways to make them conscious of their our surroundings. In the pre- colonial period the whole knowledge system was controlled by a few, so it became a privilege of the upper strata of the society. Colonial education owes its origin to an alien culture and the educated intelligentsia became a decisive part of it.[1] The educational system in India during the British period is a testimony to this fact. The case of Malabar was not different. The ideological hegemony of the Namboothiri Brahmins was firmly established on the whole sections of the Hindu community in Malabar which was re-emphasized by their dominant position as landlords. With the spread of English education, especially among the Nairs, many educated people entered into Government service and it become a landmark in the history of socio-economic development of Malabar. The present chapter examines the spread of education in the colonial period and how it benefited women in British Malabar.

---

[1] A.R.Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, pp.128-29

While considering the educational scenario of Malabar, women were considered as a neglected social fragment and kept away from the field of education. They occupied an inferior status in the social hierarchy. In addition, the caste-ridden system kept them away from the day-today affairs of the society. This prevented them from enjoying many rights and privileges. The high caste women too were at the mercy of their male masters. Modern education was unknown or denied to them. During this period, they were compelled to live by suppressing all their passions and lead a life within the four walls of their homes. However, with the advent of British rule in Malabar, especially with the initiatives of Christian Missionaries, the necessity of giving education to children came to the forefront of social discourse.

Lord Macaulay took the earliest meaningful step in this direction of popular education. He persuaded Lord William Bentick to introduce English education in India. The intention behind this was "the creation of a class of Indians who would be 'Indian' in blood and colour but Western in tastes, in opinion, in moral and in intellect".[2] However, it was the Woods Despatch of 1854, known as the 'Magnacarta of Indian education', which laid the foundation of modern education in the country. The educational system was

---

[2]*Ibid.*,p.128

to be organized in such a way to realize the object of spreading Western culture and securing properly trained servants for public administration.[3] The growth of modern education gained momentum after these measures.

The study of English language and literature significantly contributed to the development of socio-cultural and political awareness among the Indians. Through this path of English education came the liberal ideas of the West, which attracted the masses and awakened them from the slumber of ages. A critical and introspective look and a real desire for future paved the way for the new awareness. Reason and judgment took the place of faith and beliefs, and superstitions yielded to science, static condition was replaced by progress and a zeal for reform prevailed over age-old apathy. The traditional meanings of the talks were subjected to critical examination and new concepts of morality and religion remodeled the orthodox beliefs and habits.[4]

Three main agencies were responsible for the spread of modern education in India. They were foreign Christian Missionaries, the British Government and the progressive Indians.[5] A proselytizing spirit inspired the Christian Missionaries who did extensive work in the field of modern

---

[3] Sayed Narulla and J.P.Naik, *History of Education in India,* p.136 cited in *Ibid.*
[4] Thayattu Sankaran, *Indian Vidhyabhyasam Noottandukalilude,* (Mal.), pp.85-86
[5] A.R.Desai,*op.cit.*,p.128



education in India. While imparting modern education, the educational institutions started by them also gave religious instruction in Christianity. The British Government was however, the principal agent in disseminating modern education among the Indians. It established a network of schools and colleges in India, which turned out innumerable educated Indians. As centers transmitting the elements of colonial worldview, the educational institutions not only moulded the mindset of the students but also transformed and influenced local societies. The values, norms, meanings and measures not known to traditional society spread informally to the areas surrounding the schools.[6]

German protestant Missionaries founded the Basel Evangelical Mission at Basel (Switzarland). They established a center at Nittur (Thalassery) in 1889 and began to work in Malabar among the lower caste people. They had admitted the students in their newly opened schools irrespective of caste or religion. In addition, they realized that the women formed an important fragment of society and their education was an inevitable factor in the educational progress.

---

[6] Rajan Gurukkal, 'Development Experience in Colonial Keralam',in Omman (ed.) *Rethinking Development* ,Vol .I p.90

The educational system in the pre-colonial period, in Malabar was centered on Brahmanic – Sanskritic traditions.[7] There were temple -centered educational institutions called *Gathikas* and *Salas* for Vedic course accessible only to the Namboodiries. The Vedic learning, being quite extensive allowed for exegetical specializations suitable for scholarly pursuit transcending ritual milieu.[8] Brahmins extended the exercise of ritual power over the rest of the social groups in the pre-colonial situation being placed as the ritual authority and temple managers. *Upanayana*[9] marked the beginning of the education of a *Brahmin* boy. At the end of this course, the learner was expected to acquire a thorough grounding in Sanskrit along with a working knowledge in Malayalam. The emphasis was on reading rather than writing.[10] Higher education of the Brahmins was generally under the gurus. They also went to *Othupalli* and *Sabamatt* for Vedic studies.[11] The Nairs who constituted

---

[7] K. Kunjunni Raja, *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature*,p.36

[8] Rajan Gurukkal,op.cit., p.93

[9] *Upanayanam*, is the investiture ritual of the Namboodiris. Unlike the Brahmins in other parts of India, who used thread for *Upanayanam*, the Namboodiris used a strip of the skin of a deer known as *Krishnamrigam*. *Upanayanam* is followed by seven years of *brahmacharyam*, the state of celibacy and strictly observed ritual purity devoted to learning Vedas, see for more details M. Gangadharan (ed.) *Making of Modern Kearalam, The Land of Malabar*,p.18

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Among the Malayalis education is still connected intimately with religion and an important ceremony, *vidhyarambam* marks initiation into the mysteries of letters, C. A. Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer*, p.303

the lesser nobility, village head men, military retainers and clerks used to begin their education with the ritual *Vidhyarambam.*[12]

> It is a ritual of initiating students into education. Parents take the child to the nearby Ezhuthupalli where the teacher received the customary offering, (Dakshina). Then the teacher made the student sit before him and handed him an ola *(palm leaf)* containing the alphabet and writing the 51 letters of the alphabet on the tongue of the child.[13]

Higher education of the Nair caste was mainly concentrated on vocational learning, such as martial arts, accounting and medicine. Performing arts also formed part of vocational education.[14]

In the pre-colonial society there seem to have existed several personalized educational institutions called *Pallikkutams,* probably a relic of the pedagogic practice attached to the Jain and Buddhist monasteries. These institutions must have imparted literacy among the non-Brahmins. The hereditary teachers of these schools hailed from the caste of *Kuttipatters* and *Kalaripanikkars.* The larger section of the people, i.e., the lower castes was under the servitude of the upper castes, did agricultural and menial jobs, and scarcely acquired any literary skills. The Christians had not

---

[12] K P. Padmanabha Menon, *Kochi Rajya Charithram,*(Mal.) pp.659-60
[13] *Ibid.,*p. 563
[14] Susan Bayly, *Saints Goddesses and Kings,* p.243-44.

developed their own educational system. It is probable that they made use of the traditional institutions such as *Ezhuthupallis* and *Kudipallikutams*.[15] The Mappila Muslims developed their own educational system during the pre-colonial period. Mappila boys started their education in *Othupallis*. Like *Ezhuthupallis* they were single- teacher- schools. It is probable that skills in reading and writing Arabic and Malayalam have been taught in these *Othupallis*.[16]

On the eve of the establishment of British power in Malabar, there were village schools in almost all localities. They were called *Payal* schools because they were generally held on *Payals* or verandas of houses.[17] In some places there were separate buildings. But the building used as schools were mere open sheds.[18] In many places, the palm leaves for thatching the sheds were supplied by the students. There were schools attached to well, to, do families.[19] They were meant for the education of the children of particular families.[20] Since there was the joint family system there would be ten to thirty students in one family itself. The *Payal* school was an

---

[15] *Ibid.*, p.40.
[16] Baliga, *Madras Manual of Administration*, Vol.I, p.592.
[17] *Report of Education Commission*, 1882, p.91
[18] *Public Consultations*, Vol.629, p.5583.
[19] *The Calcutta Review*, Sept 1856, Article, Education in Madras Presidency, p.236
[20] Nithya Chaithanya Yathi, *Parivarthanonmughya Vidhyabhyasm*.(Mal),pp.114-115

important not only in education but also in the social and religious life of the people.

The earliest efforts to spread English education in Malabar were made by the district administrators. The District administration played an important role in the introduction of English education through collectorate schools and *Tahsildari* schools. The system was further substituted by the establishment of a provincial school at Calicut under the supervision of the Government. The English East India Company had no educational policy or programme of its own.[21] In the beginning, the Company did not think that it was their responsibility to impart education. Therefore education was left to private agencies.

Gradually the authorities began to take interest in education. The Charter Act of 1813 included a provision that a sum of rupees one lakh should be set apart for education. But because of various reasons the Company did not spend that amount for ten years. Thomas Munro British Resident of Travancore took some interest in education. He proposed two principal schools in each collectorate.

---

[21] The Basel Mission Society originated in 1815 in the port town of Basel in Switzerland against the background of the French revolution followed by the Napoleonic war which affected adversely the vocations to the mission activities among the Christian's of Europe, K. J. John (ed.) *Christian Heritage of Kerala,* p.252

But the Government policy was to start only *Tahsildari* schools. They were started at Tellicherry, Calicut and Palghat. According to a resolution passed in 1835 by the Governor General-in-Council, funds for education were to be used for English education alone. Aids to *Tahsildari* schools were later withdrawn. In 1855 grant- in- aid rules were published to encourage private agencies in the field of education. The Basel Evangelical Mission made use of the grant-in-aid code and established some schools.[22] Herman Gundert, a Basel missionary, was appointed the first inspector of the schools for Malabar. The educational policy of the Company depended on the attitude of its Governors.

The Despatches, of 1854 and 1855 drew the attention of the Government to primary education.[23] Following the directions given by the Despatch of 1854, the Government of Madras pursued the educational activities in the Presidency, including Malabar, very actively. It opened a few vernacular schools in Malabar. These and certain missionary schools set up in the first half of the nineteenth century, helped to some extent, the promotion

---

[22] Paul Manavalan, *Kerala Sanskaravum Christhava Misssionarymarum*, (Mal.) p.62.
[23] K. J. John,*op.cit.*, p.254 also see P.N.Chopra, et.al., (ed), *Social Cultural and Economic History of Modern India*, Vol.III,p.252.

of Western education among the various communities in Malabar[24]. The dispatch directed the Government to take special interest in institutions for specific professions such as medical science and engineering to encourage education among the Muslims and to give frank and cordial support to the education of girls.

Some schools were promoted by a cess along with the land tax, at a nominal rate. In most of the schools the medium was English. Under the Madras Local Fund Act of 1871 there was a provision for imposing a cess or rate, which was to be used for education. Municipalities of Calicut, Tellicherry, Cannanore and Palghat made use of the provision. Private agencies were encouraged through grant-in-aid system. Under this system, grants were based on the examination results of the students. Later many changes were introduced in the grant-in-aid system.[25]

Secondary school education was primarily a local board affair and private enterprise. The Government wanted only a few people who knew English to run the administrative machinery. On the basis of the recommendation of the Hunter Commission of 1882,

---

[24] K.T.Muhammed, 'Development of Western Education among the Mappilas of Malabar', in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol,XIV, p.43.
[25] Paul Manavalan, *op.cit.*, p.62.

secondary education was divided into two branches. One was leading to the universal and the other preparing the students for other occupations. In 1906, many changes were introduced in secondary education. Distinction was made between elementary and secondary schools. The old system dealt with classes rather than schools. The S.S.C. scheme was introduced in 1920. Neglect of Malayalam, over- emphasis on examinations, inefficient teaching and pre-dominance of literacy content in the syllabus were some of the defects of the secondary education.[26] In the absence of alternate courses, the fit and unfit alike had to follow the path of entrance to the university and suffer the consequences. Since High schools were fewer than actual requirements, the common people could not avail themselves of secondary education.

The British authorities did not take much interest in providing facilities for collegiate education in Malabar. The Government policy was to create a group of supporters from the higher strata of society. As a matter of policy the Government encouraged private colleges because it was less expensive to the Government. The

---

[26] J. A Richery, (ed),*op.cit*, p.34.

Missionaries first encouraged elementary education. Soon they changed their policy and started institutions of higher education because they could also impart religious education along with secular education.[27] Private agencies were not interested in establishing institutions of higher education in the countryside. Since there was no sufficient number of colleges and college education was expensive, the progress of collegiate education was slow.

The welfare of the society depended on the education of women. But the British Government did not encourage women's education in the early phase. There were many difficulties, for the women's education, such as superstitions, child marriage, and other age-old traditions.[28] Education was not considered as a means of livelihood in the case of women. Thus, the most effective stimulus for education was absent. Although the Education Commission was not in favour of co-education, the authorities felt that there was no need of separate schools for boys and girls in Malabar[29]. Co-education was less expensive to the Government. The Government

---

[27] K. J. John, *op.cit.*, p.258

[28] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1906-07, Vol-1, p.2.

[29] *Report of Public Instruction* 1895, p.26

favoured local bodies taking the responsibility of women's elementary education. Although Government took some interest, in female education, it was inadequate and female education remained backward.

Before the advent of the Christian Missionaries, female education in Malabar was far from satisfactory. During this period, society had a general prejudice against female education. The vast masses of people in Malabar on the eve of the British conquest were therefore illiterate. Only in some cases, some local Raja and chieftain's families imparted education, primarily in reading, writing and arithmetic to their women folk by private arrangements.[30] Yet they were taught with a view to the cultivation of moral character, as it was believed that the effect of educating women would be just the reverse. People overall were opposed to the idea of giving education to their girls in schools or other public institutions. Thus, female education was left neglected.[31]

---

[30] Northern Ballads deal with an educational system that had existed in Malabar while describing Unniarchas education provided in *Kalari*, K. S. Mathew, *Society in Medieval Malabar. A study based on Vadakkan Pattukal*, p.55. See also A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithram*,(Mal.) p.219

[31] R. C. Manjundar, *op.cit.*,p.284

Nevertheless, unfortunately, the void created by the utter absence of state efforts was partially filled up by the activities of the Christian Missionaries, who became the pioneers in this field. The Missionaries tried to promote female education by establishing day schools for girls, boarding establishment for orphans and domestic instruction in middle class families.[32] The credit for having laid the foundation of female education in Malabar area goes to the Basel German Evangelical Mission.[33] The organization and instruction of the missionary schools brought remarkable changes in social life.[34] In the schools, children of different castes were put together under one roof, which was in itself a matter amounting almost to a social revolution in those days.[35] Dr. Gundert started the first, Basel Mission School in Malabar on 14 May 1839 at Tellicherry. [36]At first the school was attended by only twelve students. Later on persuaded by Dr. Gundert's continuous visit to all homes, the parents started sending their children to the nearby school and the number increased to forty. Encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by the students and the parents, the mission laid

---

[32] J. A Richery, (ed), *Selection from Educational Records*, Part-II, p.34..

[33] K. J. John, (ed.) *op.cit.*, p.253. See K. K. N. Kurup, 'The Basel Mission in Malabar' in B. Shobanan, (ed.) *A History of Christian Missionaries in South India*, p.133

[34] Institute of Social Sciences, *ISS Occasional PaperSeries 12*, Local Self Government in Malabar, 1800-1960, pp. 7-8.

[35] K. J. John, *op.cit.*, p.254

[36] William Logan, *Malabar*, p.214.

the foundation for another school at Nettur. In due course many more schools sprang up in all the places where the Missionaries worked.[37]

In December 1854, Mr. Fritz of the Calicut station started a female boarding school with twelve girls. The number increased to 27 in 1864. Simple elementary instruction was given in the school on language, mathematics and music. In the afternoons, they were taught sewing and knitting.[38] The Basel Mission English School started at Kallai in 1848 was the first English school in the locality.[39] The girl's schools opened at Calicut attained the status of a high school in 1902. In Cannanore area also the Basel Mission schools started by Rev. Hebich were flourishing.

The Basel Mission schools, which sprang up in Malabar, did not quiet serve the purpose of conversion of the people to Christianity. However, Christian education imparted through these schools has been, to some extent emancipatory by the transmission of Western liberal traditions as far as the outcastes Hindus of the region were concerned. Schools started for girls in different parts of Malabar helped to alter the lot of women in the region.

---

[37] K. J. John, *op.cit.*, p.254

[38] *Ibid*

[39] C. A Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer*, p.296, see. Paul Manavalan, *op.cit.*, p.66.

State initiative towards female education was an ignored subject before 1882. The Government of India did anything for it during the early days of British rule.[40] It was only in 1866 that the subject of women's education came under serious consideration of the Government, though several missions had already taken some practical steps towards female education.[41] The Hunter Commission emphasized the state's special responsibility for the expansion and improvement of primary education under the care of the newly established municipal and district boards. The Commission noted with satisfaction the system of grant-in-aid and urged its extension for secondary and higher education. It also drew the attention of the Government to the inadequate facilities for female education. "It was not until the Hunter Commission took up the cause of female education that a consistent effort was made in promoting it."[42] Lord Ripon had instructed the commission to look into this important and difficult subject of female education and to recommend the best means for its encouragement.[43] The Education Commission took it seriously and made twenty-seven recommendations. It recommended that female education be treated as a legitimate charge on local, municipal and provincial funds. The commission

---

[40] Basu, *History of Education in India under the Rule of East India Company*, p.184

[41] Sathianathan, *History of Education in Madras Presidency*, p.73.

[42] K. K. Pillai, 'British Educational Policy and Social Change', in *Studies in Social History*, p.187

[43] G. O. No.44, *Education Section Files*, February 15, 1882. Tamilnadu State Archives

recommended liberal financial assistance to educational institutions, more schools and scholarships and reduced hours of stay in schools for girls. It also recommended change in the syllabus and textbooks by considering the requirements of the females.[44] The Madras Government tried to introduce certain progressive changes as a response to the reforms in tune with the recommendations of the Education Commission.

There were certain setbacks to female education, which prevented them from getting education properly. They were lack of incentives from Government, non-availability of women teachers and superstitions that existed in society, child marriage and other customs and practices. Even those who enrolled in schools discontinued their studies after completing primary education. Girls gradually dropped from schools by the age of twelve. The system of child marriage, a notable reactionary social custom, which existed in almost all sections of society, prevented girl's education at every step. The lower classes were denied education, but upper class women's education was limited to an early stage. This caused for early exemption of female education. The period of the school going

---

[44] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1882, pp. 599-600

age for female children was much limited than that of boys. They were generally forced to give up education at nine, and rarely continued up to the eleventh year. The enrolment of the girls scarcely began at an early age and the married child did not have the opportunities of continuing education.

While comparing the availability of teachers for boy's schools, it was limited for girls. In addition to this, the quality of the teachers and methods of instruction were pathetic. The Government also did not have a vision in women's education. In Government schools most of the teachers were males. The direction and inspection rested in the hands of male educational officers; while the textbooks, as a rule, were framed with a view to educate boys rather than girls.[45] Education was not considered as a means of livelihood, or framed with a view to the upliftment of women folk. So education lost its attractiveness and it arrested the spread of education. It is a fact that the cause for the relatively low progress in women education was the conservatism and prejudice in society. Social customs made difficult both the attendance of girls at schools and the provision for women teachers. The women's branch of the

---

[45] Sathianathan, *op.cit.*, p.14.

inspectorate was entirely staffed by women in 1928. Although the number of inspecting officers was inadequate, women officers inspected girl's schools.[46]

It has been suggested that in villages of less than 1000 inhabitants in which there would be less than 150 pupils of school age (both sexes) the maintenance of two separate schools should be uneconomic. One of the main difficulties, which prevented women's teachers from accepting employment in rural schools, was the inadequacy of the pay offered. An independent woman teacher needed satisfactory accommodation and it was necessary to provide for a companion or servant. In the report on the development of women's education, it was stated, "while women will come forward as teachers fairly readily, given satisfactory conditions of service, they will not and cannot do so for the very low wages often paid to them."[47] Male teachers were given gifts in the form of food or clothing by the parents of pupils and could earn additional money by giving private coaching. Women teachers on the other hand could not accept gifts, or neglect their home duties, or cannot undertake outside coaching.[48]

---

[46] *A Report on the Development of Women's Education in the Madras Presidency, 1928* p.2
[47] *Ibid.*,p5
[48] *Ibid.*, p.22

However, compared to other parts of British India, the situation of Malabar was favourable for female education, but the beneficiaries of education were the upper classes in the society. In 1868, the Director of Public Instruction remarked that except Madras and Tirunelveli, where female education was most extended, the districts, which showed the largest attendance, were Malabar and Thanjaoor. The social status of the Nairs naturally tended to preserve a much greater social freedom, which indirectly helped to promote female education, which had gone much further in Malabar than in most other parts. The colonial authorities did not deny the position of women in society. However, in other parts of Kerala the caste-oriented socio-political setup kept women away from social progress. Because of the work of Christian Missionaries, the Christian community also had the benefits of education, which reflected in female education.

The state policy of establishing girl's schools under the control of the district and municipal boards, as recommended by the education commission, was not fully and uniformly executed in India. Due to the peculiarities and interests of the regional powers,

the educational system and approaches differed. Therefore, the universally accepted progressive education was not fulfilled. The responsibility of providing education for girls rested with the Government and the department took over most of the schools, which were formally managed by the boards.[49] The management of girls' school was successful in Bombay under the municipalities and under private managements in Bengal with a fair share of funds from the Boards.[50]

Mr. Barrow, the principal of *Kerala Vidhya Sala,* Calicut, rightly put it before the Education Commission of 1882. It highlighted the state of female education in Malabar.[51] He was requested to explain on the progress made by the department in establishing schools for girls, and the character of public instructions that existed among them along with his suggestion for improvement of the whole educational system. He stated:

> For the size of this town of Calicut, which according to the last census was 50,000, female education was in a most backward state. By the efforts of the deputy collector P. Karunakaran Menon, Vice President of the Calicut municipality, a girl's school was opened in a

---

[49] Y. B. Mathur, *Women's Education in India,* p.46.
[50] *Ibid.,* p.46
[51] *Report of Education Commission, Provincial Committee Report,* p.98

somewhat favourable locality. It was supported by the municipality.[52]

The Education Commission was not in favour of mixed schools (co-education). But Duncon, the Director of Public Instruction of Madras Presidency, felt that "the mixed schools were not ill-suited."[53] The Government accepted the opinion of the Director of Public Instruction and ordered that the opening of girls' schools be discouraged in villages where mixed schools existed and which satisfied the needs of the inhabitants.[54] The system of co-education was able to reduce social rejection regarding women's education.

The appointment of an inspectress by the Government was an important step in the women's education in Madras presidency. The entire system of female education came under the direct control of that educational officer. The appointment of inspectress gave encouragement for the progress of female education. There was a recommendation for *zanana* teaching or 'home education', which was implemented in certain parts of Madras Presidency. It appears that, it was not

---

[52] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1890-91, p. 76
[53] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1890-91, p. 76
[54] *Report of Education Commission*, p.600

implemented in Malabar.[55] Duncan, the Director of Public Instructor was not very much in favour of it. Due to lack of financial assistance from the Government and the uncertain attitude of the Government, it did not help much in the encouragement of women's education. Later the inspecting authority constituted in 1888 created the post of a second Inspectress of girl's schools. Miss Carr took charge of the Inspectress of girl's school in the southern and Western circles, with Coimbatore as her head quarters.[56] For the betterment of female education, Madras Government enforced notable changes in the grant-in-aid system. The Government provided financial assistance to the Hindu and Muslim guardians, so that they could educate their wives or daughters as school mistresses and permit them to work in schools at least for one or two years after training.[57]

The financial assistance of the Government for girls was double that of boys and a yearly grant varying from 12 *annas* to Rs. 3/-.[58] By 1890, the Government salary became result-oriented. Girl's schools were allowed a grant of 50 percent above the standard rates. However, neither the Government nor the private agencies of education gained

---

[55] S. Sathianathan, *op.cit.*, p.224
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] G.O.No.143, *Education Section Files*, March 15,1883
[58] Croft Alfred, *op.cit.*, p.238

considerable progress in the sphere of female education up to the end of the nineteenth century. Among the 183 women candidates who passed the matriculation examination of the Madras University until 1893, one hundred and fifty were Europeans and 27 Indian Christians. Of the remaining one was a Brahmin, one Muslim and four were Parsis.[59]

As far as the quality of female education in Malabar was concerned, it was far better compared to other parts of the Madras Presidency. In 1895, the numberof girls of school in Malabar were 20,731 and the number of girls in primary schools was 11, 830. The percentage was 5.9. The average percentage in the Madras Presidency was only three.[60] There were separate schools for Mappila girls. In 1895 there were 14 schools for Mappila girls, seven of which, with 349 pupils were managed by the department, six with 212 pupils were aided by the Government, and the remaining one with 64 pupils was unaided.[61] Later, the British Government adopted many measures, such as model primary schools for girls at main centers, enhancing the number of training schools,

---

[59] *A Report on the Development of Women's Education in the Madras Presidency, 1928* p.2
[60] *Report of Public Instruction* 1895, p.82.
[61] *Ibid.*, p.90

liberal financial assistance and increasing the number of inspectresses.[62] This resulted in the betterment in the status of women education as shown below.

Table No. I

Female Students under instruction[63]

Year	Female Students	% of schools to population
1902	19620	9.3
1907	21161	10.0

It is clear from the table that within a period of five years the number of female students increased by 1541.

The Central Government asked the provincial Governments to submit a ten-year programme in 1911 for girl's education by providing more financial assistance, betterment of facilities like the training of school instructress, improvement of

[62] G.O.Nos.215-216, *Education Section Files*, April 16,1904

[63] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1906-07, ii, P-134

inspecting staff, free quarters and carriage allowance.[64] Financial estimates for the ten-year scheme in the Presidency, including opening of new girl's schools, scholarships, school buildings, hostels and equipments, showed a marked increase.[65] Before the Madras Government could submit their report, the central Government asked the local Government in May 1913 for the submission of three-year plans with aims similar to the ten-year programme.[66]

For many years, grants were offered to the girls' schools at much higher rates than to the boys' schools. The original intention in offering higher rates of grant appears to have been to put the girls' schools aided by grants at the same footing as boys' schools. Whereas it soon proved in practice that often, they earned more. Because of the changes in the grant-in-aid code, grants were offered to schools for girls at the same rates as to those for boys. In recommending this, the Director remarked that some little check might do something towards creating a real demand. The reforms checked progress owing to the change in the policy. It was not worthwhile for a teacher - manager to make special efforts to receive

---

[64] G.O.No.841-842, *Education Section Files*, November 30,1911
[65] G.O.No.53, *Education Section Files* January 20,1913
[66] G.O.No.446, *Education Section Files*, April 30, 1916

girls.[67] The elementary schools under public management were made open to boys and girls alike under the new educational rules of 1906 except those girls' schools where the inspectresses considered the presence of boys or of boys above a certain age to be undesirable.[68] Mixed schools were less expensive to maintain than special schools for girls.

Through the resolutions of October 1, 1919, the Government of India offered more financial help for women's education.[69] The Government favoured municipalities and local bodies taking up the responsibility of female elementary education.[70] As a result, by 1920 the local bodies became the chief patrons of female education. Followed by the Madras Elementary Education Act in 1920 the Government constituted the District Education Councils. The Government decided to go back from the control of elementary education including that of female education. It is evident from the statistics given below.

---

[67] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1906-07, Vol-1, p.2.
[68] *Ibid.*, P-44.
[69] Y.B. Mathur.,*op.cit.*,pp.58-59.
[70] G.O.No.1012, *Education Section Files*, November, 16, 1912, (Malabar) Tamilnadu State Archives.

Table No. II

Elementary Schools for Girls in 1921[71]

Nature of School	Number of Schools	Christians	Muslims	Brahmins	Other Hindu Communities	Total Number of Students
Government	17	276	53	130	1108	1584
Municipal	12	105	15	130	646	908
Local Board	60	35	423	209	962	1689
Aided	182	1496	255	649	1194	3776
Unaided	4	-	-	-	192	196
Total	275	1912	746	1118	2872	8153

Secondary education for girls was mainly in the hands of Christian Missionaries. But in Malabar a number of girls attended secondary schools for boys. Their number in 1931 was 1207, of whom 81 were attending the school at Ottappalam. The Government Girl's Secondary School at Cannanore had the largest number of pupils and was followed by the Sacred Heart's Girls' school at Tellicherry and the Basel Mission School at Calicut. The Mission Girls' Secondary School at Calicut (Roman Catholic) was another school. The

[71] *Report of Public Instruction1921-22,p.53*

municipalities of Cochin and Calicut had each a girls' middle school and the District Board had two (at Palghat and Badagara) and opened a third one at Ottappalam. The total expenditure of secondary and elementary education for girls in 1929 was Rs. 1.05 lakhs and 3.76 lakhs respectively.[72]

Among the Districts, which showed large increase in the number of girls receiving secondary education, Malabar, Madras and south Canara occupied prime importance. Judging from the increase in the strength of higher classes during 1932-36, Malabar was more progressive than Madras. The number of pupils reading in Form IV to VI of the high schools for girls had risen from 365 to 1,462 in Malabar and from 548 to 1,907 in Madras.[73] A Government high school for Mappila girls was opened in June 1940 with Form I to IV at Tirur. It was a residential school and had 132 Mappila girls on the rolls. The total number of Mappila girls reading in all secondary schools in 1940 was 237 against 86 in 1939.

The progress of secondary education was very slow as seen from the statistics below:

---

[72] Krishna Aiyar, *Gazetteer of Malabar District*, P-XXXIX

[73] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1936-37, p.84

Table No. III

Secondary Schools for Girls' in Malabar [74]

Nature of School	1926	1931	1947
Government	1	1	5
Municipal	2	2	3
Local Board	2	3	2
Aided	4	3	5
Total	9	9	15

As per the statistics, total number of schools for girls in secondary level in this region was nine, after five years with various efforts it reached nine. In 1947 the Government, after 16 years, started three boy's schools, the municipality, started one and the aided field two more schools.

[74] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1946-47.

Table No. 1V

No. of Girls in Secondary Schools [75]

	1926	1931	North Malabar	South Malabar
Christians	487	561	627	940
Brahmins	118	258	252	343
Cast Hindus	1398	1946	3453	1167
Panchamas	18	32	37	33
Muslims	6	11	41	217
Total	2027	2808	4410	2700

According to the census of 1931 the women population in Malabar was 20, 28,021. However, only 93,454 girls were under instruction. It was roughly 10% of the female population. In 1947 it rose only to 102,257 in North Malabar and

---

[75] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1947, ii, Table-3

11,206 in South Malabar comprising a total figure of 2, 13,463.[76] There was an increase of 9% because of conscious efforts on the part of the Government. Even though the Government introduced certain reforms to encourage female education, they were not sufficient. Female education was showing some progress only at the primary level. Higher education was still backward. The progress was not uniform among castes or communities.

The founding of educational institutions in Malabar was for the most part the result of the work of protestant Missionaries and the back-up given by the colonial Government. The Government and the Basel Mission established several schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; they took care of education of girls and of children belonging to the lower caste. The great attraction of education was its vocational value and distribution of offices helped the administrators to foster the tendency of dependence among the educated. There was a rush for appointment in the public service, which gave the aspirants social status and access to power.

The socio - political consciousness created by the intensified education activities in Malabar resulted in the extinction of the age-old institutions and customs. Significant changes took place among the Nair community, who

---

[76] *Report of Public Instruction*, 1946-47.

accepted Western education. The Nairs, the upper strata of the caste groups left their traditional occupation of the militia of the country after the occupation of their territory by the Company. Many of them depended on cultivation that was not so hopeful to them under the changed circumstances so younger members of the Nair *tharavadu* have to seek other avenues of activities and they took to English education. The junior members of the *tharavadu* began to claim their rights. Even litigations were made against leading members of the family. The social reforms of the period also reflected up on the changed attitude. In1819 the practice of buying and selling slaves stopped. In 1836, regulations were adopted to liberate tillers attached to Government lands. The traditional trial by ordeal and other rude forms of punishments were banned through the orders. Under the changed material setup, the educated youth began to demand for marriage reforms[77] Malabar Marriage Commission Report which was published in 1891, pleaded for the examination of the family organization and marriage system. The proceedings resulted in the abolition of matrilineal system in 1925 Dr. P.V. Balakrishnan has pointed out various reasons for the disintegration of the system[78]. The changed cultural pattern, new economic organization, ideology, and administrative changes, capitalism, liberalism and principle of equality, spirit

[77] Moorkoth Kumaran and C Krishnan were the early representatives of the educated Thiyyas
[78] P.V Balakrishnan *Matrilineal System in Malabar*,p.87

of individualism urbanization, education as well as the change in the occupational patterns are highlighted.[79]

Modern education was a powerful instrument for social mobility and it paved the way for the all round progress of the colonial people. The educational progress more or less fulfilled this function. Nevertheless, its elite character and hegemonic aspects have been ruling the realm. Because of this, except some progressive measures from the democratic Governments, the right to education and its benefits enjoyed the socially and educationally forward classes in Malabar. The history of English education in Malabar exposes its inherent strength, weakness and the process of socio-political functions that it had done during colonial period.

However, the education of the lower castes was not an easy task since they were tied to the hereditary occupations under caste obligations. Nevertheless, in a later period men and women irrespective, of caste or religion, were provided entry to schools, which opened a chance to enter into the public sphere. The education had broken hereditary ties and liberated them from earlier positions. Women also were able to get jobs in Government, which caused the social mobility of the castes. British Government had no

---

[79] *Ibid*

consideration of caste or creed. As far as possible, they opened their doors to accommodate the educated local people in the working of Government. It paved the way for social change, which reflected in all spheres of social life.

The spread of Western education, directly or indirectly, reflected in the life of the people accelerated the speedy growth of constructive ideas in society. With the benefit of education the number of free thinking people increased. They critically examined the obsolete and obnoxious social practices and lamented the fact that with these outdated customs and practices society cannot go further forward and they worked for the renovation of the society. The educated section of the society welcomed reforms and consciously created an atmosphere suitable to conceive the changes. Education circulated a critical sprit and enthusiasm to give up existing shackles of traditions and began to think about a new society based on equality and communal solidarity which were essential for any radical change. The upper hand of aristocratic classes on the basis of birth and special privileges in society was the general feature of the Malabar society and it faced serious setback, and instead a new class, the educated middle class, gained an influential role in the society. Their opinions received wide recognition in social arena because they could shape matured interpretations

and uphold progressive outlook. The aristocratic classes were treated as reactionary force due to their reluctance to adopt fresh ideas because they stood for the status quo in social relations. The educated people worked as middle men between tradition and modernity.

Modern education, in a sense, was limited to literacy. The rate of literacy was less than 18 percent during the initial phase of the twentieth century in Malabar District.[80] The Basel Mission in Malabar converted to their congregation those who have literacy in vernacular language.[81] Literacy was an essential qualification for appointments in Government services; higher qualification provided wide opportunities to those who entered the service. Education also had an added attractiveness because higher officials enjoyed more reputation than the wealthy aristocratic families.

The growing enthusiasm for education also spread the habit of reading and writing. Earlier it was the monopoly of the privileged sections of the society. The introduction of the press and its widening horizons attracted a large readership and marked a qualitative change in the mentality of the people of Malabar. Establishment of vernacular press and their positive role

---

[80] *Census Report, 1911*

[81] Jayaprakash Raghavaih, *op.cit,* p

in the social reform activities were widely discussed.[82] Every social and political organization had its own mouthpieces to spread its ideas and messages among the people.[83] Through the press and books fresh ideas were dispersed and the necessity of social change came into the forefront of society.

The twentieth century was a century of political awakening and an era of the growth of nationalism in India. Its widespread repercussions echoed in the nook and corner of the country. Education was the most powerful instrument which was able to spread nationalist ideology among the people. When a social system fragmented and divided people into different sections on the basis of socio-economic disparities and gender differences, nationalism worked as a unifying force. During this period, the ideals of democracy and secularism promoted by education were nurtured, and liberalism and humanism became prominent in social discourses. The increasing influence of Western liberal ideologies also envisaged equal status of women in society and their presence in public sphere.

---

[82] See for more details Chacko, K.M, *The Press in Kerala,* Kerala Historical Society Thiruvananthapuram,1980, G Priyadarsan, *Kerala Patrapravarthanam :Suvarna Adyayangal,* (Mal) Current Books, Vivekodayam, Press, Cherunniyur, 1999, N.Sam,*Malayala Patrapravarthanam Pathonpatham Noottandil,* (Mal) D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2003, Puthuppalli Raghavan, *Kerala Patra Pravarthana Charitram,* (Mal) D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2001.

[83] P.K.K.Menon, *Freedom Movement inKerala,*Vol.II,p.363

The altering dress and food habits were another perceptible change in society which accompanied modern education. The concept of body, mind and self of women were re-defined on account of the consequences of colonial perceptions. Apprehensions over health and cleanliness were the byproduct of the modern education. It was a common view that developed during this period that maintaining healthy and cleanly atmosphere in the house and society is the responsibility of women. Education plays a pivotal role in the dissemination of personal and social cleanliness. The dress code of the society to a great extent determines the quality and standard of the society. Decent dress pattern and the right to cover the body of a person in their own choice were received as an individual privilege. Its benefit was mostly enjoyed by women. Thus the result of education in the life and activities of the society was uncountable and its benefits were able to change the society and individual from which women were not exempted.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Social transformation as a phenomenon owe much to various socio-economic forces that exist in a peculiar social framework in a measurable time span. It can be determined through examination of certain parameters recognized widely as criterion for the understanding of this alteration. On the basis of the change in the position of women in the society is a valuable constraint which determines the volume of social change. Social transformation cannot be examined separately without considering the role of economic forces in the process. The economic forces and its relation are closely related to factors and relations of production prevalent in a particular society. This chapter intends to examine the process of social and economic transformation in Malabar in general and the role played by women in particular. Here the parameters relevant in the measuring the socio-economic mobility of women in colonial Malabar also examined and analyzed.

The right to enter the public sphere and the permission and volume of women in education are important yardstick to measure qualitative change in social change.[1] Enactment of laws and regulations in favour of women and protection from the exploitation of male-dominated society also provides certain protection which also forms a considerable aspect in this regard.

---

[1] See for more details the chapter 'Modern Education and Women'

Marriage and personal choice for selecting husband is an important right of women that enable them to keep their prestige in society. The story of *Indhulekha* shows that her discriminate taste and the capacity to reject a Namboothiri Brahmin she dislikes. Indhulekha was in love with an educated youth named Madhavan who was equipped with modern western liberal ideas. This was the reflection of the ruling spirit of the age which denotes the capacity of modern women with discriminative capacity.[2]

Another important aspect which determines the social position of women is the age of marriage. Child marriage was a common practice in India. Social reform movements took a rigorous campaign against this unhealthy social practice.[3] Child marriage caused many social problems. The child mortality rate dangerously increased during this period and the number of child widows became a serious social problem of the society. The changing concept and increasing enthusiasm against this social evil was a transforming tendency of the society. The renouncement of traditional dress of Namboothiri women (*Khosha Bahishkaranam*) and the widow re-marriage conducted under the auspices of *Namboothiri Yogakhama Sabha* were welcome

---

[2] See for more details O.Chandu Menon *Indhulekha,* (Mal.)

[3] K.N.Panikkar, *Culture Ideology and Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Conscious in Colonial India,* p.263

steps in this regard.[4] The social reform movement in Malabar fought against extravagant social practices and most of them were centered on the women and female children.[5]

Entry into public life is another aspect that can be considered as a major change in the socio-economic transformation. Benefits of education empowered the women to engage in public life. The interaction with society was more meaningful when women became earning members in the society. The employment opportunities, even though were limited to women but trained graduates and specially educated women were appointed on the post according to their qualification. The Government, aided and unaided schools appointed them as instructors. The lady teachers in different strata of education formed a prestigious social class in the society. Later these women were the leaders of the nationalist movement in Malabar.[6]

The women in public life also gained modern education. The women faction of the political and social movements fought against the discrimination faced by them. The middle class women broke themselves away from the shells of isolation and disgrace and their urge and necessity for

---

[4] Lalithambika Antharjanam, *Atmakathakkoru Amugham* (Mal), p.126
[5] See for more details the chapter 'Society in Pre-British Malabar'
[6] For example Yasdha Teacher, Kaumudi Teacher etc.

meaningful engagements are reflected in the works of V.T.Bhattathirippad[7], M.R.Bhattathirippad[8], Lalithambika Antharjanam[9], Kanippayyoor Sankaran Namboothirippad,[10] E.M.S Namboodirippad,[11] Devaki Nilayangode[12]etc. It should be remembered that freedom of travel was restricted even among the high caste women and was confined only to certain places, including temples and houses of close relatives. The colonial rule in Malabar was significant in the socio-cultural transformation and the western concepts and way of life became prevalent in the society.

As the British established their power in Malabar, they tried to transplant their form of economy and culture on to the occupied territory. The traders did their lot, the missionaries the rest. It may seem now to be progressive as it broke the shackles of feudalism and let in the fresh air of English education. Therefore, the colonial impact may be said to be liberative as seen by the advance made by various communities under their influence. The woman benefited mostly from these changes. It contributed in an indirect way to their uplift as the educational and social reforms resulted through the

---

[7] V.T.Bhattathirippad, *Adukkalayilninnu Arangathekku*(Mal).
[8] M.R.Bhattathirippad, *Ritumathi*(Mal).
[9] Lalithambika Antharjanam, *Atmakathakkoru Amugham* (Mal), Agnisakshi, (Mal).
[10] Kanippayyoor Sankaran Namboothirippad, *Ente Smaranakal*, (Mal).
[11] E.M.S Namboodirippad, *Atmakatha*,(Mal).
[12] Devaki Nilayangode, serialize article published in *Mathrubhumi Weekly*

British intervention to be found in the various strata of the society. The basic dynamics behind these social changes was the inter-connection of the various spheres of society, like the economy, politics and culture.

As Marx observes in the *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy.*

> Mode of production, material life conditions the social, political and intellectual process in general....With the change of economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformation the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science ,and the legal political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic. In short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.[13]

What is underlined here is the complex character of superstructure constitutive of human consciousness. As Raymond Williams has pointed out, it is complex not only because it is diverse, but also because it is historical: "at any time, it includes continuities from the past as well as reactions to the present".[14] Because of colonial interaction, the concept of the individual was re-defined and a new image of the individual was established. This could not have life, the woman as well as the other deprived sections of the society remined untouched. Inadvertently these social changes created a space for

---

[13] Karl Marx and Frederick Engles, *Selected Works,* Vol. XI, p.363

[14] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society,* p.259

women to express themselves through political action. This image of the individual is politically advantageous for modernity. It started clearly that at first the individual is to be redeemed for liberating the real, living, tradition bound individuals.

The traditional society of Malabar underwent conspicuous changes in the socio-economic sphere during the colonial period. This transformation was a gradual process like many other social changes in history. A society dominated by the stagnant elements of medievalism and feudal institutions like caste hierarchy and customary laws now faced a serious threat from the historical forces released by the West.[15]

The traditional society in Malabar had numerous channels and methods of communication of cultural conditions of social existence. There were considerable variations in social strata's accessibility to them, which was determined by requirements of each one's functional space in the social structure.[16] Most of these channels were tied to the practice of hereditary specialization of caste exclusiveness. Therefore, the production and transaction of each form of knowledge was a task normally confined to the

---

[15] K.K.N Kurup, 'European Impact on Society in 18th Century. An Analysis', in *Journal of Kerala Studies* Vol.IV,p.429

[16] Rajan Gurukkal, 'Development Experience in Colonial Keralam', in Omman (ed.) *Re-thinking Development*, Vol.II., p.76

caste concerned. There was no commodity-instituted means of social education, which obviously was anarchistic in a system of hereditary specialization of arts, crafts, and skills with little or no scope for caste mobility. Transformation of knowledge in hereditary professions was the responsibility of the elders of the respective castes. No arts and craft in those days required education of a general nature and therefore generalization based on modern assumption of literacy would be meaningless.

In a sense, social changes in Malabar under the British rule were progressive in its nature and content. A medieval society in which the worst form of feudalism prevailed, a society in which most of the people were reduced to the position of slaves and social outcastes, suddenly found itself exposed to western influences and the effect was remarkable.

Jawaharlal Nehru observed:

> The impact of western culture was the impact of a dynamic society of a modern consciousness on a static society wedded to medieval habits of thought which however sophisticated and advanced in its own way, could not progress because of its inherent limitations.[17]

Slavery, one of the most inhuman institutions of history appeared in different forms and continued for several centuries among many nations.

---

[17] Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India,* p.291

Malabar was no exception. Even in the eighteenth century, slavery was widely prevalent among several native kingdoms of Malabar. When Malabar was ceded to the English in 1792, the Joint Commissioners carried out immediately the administrative arrangements of the territory. They decided to check the centuries old infamous practice of traffic in slaves, and regulations were formulated to restrict this custom. It was one of the progressive administrative steps taken by the English in Malabar.[18] Slave trade was prohibited in Malabar as early as 1792 by a proclamation issued by the Malabar Commissioners.[19] Act V of 1845 passed by the Government of India finally abolished slavery in Malabar in 1843.[20]

A few indigenous documents throw light on the transactions of human beings as mere commodities.[21] When Europeans began its commercial activities on the Malabar Coast, the characteristic of Malabar society, which permitted slave system, helped the foreigners to engage themselves in slave trade. On slavery Karl Marx stated:

---

[18] *Dairy and Consultations of Tellichery Factory,* 11th October 1792,p390

[19] D. Damodharan Namboothiri, 'Caste and Social Reform Movements in Kerala' in P.J. Cherian (ed), *Perspectives on Kerala History,* p.429

[20] G. Arunima, *There Comes Papa: Colonialism and Transformation of Matrilinity in Kerala, Malabar,* C. 1850- 1940, p.69

[21] V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, *Pracheena Likhithangal* (Mal.), pp. 355-56

> The purchase and sale of slaves is formally also a purchase and sale of commodities. But money cannot perform this function without the existence of slavery. If slavery exists, money can be invested in the purchase of salves. On the other hand, the mere possession of money cannot make slavery possible.[22]

So the slave owning- society of Malabar encouraged the foreign traders to trade in slaves also. Regarding the slavery in Malabar in the eighteenth century, native documents are very rare. However, the factory records of Tellichery left by the English bear a good testimony of slavery in Malabar. These documents not only reveal the salient feature of the contemporary slavery, but also the existence of that great social evil. Francis Day observed: "One of the horrors of Malabar which the British first endeavored to put an end to, was the kidnapping of children by gangs of Moplahs, more especially to the French at Mahe and the Dutch at Cochin".[23]

The consolidation of British power marked the end of the Nair dominance in this region. In Gough's opinion, changes in matrilineal kinship occurred primarily due to colonial influence.[24] The first rupture with the existing social relations occurred when the Nair armies were disbanded. The soldiers, on returning home, found their position within matrilineal system unpalatable. In time, their disaffection was channeled into questioning the

---

[22] Karl Marx, *Das Capital*, Vol. II, p.32
[23] Francis Day, *The Land of Perumals*, p.183
[24] Kathelen Gough, *Changing Kingship Usage*, pp 79 – 80

base of matrilineal kinship. Long-term structural changes in the economy induced by the British like improved communications, technological changes and cash cropping were all conducive to the changes in the patterns of matrilineal kinship. Rigid caste structure, hereditary rank order in the villages and an almost feudal relationship between landlords and vassals, all of which had combined to form the edifice of traditional Malabar society were shaken. Malabar was fundamentally transformed by the economic changes under the colonial rule.[25]

The breakup of the joint family system through changes in the laws of inheritances was another consequence of the British rule. The younger generation under the influence of western ideas developed individualistic tendencies and clamoured for their share of the family estate through partition. The resultant subdivision and fragmentation of holdings had serious repercussions on the socio - economic structure of society. At the same time, the abolition of slavery, other social evils, and the extension of educational facilities to the children in the lower strata of society narrowed down the gulf between the high and the low.

---

[25] *Ibid.*

The economic reforms introduced in Malabar by the British government were harmful to the people that were aimed at to exploit the region economically. The British destroyed the handicrafts of Kerala and at the same time new industries were not started.[26] In the agriculture field, the British gave importance to cash crops and majority of the tea and rubber plantations were under British control.

The Company giant imposed high rate of rent upon the peasants and adopted every method for its extraction from the people.[27] They showed no interest to introduce modern technology in agriculture. The landlords were given all sorts of help and assistance in their exploitation of the peasants. The Company officials showed more favour towards the landlords.[28] They began to exercise transactional rights with the intention of absolute ownership of property that was a creation of the colonial administration.

The growing discontent and dissatisfaction of the peasants compelled the British Government to inquire into the agrarian relations. William Logan, the Collector of Malabar, was instructed in 1881 to enquire into the land

---

[26] K.Damodaran and C.Narayana Pillai, *Keralathile Swathanthrya Samaram* (Mal.) pp.3-5

[27] Prakash Karrat, *Malabarile Karshika Bandhangalum Karshaka Prasthanavum* (Mal.) pp.18-19

[28] William Logan observed that, the policy adopted by the British government and their whole support with police and all administrative machinery worsened the life of peasants. See fore more details, William Logan, *Malabar Land Tenancy Report* Vol.I ,Malabar Special Commission,1881-82.p.22

tenures and suggest remedies. He made a careful and exhaustive study of the relation between the landlord and the tenant in Malabar. His report was a strong indictment of the landlord. After examining the economic condition of about 7,994 cultivators, he found that the agricultural indebtedness amounted to nearly 10 lakhs of rupees and the interest on this amount went into the hands of the moneylenders. He concluded that the cultivators were impoverished owing to three evils, rack-renting, extortionate renewal fees, and inadequate compensation for improvements.[29] With a view to mitigate the sufferings of the tenants Logan suggested the creation of a statutory class of peasant proprietors with permanent rights of occupancy and the provision by law for adequate compensation to the tenants for improvement. The result of Logan's proposal was the enactment of *Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvements Act of 1887*[30]. This enactment, the Commissioners believed, "would remove a most prominent grievance of the tenant in Malabar."[31] It was calculated to exercise a beneficial effect on the relations of all agrarian classes in the District.[32]

---

[29] See William Logan, *Malabar Land Tenancy Report*

[30] *Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvements Act of 1887*

[31] *Ibid.*,p.1

[32] Innes, *Madras District Gazetteers-Malabar and Anjengo*, Vol.I.pp.80-89

Along with these changes, Company's administration in Malabar implemented a vigorous land revenue policy in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The most adverse impact of the foreign government on Malabar was this immediate revenue policy enunciated by it. The oppressive role of imperialism had begun its ruthless exploitation and its whole burden fell upon the riots. Trade in tobacco and salt were monopolized by the government, which affected even the poorest of the inhabitants of Malabar.[33]

When the cost of the agricultural production increased, the British introduced a system called *melcharth* by which the land already leased to one tenant was again leased to another tenant, who was prepared to pay more rent to the landlord than the existing tenant.[34] The landlords were more interested to lease the land on *melcharth* as they received more money from their tenants. Under the threat of *melcharth* the existing tenant used to accept the new demands of the landlords. This system worsened the social relations in the villages. The tenant was to pay various kinds of rent apart from the fixed land rent. Logan had studied the agrarian system introduced in Malabar by the Company and examined how these reforms had badly affected to the poor peasants. He reported that there must have fundamental

---

[33] S. Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*,p 78

[34] Johnsy Mathews, *Economy and Society in Medieval Malabar (AD 1500-1600)* p.105

changes in the agrarian system of this region to avoid the poverty in the villages of Malabar.[35]

The Company further created a powerful landed class known as *Janmakars* in Malabar.[36] This class derived its privilege from the Company. It was confidently hoped that this particular class would not only be made responsible for the payment of revenue to the government, but would also remain as ramparts of loyalty in the subjugated land. British courts upheld the absolute and unqualified right of this landlord to the soil and maintained that they could evict their tenants at their pleasure after the expiry of the contractual period of tenancy. Such an agrarian system was not conducive to a prosperous agricultural life. It was one of the reasons for the backwardness of the region and frequent riots in the nineteenth century. The worst agrarian system and changing laws paved the way for increasing civil cases against landowners, especially blood relatives.[37] These caused prolonged court cases resulted the distraction of the financial well being of each families engaged in it.

---

[35] William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, p.399

[36] Janmam, was one of the popular kind of tenure which entitled the holder of land to collect his share of the produce of the land Johnsy Mathews, *op.cit.*,p.95

[37] See for more details *Madras Administration Reports*,1924-25 to1945-46

The impact of the West on the life and society in Malabar brought about changes that were more fundamental in the case of women. Emancipation of women through female education and social legislation was one of the most important achievements of the British rule. The first momentous Malayalam novel *Indulekha* was published in 1889 reflected the colonial ideology. Benefits of colonialism were highlighted in the novel and communicated the anxieties of the new educated middle class during the colonial period[38]. It tried to make the people aware of the British system and the benefits of colonial rule and acquiring European knowledge.[39] The new values of life, which the English - educated Malayalees cherished, found its expression in the novel. British officials and Christian missionaries launched an intensive campaign against child marriage, ban on widow remarriage, polygamy and temple prostitution known as *Devadasi system.*

The Basel Mission concentrated its activities in Malabar which had contributed much to the social progress in Malabar and within two decades it established a network of churches, schools and industrial complexes. [40] The tile factories, the textile mills and timber depots run by the mission provided

---

[38] See for more details, E.P. Rajagopal (ed.) *Indhulekha Vayanayude Disakal,* (Mal)

[39] K. N. Panikkar, *Culture Ideology and Hegemony, Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India,* pp.268-73

[40] S. Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.,* pp.101,102

employment to a large number of people in Malabar.[41] Some changes brought by British authorities were praiseworthy while some others had a reactionary effect. In other words, the contact with the west left both destructive and constructive forces to function in the traditional society of Malabar.

There had been considerable changes in the social status of women in Malabar due to British intervention. Nevertheless, the changes among the high caste women were extremely different from those among the lower caste. The social life of the high caste women was mostly determined by the traditional caste-related customs, caused for a lot of social disabilities found expression in different ways. The life of the low castes was at variance with that of the high caste in every aspect. Like the high caste women, the lower caste women were weighed down under the yoke of various kinds of exploitation in Malabar. The former were discriminated against in the family, the latter had to suffer more or less the same kind of exploitation in both the family and the workplace.[42]

As elsewhere in Kerala, in Malabar too, agriculture was the main source of livelihood. The changes in the means as well as in the relations of

---

[41] William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.214

[42] C. S. Chandrika, 'Keralathinte Sthree Charitram',(Mal)*in Samakalika Malayalam Varika* 2000 January 7,pp.196-226

production affected the family, which formed the basic element of the social edifice. These changes were most prominent at the level of interdependence of various social classes like the agricultural workers, farmers and traditional artisans.[43]

Beyond the hierarchical relations that existed in caste practices and relations during the pre-colonial social structure, there came into being, during colonial hegemony, a new concept of oneness. Such changes were due to the transformation of the agricultural sector and the excessive pressure on land created by the collapse of traditional industries.[44] The changes in land ownerships increased the level of self-reliance, and created a new consciousness of earning a living by working in one's own land. Joint family system degenerated and almost all joint families split into nuclear families. The modern family was expected to function as an efficient institution for the production of industrious, rational and self-disciplined subjects with the husband and wife playing their respective gender-ordained roles, complementing each other's role.[45]

---

[43] S. Ramachandran Nair, *Social Consequences of Agrarian Change*, p.172(hereafter *Social Consequences of Agrarian Change)*

[44] K.Damodaran and C.Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, pp.5-7

[45]J.Devika,*Domesticating Malayalees:Family Planning, the Nation and the Home Centered Anxieties in mid20th Century Keralam*, C.D.S.Working Paper,340,October 2002,Visit.www.cds.edu.

Under the influence of the colonial rule, the native social system underwent a thorough change. The colonial liberal views penetrated into the progressive sections of society through various educational measures. Every social stratum desired a change in its wretched life. People became conscious that only a legally constituted social order could change their life. It resulted in the demand for appropriate legislations.[46] These legislations knowingly or unknowingly brought about laws affecting personal relations, successions in families and marriage customs that had direct consequences vis-à-vis the women.

The caste society was ridden with so many evil customs and practices, like informal wedlock leading to polygamy *(sambandham)*, trial by a court of elders *(Smarthavicharam)*, initiation ceremonies *(Thirandukalyanam)*, Ostracism *(Mannapedi and Pulapedi)*, etc. These issues were for the first time openly discussed and people began to assert their individual rights and to refuse to

---

[46] In the context of Kerala, the Madras High Court decree of 1869 called the *sambandham* not marriage but a state of concubinage. Thus by a single legal decision it declared the practice of *sambandham* as null and void as far as the legality of such customs as signifying marriage. This provoked a major debate in Malabar as to the legitimacy and viability of such social custom as being a primitive practice that as C. Sankaran Nair put out was a great legal impediment to progress. In the course of next fifty years first the *Malabar Marriage Act of 1896*,and then the *Marumakkathayam Act of 1933* contributed to the disintegration of the earlier practice of the *tarawad* and in its place brought into being the patriarchal patrilineal family as the norm where earlier matriliny had been the accepted practice. Thus, some of the legislations that were undertaken during this period had far-reaching consequences on the nature of family. These acts in Malabar created the patrilineal family where earlier women were key determinant of lineage.

be subjugated to the feudal customs. The high caste women were in the forefront of these struggles to denounce arbitrary and discriminatory traditional social practices, which in turn influenced the social changes in Malabar.

There were marked differences in the living conditions of the lower caste woman. They used to work in the fields along with their men folk[47]. Usually they could earn enough to lead a contented life. The changes in the crop pattern and methods of agriculture vastly affected their life. Earlier, agriculture had been a means of livelihood. However, with the arrival of the colonists the character of agriculture also changed[48]. The feudal mode of production gradually gave way to capitalist mode of production, thereby making cash economy dominant in the agrarian sector. The peasant lived and worked in conditions of extreme poverty caused for the twin exaction of the landlords and the colonial state.[49] The prevailing mode of payment of wages in kind switched over to payment in cash. This brought to light the sharp disparity in wages between men and women, women getting less and man getting more.

---

[47] Moyyarath Sankaran , *Ente Jeevitha Katha,* (Mal.),p.205

[48] *Consequences of Agrarian Change,*pp.38-39

[49] See more details K N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836 -1921*

Hitherto selection of crops was determined by the daily needs of the people. But as the capitalist economy is driven by profit motive it turned towards cash crops like rubber, tea, coffee, indigo, cinnamon, etc. Therefore, exclusive plantations began to spread everywhere. When the cash crops displaced the food crops the family lost its food security, however nominal it had been. There was a considerable fall in rice cultivation[50]. The food crops that had reached every working class family were enough to satisfy its daily needs. Now this inflow of food crops ceased and those families slid from half starvation to total starvation. The wages of the plantation workers were inadequate to meet their daily needs, and it was the women folk who had to bear the brunt of ensuring food security. The poor peasant and working class led a miserable life . A. K. Gopalan, the veteran Communist Party leader wrote:

> I realized that the land lord was living on wealth amassed in this manner by fumigating and expropriating poor people. This story troubled me much. I saw that the peasant might be made to ovenge himself or herself for these injustice and oppression by organizing them in a struggle to retain their wealth confiscate in this manner by land lords and to return on the just basis of "land to the tiller"[51]

---

[50] Dileep. M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India*, pp.30-34

[51] A. K. Gopalan, *In the Cause of the People*, pp.38-39

The conditions of artisans and skilled labourers were no better. They used to get food grains as a matter of right. Now there was a marked decrease in the amount of grains they got. Those areas in which men and women used to work together either disappeared or became incapable of accommodating women also. While the production in each area had been based on reciprocal relations and was intended for the whole community, its ambit now became narrower and narrower. It now served only the rich. Traditional farming methods needed more women workers, whereas, in commercial farming their share was nominal and certain activities were set apart exclusively for men. The division of labour in the capitalist mode of production completely ignored the role of womenfolk.

The lower castes found it increasingly difficult to cope up with the changes brought about by the new living culture. When the total income of the family had to be divided among various necessities, the expenditure on education, which at least remained unproductive for the time being, affected them badly. During 1900-1936, girls lagged far behind boys in education. Even when the government spent more on this account, it could be seen that it benefited only the rich communities. A major share of the family income went to the education of boys. The birth of a female child was not generally

welcomed and even looked upon as a misfortune. [52]It is a fact that even rich feudal families found it difficult to meet the increasing expenditure on marriage and other ceremonies. Many traditional families declined due to such expenses on customary rites.[53] The unjust marriage customs made the life of women insecure and miserable.

A powerful instrument of social change in the first quarter of the twentieth century was the caste associations. Along with English educated intellectuals, the traditional philosophers who had great Sanskrit knowledge also played a supreme role in social reform. They were not English educated; they did not have a realization of the servitude enforced by the colonial system and its cultural hegemony. They fully realized the realities of depressed classes of their society. They were able to provoke strong national feelings and humanism and the vision of the new social order. They took up the aspirations of the emerging middleclass. In Malabar Swami Brahmanand Sivayogi, the founder of *Anand Mahasabha* needs a special mention. He was a great rationalist and atheist. He produced a number of literary works, which provided a drive for social reforms. V.K.Gurukkal or Vagbadanatha of Tellichery also produced a situation in Malabar in which the lower castes

---

[52] E.M. S Namboodiripad, *Atmakadha* (Mal.) p.218

[53] Mannathu Padmanabhan, *Reminiscence of My Life*,pp.30-31

began to demand for reforms. He belonged to the Thiyya community and taught against caste hierarchy. As an intellectual leader he participated in various activities aspired for social reforms.[54] India's education in the post independence period expressed secular and independent character. The new system mainly derived from the socio cultural and intellectual experience of the pre colonial – colonial period. K.N. Panikkar pointed out that even though the system defended the interest of the elite, it represented the socio cultural diversities of our land.[55] In the anti-colonial struggles, it transcended beyond the boundaries of class, caste, colour distinctions and worked as a unifying force.

They were the important socio-economic groups based on democratic principles. There was hardly any community in the state without an association of its own for self-development.[56]All the social reform movements had very effective structural and organizational frameworks that suited the

---

[54] KKN Kurup, *op.cit.*,p.28

[55] K.N. Panikkar, *Before the Night falls: Foreboding of Fascism in India,* p.99

[56] Sree Narrayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, Nair Service Society, Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam, Araya Conference, Kudumbi Association, Muslim Aikya Sangam,Variya Samajam, Vellala Mahasabha, Tandar Mahasabha, Muslim Service League, The Mujahid Movement, Dheevara Sabha, Atma Vidhya Sangh, Sahodara Sangam, Pulaya Mahasabha, All Kerala Catholic Congress, were some of the important caste and religious organizations established during the colonial period. Among them, some of the organizations existed only the regions the castes were present. These organizations had worked nominally in Malabar.

requirements of a society[57]. They worked as a cohesive force by minimizing internal differences in the society.[58] Their intervention generated new insights and persuaded people to think and act in accordance with their consciousness. Because of modern education and liberal ideologies educated sections of the society re-examined the social practices. Compared to the perceptions of the political and economic reality, the nineteenth century Indian intellectuals had a clear vision of the socio-religious conditions. The inter-dependence and inter-connection of religion and social life, religious belief and social evils, the distortion and misinterpretation of religious scriptures and knowledge, social implications of some of the prevalent forms of worship, and the adverse influence of social institutions such as caste, were part of this perception. [59]

The newly achieved caste solidarity emboldened them to demand proportionate representation in government services and in legislative bodies.[60] Almost all the castes and religions demanded legislative enactments on marriage, succession, and partition of ancestral properties. In response to

---

[57] P.J Cheriyan, 'Dialectics of the Socio-Religious Movements in Travancore', in *Inter national Congress on Kerala Studies*, Vol. I,pp.97-99

[58] S. Ramachandran Nair, *Social and Cultural History of Colonial Kerala*, p.106(hereafter *Social and Cultural History of Colonial Kerala)*

[59] K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology and Hegemony. Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, p.

[60] P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*,Vol.II, pp488-89

the demand, the government appointed committees and because of their recommendations enacted laws one by one.[61]The impact of reform movements came to be felt in every sphere of social life and obliterated some of the objectionable features of the customs and practices that prevailed. These social legislations helped to make the communities well integrated with the uniform laws regarding marriage, maintenance, succession and inheritance.

There were a great deal of caste organizations in Malabar, but they had little influence on the people. There were several reasons why caste organizations failed to gain a firm foothold in Malabar. Firstly, in Malabar, the castes did not suffer from any discrimination as far as the fields of government services and educations were concerned, which were a glaring issues in the princely states. Secondly, unlike in the limited areas of native states there was no scope for forcing the Madras government to admit communal representations for each caste. In Malabar nationalist movement challenged caste movements, though it was weak and late to come up in the native states. By the time Malabar came under the influence of the S N D P Yogam the political scene in Malabar had undergone radical changes and the

---

[61] *Social Consequences of Agrarian Changes*, p.89

Thiyyas themselves became part of the nationalist movement.[62] The general awakening manifest in each community gave rise to communal organizations through which its members began to struggle for the recognition of their social rights. This phenomenon was an outstanding feature during the transitional period of social awakening in Kerala.[63]

The change in women's dress code was a major step in their development. Inside their homes, the Brahmin women continued to remain half-naked, and went out shrouded in veils and the traditional palm leaf umbrellas. Their life was a symbol of servitude and gross inequality between men and women.[64] The lower caste women went out scarcely clad and did not have the right to cover the upper part of their body. The Christian missionaries changed these anachronistic practices. The women folk began to get properly dressed and discarded their traditional ornaments, which were used to mark their lower caste status. The concept of personal space came into being. The Namboodiri women discarded their veils and it was a protest

---

[62] Thoshie Aawaaya, 'Some Aspects of Thiyya Caste Movement with Special Reference to British Malabar' in .Kothani (ed.) *Caste System Untouchablity : The Depressed*, pp.139-168

[63] P.K .K. Menon, *op.cit.*,p539

[64] Lalithambika Antharjanam, *Athma Kadhakkoru Amugham* (Mal.) p.136

against the characteristic dress code of the community and thus against the orthodox social views.[65]

Increasing use of liquor was characteristic of the colonial era. In this period, the consumption of toddy and other intoxicating spirits increased. In the existing cash economy it took away much of the income of the lower castes. If the wages in kind reached the homes intact wages in cash could be spent as one wished which in turn promoted the habit of drinking. As a share of the family income went to the liquor shops poverty increased double fold. Though the women and children were not consumers of liquor it was they who suffered most because of it. It is to be pointed out that this had adversely affected the progress of the lower castes in Malabar. That was why the subsequent social reform movements and political movements adopted the demand for the prohibition of liquor as one of their main agenda.[66]

The shift from the joint family to the nuclear family also marked a change in the organization of the family. The early reformists demand for change in the family form and the reformist appraisals of the joint family

---

[65] *Ibid.*,p

[66]The anti-liquor campaign was one of the main agenda of social reform movements in Kerala. Sree Narayana Guru took initial step in this regard. His teachings echoed in the social arena that inspired the masses irrespective of caste or religion. See P.K.Balakrishnan, *Sree Narayana Guru* (Mal). Later Indian National Congress adopted and by the initiative of Mahatma Gandhi conducted rigorous campaign against liquor as part of the Constructive Programme,A.K .Gopalan,*Ente Jeevitha Kadha,* (Mal), pp.48-55

there is little that links the desired ideal of the modern family to small family norm.[67] Men were entrusted with the task of earning money and contact with the outside world, and women were entrusted with home management.[68] It became the duty of the women to meet the requirements of the family out of the limited resources. They remained either fully or semi-starved. The women folk, including girls had to be satisfied with less food both in quality and quantitatively. Their labour was not acknowledged or accounted for. It established a male dominated family.[69] The women lacked economic freedom and any source of income and were completely tied to the family. During this period the society recognized in principle the hegemony of the male in the family.

The employment opportunities brought about by the changes in the agrarian system also adversely affected the life of the female agricultural workers. The fact that the men received higher wages compelled the society to

---

[67] J.Devika, *op.cit.*

[68] The modern family was constituted by two major axis, that of husband wife relation and the parents –children relation supported economically by the self earned income of mainly by the father and managed by the mother, *Ibid.*

[69] Women were more mobile between establishments while hardly, achieving any upward mobility in terms of status/occupation. The need to include women's domestic work as a category of work in such an economic analysis a growing proportion of women moving in to the activity 'not in the labour force' whether voluntary or involuntary, reduces their mobility. It tends to enhance their dependence, making them economically vulnerable and hence weakens their bargaining position with in the household and outside. Mridul Eapen, *Women and work Mobility: Some Disquieting Evidence from the Modern Indian Data,* C.D.S. Working Paper, 358 May 2004, Visit.www.cds.edu.

believe that men were physically superior to women. These views on physical ability and the division of labour further decreased the women's job opportunities. It became more and more seasonal. The loss of working days through the seasonal work system affected the family income as well as the total production. Hitherto agriculture had been the enterprise of the whole family. All the members of a family including women and children had worked in the fields.[70] However, with the spread of education, children were sent to schools and their share of work was lost. After the completion of education, services of such people were devoted to sectors other than the agricultural sector.

In any society, the status of the women is the yardstick to determine the level of social development in general.[71] As the basic unit of society and a major participant in the organization of the family, the role of women cannot be neglected. Social transformation becomes a reality only when the changes resulting from the colonial rule are felt at the lowest strata of society, ie, the family. It has been proved that family ties play a decisive role in molding an individual's character and social perspective. The most remarkable fact in the

---

[70] Moyyarath Sankaran, *Ente Jeevitha Kadha,* (Mal.),p.178
[71] *Ibid*

social changes in Malabar had been the changes in the family structure, and that too appeared as a reaction to the prevailing economic system.

There are numerous studies on the economics of social change. The ideological content provided by colonial intervention engaged the orthodox native systems and enabled the evolution of a new ideological climate. This resulted in a hybrid between colonial practices and the transformation of the native social system. The native societies did not adopt the stereotypes of colonial systems as such, but were trying to implement the practical possibilities in the native societies. The colonial experience of Malabar bears testimony to the truth that a particular social order cannot be transplanted on another society. In to that was why public opinion was formed about the rule of law and social justice in order to systematize the native order of life.

With the establishment of the colonial rule, the prevailing socio-economic order in Malabar underwent vertical and horizontal changes. The extension of the colonial rule had led to the reconstruction of minds and ideas. Redefining family relations discovered the applicability of such systems of thought. Hitherto the concepts of individual family, private sphere and social status had been either ambiguous or ignored. Now these concepts came to the forefront. Nevertheless the male-centered world view of the middle

class can be understood with reference to the social structure of Malabar as a contribution of colonial modernity. [72]

The colonial rule had not considerably transformed the feudal relations of production. The feudal lords and chieftains accepted the colonial rule and as far as they did not oppose it, they got special treatment. These native rulers were the watchdogs of social customs and laws to serve them as sources of revenue and production. They were the pillars of a caste-dominated ideological system. At a time when the caste-power-gender equation remained at the center of social discourse and safeguarded the given system, the women community as a whole was relegated to an inferior status. Society always looked upon them with suspicion and their bondage compelled them to obey the social customs.

The lower caste women enjoyed a limited freedom and therefore their social relations were more meaningful. In their case, both men and women had to work together to maintain the family. But here too the male-dominated

---

[72] Modernity is simply the sense or the idea that the present is discontinuous with the past that through a process of social and cultural change (either through the improvement, that is, progress or through decline) life in the past is fundamentally different from life in the past. The concept of colonial modernity is a matter of controversy among the scholars in different disciplines. In history the concept of colonial modernity is considered as the by-product of the interaction with colonialism. See for the detailed discussion on colonial modernity, Rajan Gurukkal, 'Development Experience in Colonial Keralam', in Omman (ed.) *Re-thinking Development*, Vol.II., p.76

society relegated women to an inferior position. The social changes in Malabar were inextricably related to the colonial rule. The colonial middle classes, a product of social and cultural changes engendered by colonial intervention, became an active collaborator in this process, even if they disapproved of it later. In this process, colonial policy was double edged: cultural denigration or destruction on the one hand and hegemonization on the other. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, an African novelist, in a very insightful analysis of the politics of language recognizes the 'cultural bomb' as the biggest weapon of colonialism.[73] The effect of the cultural bomb he argues is to 'annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves.[74] The denial of cultural rights to the indigenous people which Wa Thiongo emphasizes is integral to colonialism all over the world and a precursor to the cultural transformation of the colony. It is not characterized only by destruction and plunder, which at any rate happened in ample measure.[75] This, in turn, is related to the colonial modernity, which itself was unilateral and male-centered. The rational movement began to take root in Kerala at a time when the various sources of exploitation had alienated

---

[73] Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature,* p. 2.
[74] *Ibid.*
[75] K. N. Panikkar, 'Colonialism, Culture and Revivalism' *Social Scientist,* Vol. 31, No. 1/2 (Jan. - Feb., 2003, pp. 3-16

the subjectivity of women. It was the attempt to oppose every kind of exploitation and to make social progress meaningful where that developed into the women's representation in the rational movement. It found its expression as a reaction to and resistance against the multi-faceted exploitative system.

Overall, the issues of eradication of some of the glaring inequalities of traditional society also came to the forefront of social attention. Linda Twahi Smith rightly puts it, "Colonial education was used as a mechanism for producing elite groups, as the traditional hierarchies within an indigenous society who converted to the colonial ideology also formed part of the elite groups".[76] While increase in education and social consciousness among the disadvantaged challenged the old order, the new resources that were made available by the growing commercial capitalist economy and expanding education opportunities opened up new possibilities for social mobility outside the framework of the caste-based ascribed-status system.[77]

The new social forces served to eliminate many of the traditional and hereditary inequalities. The traditional order was no longer able to resist the new forces and new aspirations of the hitherto unprivileged people. The occupational aspects of the caste system and the artificial grading of castes

---

[76] Linda Twahi Smith, *De-colonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous People*, p. 64.
[77] *Social and Cultural History of Colonial Kerala*, p. 134.

based on arbitrary standards of traditional practices attributed powers of pollution to the low castes and isolated them. With the emergence of a new social and political consciousness, more and more people in the lower strata became aware of their place in the society. New standards, new values and new voices arose. The low castes and unprivileged were closer to political and economic power by the middle of the third decade of the last century. The predominant position enjoyed by the joint family as the unit of social relations gave way to importance of the individual. Nuclear families, each with the father as the head, came into vogue. Children began to inherit equally the properties of their parents. Individuals gained freedom of action and initiative in economic and social matters. This change created a chasm in the traditional social order and broadened the outlook of the individuality. The attitude of man to fellow human beings and to women changed drastically.

CHAPTER V

ANTI - COLONIAL MOVEMENT AND WOMEN

The twentieth century has been a century of resistance against colonial domination in Malabar. The resistance movements worked mainly at two different levels, firstly, against centuries old feudal system and its degenerated values, and secondly, against imperial domination. The awakening of the oppressed people, like the working class and the peasantry, resulted in weakening of feudal as well as colonial power. But there has been any inquiry on the involvement of women in the movement. Male-centered historiography has blotted out women's role in the making of nationalist history. This chapter attempts to explain the association of women in the movement.

Since the rise of British power, there had been a number of struggles, big and small, against foreign domination. Several armed insurrections and popular upheavals organized by patriotic elements of the population who were determined to overthrow British authority and regain the lost independence. The disposed princes and chieftains and aggrieved sections of the population like the peasantry and tribal communities are in the forefront of the insurrections and upheavals. The revolt of Pazassi Raja was a people's revolt in every sense. All sections of the society were actually involved in it. The active involvement of the

tribal communities of the Kurichyas and Kurumbrar has lent its dimensions of an agrarian upheaval as well. The active involvement of families including women and children were noticeable factor of the movement.[1]

The Kurichya revolt, a typical peasant uprising, which broke out in the Wynad region of Malabar in 18121 ends distinctiveness to the freedom movement in Malabar during its early phase. The Kurichyas under their brave leader Talakkal Chandu had plyed a leading role in the Pazassi revolt. The establishment of British supremacy over Waynad after the suppression of Pazassi uprisings resulted in untold miseries and hardships for this tribal folk. The tribal women bestowed whole hearted support to their heroes and joined with them in all lethal consequences of the revolts. The uprisings created countless miseries and misfortunes. Hundreds of women became widows and children were orphans.

They range from the Pazhassi revolt that challenged the British rule to the numerous peasant uprisings in Malabar under the leadership of the Communist Party. Though the struggles of Malabar formed part of the

[1] William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, pp, 495-555

national movement, they stood apart from the main stream by their intensity and revolutionary zeal and the participation of a large number of women. Anti-imperialist and anti-feudal nature gave these struggles an added significance to the nationalist struggle for freedom. They also gave a new orientation to the national movement for political freedom as well social justice and equality. The active involvement of rural folk and women in the struggle converted the national movement in Malabar as a most popular one.

During the period of the anti-colonial struggle, a large number of women came forward to arrange food and shelter to the political workers. They used to visit the political prisoners treating their relatives and strangers alike. Moreover, they stressed the importance of the family. Thus, most of the activities of women in the movement were based on a strong foundation of the family.[2] Women's participation in the resistance movements in Malabar reminds us of Lenin's words that "No mass movement is really possible without the participation of

---

[2] See for more details, M.S.A. Rao, *Social Change in Malabar*, p.18, K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State Religion and Peasant Uprising in Malabar–1836-1921*, p.1. Michael Tharakan, 'Factors in Penetration and Consolidation of Colonial Power in Kerala, 1721-1819', in P. J. Cherian (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History*, p.356

women".[3] We now know the socio-political reasons behind the obliteration of the role of women in the making of history. Therefore it is necessary to study the role of women with reference to the time and place in which they exerted great influence.

Malabar came completely under the British rule in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before the British rule, there existed a feudal order under the domination of Brahmins and other higher caste Hindus. British regulations replaced these traditional age-old property rights. It affected the landlord-tenant relationship. Most of the tenants in the Ernadu and Valluvanad regions in Malabar were Mappilas,[4] while the landlords were Namboodiris or Nairs. The new British regulations and land revenue policies, and exploitation of tenants by landlords paved the way for a number of peasant uprisings in the region.[5]

---

[3]Moyarath Sankaran, *Ente Jeevitha Kadha,*(Mal.) p.185, Rajani Alexander, 'Sthreekalum Indian Swathanthriya Samaravum', in V. M. RajaLakshmi (ed.) *Sthreenithi,* (Mal.) p.108.

[4] Quoted in C. S. Chandrika, *Keralathile Sthree Munnettangalude Charithram,*(Mal.) p.14

[5] The Mappilas were very poor, agriculture being their means of livelihood, and had always been under the thumb of the money lenders, who were Hindus. The majority of big land holders in that part of country also happened to be Hindus. The peasant revolts were caused by purely economic causes; M. N. Roy, *India in Transition,* p.88

It has been recorded that between 1836 and 1900 there were as many as eighty peasant uprisings in Malabar alone.[6] The Mappila out brakes of the nineteenth century which were anti-feudal and anti imperialist content. It is observed that "the turbulent history of the Mappilas of Malabar reveals yet another facet of the complexities of the Indian situation-the way in which religious 'fanatism' has served as the outward form for the expression of anti-landlord and anti-foreign discontent."[7] The turmoil affected by the Mappila out brakes was innumerable and victims included women and children.

All of them without exception were against the British administrators and landlords. Though the womenfolk did not directly participate in these struggles, there were numerous instances where they fought the police and landlords who went on raiding homes.[8] The chief cause for the 1843 riot was the dismissal of a housemaid for not showing

---

[6] A.K.Poduval, *Karshaka Samara Kadha,*(Mal.) p.10, K. N. Panikkar,(ed.) *Peasant Protests and Revolts in Malabar,* p.IX, S. Ramachandran Nair, *The State and Economy in Colonial British Kerala,* p.20.

[7] Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1905,*p.268

[8] There is another version as to the beginnings of peasant revolts in Malabar. According to it the first peasant outbreak in Malabar took place in 1812. The British policy to collect land revenue in cash instead of in kind infuriated the tribal peasants, viz, Kurichiyas and Kurumbas of Wynad. This led to the attack on the detachments at Manathvady and Sulthan Battery. It was an 'enmasse' attack by the aggrieved tribals. However, the rising was crushed down by the Brutish troops, C. A. Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer,* Vol.I, p.77.

obeisance to her masters after her conversion to another faith.[9] During the 1894 revolt, there were instances of feudal officials manhandling and harassing the members of a martyr's family.[10] Society seems to have cleverly buried the memories of these miseries undergone by women into organized forgetting. Chekku of Valiamannil in his statement quotes the warning given by Ahmed Kutty of Manchapally, a participant in the revolt, "A large number of mothers and sisters belonging to the Muslim community have been tortured during the rebellion. If it is going to be repeated, we have enough men to retaliate".[11] It shows that the repression on the womenfolk regardless of being Hindu or Muslim was beyond words.

The women of Malabar received inspiration for participating in the freedom movement from Gandhiji, Mrs. Annie Besant and other national leaders. A branch of the Home Rule League of Mrs. Annie Besant was established in Malabar.[12] On May 6, 1923 Mrs. Sarojini

---

[9] A.K.Poduval, *op.cit.*, pp.10-11

[10] Hr.Conolly, *Letter to Judicial Secretary*, 1843 November 14, M.J.P. November 69, January 27, 1844, p.198, Quoted in Conrad Wood, *Malabar Kalapam Ativerukal*,(Mal.tran.) p.93

[11] H.M.Winter Bothan, *Letter to Chief Secretary*, 1896 May 5, M.J.P. November 1567, September 30, 1896, P-57, *Ibid.*, p.65.

[12] *Ibid.*

Naidu[13]came to Malabar to preside over the second Kerala Provincial Conference held at Palakkad.[14]

The Malabar rebellion of 1921 mainly affected Ernadu, Valluvanadu and Ponnani taluks.[15] More than two hundred minor principalities came under the control of Mappila rebels. It spread to Tirurangadi, Pookottur,[16] Malappuram, Manjeri, Perinthalmanna, Pandikad, Karuvarakundu and Tirur.[17] Though the direct participation of women was insignificant, there were a number of women who resisted the police and army who had gone on raiding each and every house. Kummath Chinnammu of Valanar was one of the women who dared to defy the soldiers with a knife. She stopped them with a kitchen knife when they tried to force their way into her house.[18]

---

[13] Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Govt. of India *Great Men and Women of India*, p.167.

[14] During the Mappila peasant struggle, the women's participation was reported in the Pookkottur action against the police. According to a report, "a large and hostile crowd of Mappilas armed with swords and knives and including a number of their women folk, gathered to prevent the arrests. Women were seen with sticks and some with head chains to induce even the boys to fight. It appears to be more of a spontaneous participation, R.H. Hitchcock , *A History of Malabar Rebellion, 1921-1925*, pp.181-82.

[15] K.Damodaran and C.Narayana Pillai, *Keralathile Swathanthrya Samaram*,(Mal.) p.17, A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala and Freedom Struggle*, p.67.

[16] T.K.Anadi, *Janakeeya Samarangalil, Malabarinte Pen Pathakal*,(Mal.) p.27

[17] K.Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*,(Mal.) p.192.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp.211-13

During the 1921 rebellion, the rebels used to torture those who kept aloof from it. One of the most painful incidents was the attack on Eranhical Narayani Amma at Areacode. When she saw the rebels entering her house, she tried to escape. They stabbed her. She resisted and wounded a few of them. She defied the enemy with courage and dignity.[19]

Naduthodi Kunjambu Paniker gave the following statement at the Congress Party office on 20 December 1921 about an incident in Chorur.

> On October 12, I was staying in the house of the village officer. At about ten in the morning Kunhalavi and Leva Kutty accompanied by some rebels came there. Seeing them all the women went into hiding. They were found out. They asked us to give the necessary things. Somehow I managed to escape taking a few women with me. But a few housemaids could not manage. Among them Bapiyodath Kunhiri Amma was wounded, so also Puthenveetil Kaliamma. Later, Alingal Ayamma took us to her house. Meanwhile, the rebels left the place hearing that the police were coming. Then the remaining women also escaped and reached Kozhikode.[20]

A man present at the time of the rebellion in Palli village south Mannar told the editor of *Kerala Patrika* that, "At Pallikunnu the rebels set fire to more than a hundred houses, they were fleeing from the

---

[19] *Ibid.*, p.216.
[20] Moyyarath Sankaran, *op.cit.*, p.115.

scene."[21] In another harrowing incident a pregnant women was thrown into the river and she was seven-month pregnant.[22] This occurred on November 9. After these incidents all the people fled and made their way to other places. These incidents were telling tales of sheer brutality, which the women were subjected to. Here is a report that appeared in the *Kerala Patrika* about an incident at Puzhikalil,

> On November 14 the rebels reached the house of Puzhikal Narayanan Nair and killed six of his children. They took away his 18 year old daughter. Nothing was heard about her. Later it was reported in the newspapers that Ammukutty was abducted by Pookoya Thangal and detained her secretly. He then invited the other rebels and married her with fanfare. He was later arrested. On being questioned by the police he said that Ammukutty had been converted to Islam and was staying at Tirurangadi. She was later found out wearing a pardha and was restored to her father. It shows that women faced severe harassment during this period.[23]

K. Madhavan Nair in his work *Malabar Kalapam*[24] gives a detailed account of the course of the Malabar rebellion. He also says about "one Malu who was newly wed to Kunhahammed Haji in his old age might have thought that as a King he needed a *Queen,* and so decided to marry

---

[21] K.Madhavan Nair, *op.cit.*, p.258

[22] M.Gangadharan, 'Malabar Rebellion, 1921-22 : A Historiographical Note', in K. K. Kusuman (ed.), *Issues in Kerala Historiography,* pp.157-58.

[23] K. Madhavan Nair, *op.cit.*, p.240

[24] *Ibid.*, p.258

Malu the daughter of Paravetti Koya Muhammed Haji. She used to fight along with her husband with sword in hand."[25] The *Kerala Patrika* gives the following description of Malu "Malu is very young, dark in complexion and short in stature. She was very strong physically and masculine in nature. She used to stay in the woods and lost two teeth after stumbling over a stone."[26] K. P. Kesava Menon records an oral statement given by a Muslim woman called Kunnath Kathisa belonging to Mannur village.

K.P.Kesava Menon reproduces her words:

> I am living in Mannur. Occasionally I stay with my sister at Elanneemal Kizhakkethodi house in Kozhikode taluk. She was living there with her husband and five children. One day in November, at about three 'O' clock a few soldiers came to the house. My sister, her husband and their children ran away. At the time I was in the kitchen. Two soldiers came in. They were wearing full military outfit. They inquired about the whereabouts of other members in the family. When I said that they had gone somewhere; they stabbed me with the bayonet. I fainted. When I recovered in the evening, I found that I had been wounded all over. Later I learned that the police shot dead my sister and her husband.[27]

The brutal repression during and after the Malabar rebellion by the government slowed down the pace of the national movement in

---

[25] *Mathrubhumi*, Calicut 18 March 1938
[26] K. Madhavan Nair, *op.cit.*, p.240
[27] K.P.Kesava Menon, *Kazhinjakalam* (Mal.) p.136

Malabar in the remaining years of the 1920's. The national movement in Kerala received a new vigor with the beginning of the Salt Satyagraha under the leadership of Gandhiji in March 1930. The Dandi March was enacted in several coastal areas of India. Many volunteers in Kerala participated in this unique agitation against the prevailing Salt law at Dandi, Vedaraniyam and elsewhere.[28] In Kerala, the venue of the Salt Sathyagraha was Payyanur. Participants came from all over Kerala. It was K. Kelappan who led the march from Calicut to Payyannur. Receptions were given at different parts of Malabar. A number of women donated their gold ornaments.[29]When the march reached Pariyaram near Payyanur, the Congress activists under the leadership of Mrs. Gracy Aron accorded them a traditional welcome, showering flowers and rice on them. Women from all over Malabar enthusiastically came forward to enroll themselves as volunteers.[30] The women of Kerala had played a decisive role in the freedom movement in all the three areas of the state. It was only with the dawn of the Gandhian era that

---

[28] The first All Kerala Provincial Conference held at Ottappalam on April 23, 1921. In this meeting, several women donated their gold ornaments for the success of Khilaphat and Non-Co-operation Movement. It gave inspiration and self confidence to the Congress activists, C.K.Kareem, *Kerala Chrithra Vicharam*,(Mal.) p.224

[29] Interview, Pariyaram Kittettan, August 19, 2001

[30] A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, P-128.

women joined the national movement in large numbers.[31] Mahatma Gandhi argued that the entry of women would have a cleansing effect on the freedom movement and would rid it of its corrupt and undesirable practices.[32] He also allowed women to assume leadership.[33]

M. K. Paru was a participant in the Salt Satyagraha at Payyanur. She now lives at Eramam in Kannur district. She and her companions marched to Payyanur beach, collected seawater, took it home and boiled it to make salt. Her companions included Kunchakkan, Edadi Paru, Kunhatha, Koyiran Chappila and Poyiran Narayani. She told me that she made salt to show her solidarity with Gandhi's struggle and that the demand for the withdrawal of the salt tax was just and necessary.[34]

The movement gained momentum thereafter. Four hundred representatives participated in the sixth all Kerala Political Conference

---

[31] On the participation of women in the freedom movement the appraisal of Jawaharlal Nehru is noteworthy: It was Gandhiji, that wonderful man and great revolutionary, who brought a dramatic change among our women, when at his bidding they came out in large numbers from the shelter of their homes to take part in the struggles for India's freedom, quoted in V. Sankaran Nair, 'Women in Nationalistic Politics', *Proceedings of Sixth Annual Conference,* 1988, p.85.

[32] Karuna Channa Ahamed, 'Gandhi and Women's Role and the Freedom Movement', No-XIX. *Occasional Papers on History and Society,* published from Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1984 December, pp.11-13.

[33] *Ibid*

[34] Interview, M.K.Paru, On April 18, 2004.

held at Calicut in September 1932.[35] A distinguishing feature of that movement was the participation of many women belonging to the lower strata of society.[36]

During this time women actively participated in the mainstream of the national movement. Meanwhile the news of the arrest, at Bombay, of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and some other members of the Congress Working Committee on 1 August, 1930, caused much excitement in Malabar. The Congress Working Committee called on the people to observe 10 August 1930, as 'Political Sufferers Day'. The leading members of the *Swadesi League* and *Mahila League* at Calicut went round the town organizing a *hartal,* which was highly successful. K. Kunji Lakshmi Amma and N. Sanjivi Bai[37]went to the *Valiyangadi* in Calicut at 12 February 1931 holding the tricolor flag high and posted themselves before a piece goods shop. This was the first occasion in which women in Malabar undertook picketing. The women carried on their work in the hot sun as Gopala Krishnan, the twelve

---

[35] P.V.Kunjamma, 'Malabarile Deshiya Prasthanangalile Sthreekalude Pank', in A.K.G. Padanna Gaveshna Kendram, *Keralathile Sthreekal Innale Innu,* Women's Development Centre, 1995, Thiruvananthapuram, p.160.

[36] P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala,* p.137

[37] Smt. Kunjilakshmi Amma had been a teacher in Cochin Government Service and Smt.Sanjivi Bai a teacher under the Malabar District Board. They had resigned their jobs to join the Sathyagraha Movement, P.K.K.Menon, *op.cit.,* p.263

year-old son of Mukunda Pai, exhorted the anxious crowd to take to Khadi. The women were arrested on 14 February.[38] On her arrest; Smt. Kunhi Lakshmi Amma nominated Margerate Pavamani, wife of Benjamin Pavamani of Calicut, an advacate practicing at Calicut, as the next Dictator as their leader was called at that time. Meanwhile arrests and convictions for picketing were taking place in large numbers in Palakkad, Calicut and several centers in north Malabar.[39]

The women of Malabar, as a class, in general were confined to their homes. Even educated women of aristocratic or middle class families seldom participated in public activities.[40] But with the launching of the Salt Sathyagraha in 1930, one could see a miraculous change in their attitude. Women from all levels and walks of life came out into the battle arena.[38] As men were put behind bars, the women stepped out providing mature and considered leadership, initiative and resourcefulness beyond all expectations. No wonder that at the close of

[38] The ladies were remanded in jail for a fort night. They were tried on 28 February and awarded six months rigorous imprisonment, *Ibid.*, p.263
[39] Moyarath Sankaran, *op.cit.*, p.180.
[40] *Ibid.*

the movement Gandhiji commended that the role the women played in the freedom struggle should be written in letters of gold.[41]

In Malabar under the joint auspices of the *Bala Bharat Sangh* and the *Balika Sangh,* a large procession of girls led by Miss Jayalakshmi and Swarnakumari went along the important roads of Calicut on 25 February 1931 singing national songs and playing on *takils* (an instrument, using to make cotton trades).[42] In response to the call of Margaret Pavamani, shops, streets and residential houses in all-important places in Malabar were decorated with tri-color Congress flags on 27 February. Vigorous house to house propaganda was conducted in north Malabar by the members of the *Yuvak Sangh* and *Desa Sevika Sangh* headed by Karthyayani Amma and Mattilda Kallen.[43]

The non co-operation and civil disobedience movement saw the participation of women on a large scale. Gandhiji was so much impressed by the response of women to his call that he observed at a public meeting at Palghat in January 1934, "Women in Malabar stand first in India. All the women I have seen possessed a majesty which has

---

[41] K.Madhavan, *Oru Gandhian Communistinte Ormakal,*(Mal.) p.238
[42] K.G.Vijaya Lakshmi, 'Role of Women in Kerala Politics',in *Journal of Kerala Studies,* Vol-XII, 1985, December, pp. 20-21.
[43] Tara Ali Bai, *Women of India,* p.19.

commanded my respect."[44] It was particularly during the civil disobedience movement that the women who were determined to defy the law and get arrested, came out of the house and marched forward. The women processionists were arrested, and taken to the special sub-jail at Calicut. The arrest of the women and their trial attracted large crowds. M. Karthiyayani Amma, one among the arrested, was sentenced to undergo imprisonment till the adjourn of the court. On her refusal to give security for good behavior she alone was taken to jail when the court rose. The Magistrate observed that it was the first time that the women in Malabar joined the political movement and hoped that they would not repeat such things.[45]

The next occasion for women to defy law and court arrest came on 13 January 1931, when Gracy Aron, the Congress Dictator led a procession to Calicut beach accompanied by a team of women volunteers. The police arrested all the volunteers and in the trial proceedings, they demanded maximum punishment for themselves and they were awarded six months rigorous imprisonment. For breaking, the

---

[44] Quoted in Meera Velayudhan, 'The Growth of Political Conscious among Women in Modern Kerala', in P.J.Cherian, (ed.) *Perspectives on Kerala History*, p.500.

[45] Moyyarath Sankaran, *op.cit.*, p.185

salt law on 2 February1931 Easwari Amma the fifth Dictator, and M. K. Janaki Amma were arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year. On 12 February picketing for the first time was staged by the women in Malabar before a piece-goods shop in Calicut. Kunju Lakshi Amma, the sixth Dictator, and Sarojini Bai who had resigned their jobs to join the Satyagraha movement were arrested on 14 February. They were later tried and warded six months rigorous imprisonment.[46]

The civil disobedience movement was gradually gathering momentum in Malabar and it was at this juncture that the movement was suspended by Gandhiji as per the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 4 March 1931.[47] At that time in Malabar, picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquor shops continued. On March 7, 1931 public meetings were held and processions taken to celebrate the event all over Kerala. In Malabar, at Calicut, the Bala Bharat Sangh, the Balika Sangh, the Mahila Sangh and the Students League organized a huge procession. It was led by Smt. Margaret Pavamani. The authorities participation of woman is recorded by E. M. S. Namboodiripad as follows. "In Thrichur a lady teacher by name Karthiyayani Amma, resigned her job and joined the Salt

---

[46] A. Sreedhara Menon, *op.cit.*, p.128
[47] Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p.500

Satyagraha."[48] The large scale participation of women was a clear signal of the growing popular support to the freedom movement in British Malabar.[49]

On 19 March, 1931 Kamala Devi Chathopadhya visited Kannur and called up on the women to picket foreign cloth shops. On 2 April, 1931 at Trissur picketing by women was launched and led by A. V. Kuttimalu Amma and Mrs. Pavamani from Kozhikode. Among the women were P. Amritamma, P. Visalakshi Amma, T. Lakshmikutty, M. Karthyayani Amma, M. Lakshmikutty Amma, P. A. Narayanykutty, P. A. Kochammini, K. Kamalam and T. Subhadra.[50]Educated women from well-to-do families in Malabar now came to the forefront and picketed the foreign cloth shops. In Palghat similar activities ware organized by Mrs. R. V. Sharma, Mattilda Kallen, C. R. Devaki Amma and M. K. Janaki Amma who, with the aid of an enthusiastic band of volunteers and some of the members of the local bar, picketed leading wholesale and retail shops in the town and spread the message of Gandhiji in the remote villages of the taluk as well.

---

[48] E.M.S. Namboodirippad, *Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, (Mal.), p.267
[49] R.C.Majumdar, (ed.) *The History and Culture of the Indian People Struggle for Freedom*,Vol.V p.484
[50] E.M.S. Namboodirippad, *op.cit*, p.268

Calicut, the biggest commercial center in Malabar, gave a lead to the rest of the country. Mrs. Kamala Devi Chathopadhaya took up the leadership there with the hearty co-operation of a band of enthusiastic women workers.[51] including Mrs.U.Gopala Menon. A.V.kuttimalu Amma, D. B.Sita Bai, J. Ammukutty Amma,[52] Mrs.K.Madhavan Nair, C. Kunhikutty Amma and a few girls. They picketed the shops of the leading merchants while the men organizers did everything possible to avoid traffic obstruction and maintain orderliness in the streets. At Tellicherry Margaret Pavamani and P. M. Kamalavathi organized the picketing while at Cannanore the ladies came out of their homes for picketing from 19 March onwards.[53] In all these towns, the nationalist activity as reported by the police was regular and peaceful on the whole. The ladies who entered the political field hailed from respectable middle class families and were educated. Their participation in the movement enhanced its popularity and was bound to contribute to its ultimate success. They roused; it has to be recorded, the youth to an increasing consciousness of their duty to the motherland. The All Kerala women's League was formed at Kozhikode on 13 June 1931 with Mrs.Pavamani as

---

[51] E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *How I Became A Communist*, p.133
[52] T.Ammukutty Amma was the wife of a member of the Zamorin family
[53] K.Madhavan, *op.cit.*, p.237

President, Kunhikavu Amma as Vice President and Kuttimalu Amma[54] as Treasurer. P.M.Kamalavathy and Kunhi Lakshmi Amma were the secretaries.

The Provincial Women's Conference was the first to be held, under the presidentship of Padmavathi Asher of Tirupur. In her Presidential address she called upon the women to keep the tri-colour flag flying aloft until the attainment of independence.[55] The conference resolved that all Hindus, irrespective of caste differences, should have free access to all public places and demanded the recognition of equal rights of women, consistent with their number, in all administrative institutions. It was decided to organize the Kerala *Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh*[56] for carrying on the nationalist work and serving the cause of women in the country and to set up night schools and handicraft

---

[54] A.V.Kuttimalu Amma became an active member of the Indian National Congress in 1925, after she married Madhava Menon, a pioneer in the freedom struggles in Kerala. She took keen interest in the picketing of foreign cloth shops in 1931-32 and participated in the Satyagraha movement in 1932 and was convicted for two years. She went to jail with her six-month old daughter. Later she became a member of the Legislative Assembly, the All India Congress Committee, and the president of the Malabar Congress Committee, Tara Ali Bai, *op.cit.*, p.171

[55] Moyarath Sankaran, *op.cit.*, p.186

[56] Such an organization was formed in Calicut on June 13, 1931 at a meeting of women at Verkot House, with Mrs. Margaret Pavamani as President, Smt. Kunjikavu Amma as vice President, Smt. A.V. Kuttimalu Amma as Treasurer and Smt. P.M. Kamalavathi and Smt. K. Kunhilakshmi Amma as Secretories, P.K.K. Menon,*op.cit.*, p.276.

training centers for providing education and employment to poor women.

On 2 August 1931, the K.P.C.C. passed the resolution on temple entry and its meeting conducted on 5 September, in which P. M. Kamalavathy and M. Karthiyayani Amma were appointed to do propaganda work among the untouchable communities in a house-to-house campaign. At a large public meeting at Guruvayoor on the same day Karthiyayani Amma addressed the gathering. On 21 November 1931 on *Ekadasi* day K.Kelappan and some women offered Satyagraha at Guruvayoor. The 13th conference of the *Namboodiri Youth League* held at Taliparamba on 27 and 28 December attended by Parvathy Nenmini Mangalam passed the resolution supporting temple entry.[57]

The *Mahila Sevika Sangh* in Calicut continued its constructive work and organized a Swadesi Exhibition from 1 to 10 November 1931. Meanwhile the picketing of foreign cloth shops continued on 27 January 1932 at Talasserry. During the picketing, Kamalabhai Prabhu, Mrs. Govindan Nair and Sambhavi Amma were arrested on their refusal to declare loyalty to the government. Mrs. Prabhu received 6 months'

---

[57] Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p.502.

rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1000/- and the other two were imprisoned till the rising of the court. On her refusal to pay the fine Mrs. Prabhu was asked to take off her jewellery. Instead, she gave all except her *tali* (marriage locket) saying she could not part with it as long as her husband was alive. The Magistrate ordered the police constable to remove it. Mrs. Parabhu then herself removed it and asked her arrested colleagues to do the same which they did. She was then taken to the Vellore jail in a train without a single woman escort. This incident led to all-India protests and was raised in the Legislative Council, the Central Legislative Assembly, and even in the House of Commons. The government responded with a press note regretting the Magistrate's grave and highhanded action and the Magistrate himself regretted the action and ordered the return of the *tali*.

On 4 February 1932 the agitators took out a procession at Kozhikode and following the procession the police arrested Kunhikavu Amma, Mrs. Pavamani and Padmavathy, the first two received two and a half years rigorous imprisonment and Padmavathi, two years. On 10 February 1932, Mattilda Kallen, a Dictator of the *Kerala Yuvak Sangh*, and Devaki Amma took out a procession of volunteers in Quilandy. They

were arrested and the volunteers beaten up. They received two years' rigorous imprisonment. At Palghat on 9 February 1932, P.Devaki Amma led a procession. She along with P.Janaki Amma and Padmini were arrested. Devaki Amma was imprisoned on 18 February 1932 at Talasserry. K.Madhavi Amma and Sambhavi Amma were arrested for picketing cloth shops and given six months rigorous imprisonment. On 17 February a procession of women at Palaghat was severely attacked by the police. On 22 February at Kozhikode a procession led by Kuttimalu Amma accompanied by two aristocratic women, Ammukutty Nethyaramma and Suguna Pai was stopped by the police and the women were arrested. The Magistrate refused permission to Kuttimalu Amma to keep her two-month old baby with her in jail. Nevertheless, the superintendent of jail allowed her to keep her child with her. All three were given two years rigorous imprisonment on April 30 1932. At Kannur[58]about a hundred women who were taking out a procession were arrested. Twelve including Mrs. Arron were kept in custody on 19 May 1932. Women again picketed at Kozhikode, courting arrest. Arrests of women also took place at Kozhikode on 30 June and Chirakkal. On 9 July, Kunjiratha, a sixty-year-old woman, who courted arrest every day,

---

[58] Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p.504

was sentenced to one-year rigorous imprisonment for having presided over a conference at Peralasseri and was kept in solitary confinement in a dingy room. She fell ill. There was an agitation for her release and medical treatment. Finally, she was admitted to the Kannur Jail Hospital on 8 September 1932. Between January and July, 22 women were convicted.[59]

In Malabar all the three struggles, the Salt Satyagraha, the boycott of foreign goods and the anti-liquor campaign occurred simultaneously. In the course of these struggles more than five hundred women were arrested. The civil disobedience movement was gaining momentum. More and more women came forward to participate in the struggle and courted arrest. Just after the Salt Satyagraha was over, T. Narayani Amma, Mrs. U. Gopala Menon, K. E. Saradha and Margarat Pavamani formed at Kozhikode a committee to propagate *Khadi*. They initiated a series of public debates throughout Malabar. They went from house to house and campaigned for *Khadi*. A team of three women was sent to Wardha to learn spinning of *Khadi* as well as Hindi. One among them was Devaki Narkatiri. M. Karthyayani Amma was a beloved disciple of

---

[59] *Ibid.*

Gandhi and took an active part in the propagation of *Khadi*. She wrote in her memoirs:

> My mind urged me not to waste the opportunity and to do my duty. I was a teacher at the time after having graduated from college. I let my father know my intention to resign the job and participate in the *Sathyagraha* movement. I resigned the job and left for Kozhikode. At the time Kochi was a princely state, and Gandhiji would not give his permission to stage the civil disobedience movement there. All the major leaders had already been arrested and sent to prison in Kozhikode. Police brutality had no bounds. I thought that it was dastardly to keep quiet. So Mrs. Aron, Kunhikavamma, Narayanikutty Amma and some others got ready to participate in the civil disobedience struggle. Hundreds of policemen had been deployed at the venue. A large number of people had also gathered here. As soon as we got down the police began to lathi charge. I was driven forward by an unseen inner urge. I managed to come near the police. Then the commandant asked his men to stop the lathy charge. All of us were taken into custody and then to prison. We were tried the next day itself. The court found me guilty and observed that I was behind the whole trouble. I was taken back to prison. I felt that I had fulfilled my duty to the nation. At the time my father was in government service. His superiors threatened him with dire consequences and asked him for an explanation for his daughter's treasonous activities. He calmly replied that she was only doing her duty.[60]

When the civil disobedience movement was called off for sometime, the activists turned their attention to other non-political activities. The economic depression, the fall in prices of agricultural

---

[60] M. Karthyayani Amma,*Thirumumbinoppam*(Mal.)pp.59-68

produces, the increase in land tax etc, paved the way for peasant and workers to organize. Malabar witnessed a number of significant peasant revolts as part of the nationalist and Communist movements during the 1930's and 40's. It was the peasant organizations that nurtured and nourished nationalism and anti - colonial feeling among the peasants. It also ensured the participation of women in these agitations leading to a great upsurge in Malabar.

In Malabar, work among the peasants was a difficult task. For centuries, the peasants had suffered insult and injuries at the hands of the landlords. Conditions of serfdom and caste-practices enforced restriction on them. There were also occasions when good-looking and healthy women both married and unmarried, belonging to peasant families were molested by the landlords.[61] Besides the stipulated taxes, many illegal exactions were imposed by the landlords on their tenants. There are references to numerous methods of torture by the landlords for extracting rent from the peasants of Malabar. Andalat has given

---

[61] K.K.N.Kurup, *The Kayyur Riot*, p.11. In addition to the economic servitude the peasants also suffered social servitude. An illegal practice existed in Malabar. After the marriage of a young peasant it was customary to offer his bride to the landlord. This is known as *'Adhyarathri Avakasam'* A.K. Pothuval, *op.cit.*, p.31, K.K.N. Kurup, (ed.) *Keraleeyante Leghanangal*, p.244

ample examples in his work, *Rekhayillatha Charithram*.[62] During the 1930's the peasants began to organize themselves against the landlords' exploitation. The first regular unit of the *Karshaka Sangham* was formed at Karivellur in September 1934.[63] The impact of the activities of the *Karshaka Sangham* was widespread, and even members of the landlord families were drawn to it. In the 1930's a new generation emerged in Kerala politics and they led the Kerala peasantry. During the thirties and the forties, Malabar witnessed so many peasant struggles led by the *Karshaka Sangham*. Malabar was a region in which women participated in the struggle in a substantial scale, and formed women's organizations including the *Mahila Sangham* and the *Mahila samajam*. The names of some of the women who participated in the struggles have been given by historians.[64] But a detailed account of the struggles from a gender perspective is yet to be undertaken.

The peasant organizations and their numerous conventions also served to destabilize caste discriminations and practices. They arranged inter-caste communal feasts (*misrabhojana*). In the convention at

---

[62] Andalat, *Rekhayillatha Charithram*, (Mal.), PP: 12-25

[63] M.P.Narayan Nambiar, 'Adhunika Karshaka Prasthanathinte Utbhavavum Valarchyum Keralathil', in *Kerala Karshaka Sangham Suvarna Jubile Souinier*,(Mal.) 1986, p.47.

[64] Andalat, *op.cit.*, pp.12-25

Kodakkad in 1931 such a feast was organized and women from the higher caste feudal families also took part. They began to take an active part in the peasant organizations. Among them were P. C. Karthiyayani Amma, Parameswari Antharjanam, Chenan Veettil Lakshmi Amma and Puthilot Payadakanveetil Lakshi Amma. It was also a period of glorious revolutionary struggles in Malabar. At Kayyur, Karivellur, Morazha, Kavumbayi and other places people rose against the colonial and feudal forces. In all these struggles, it was the support given by the women with utmost devotion to the cause that made them possible. They arranged food and shelters to the leaders and activists. They bore the burden of running the family and bringing up children, and they had to suffer the outrages and repression of the police and thugs of the landlords.[65]

Moyarath Sankaran in his autobiography observes:

> National awareness is to be measured in terms of the women's participation in the national movement. When young men return from prison after suffering at the hands of the police, the welcome given to them by their mothers and sisters would remove all their lethargy and they would

---

[65] C. S.Chandrika, 'Keralathinte Sthree Charithram', *Samakalika Malayalam Varika, Keralam Erupatham Noottandu,* (Mal.) 2000 January 7, p.205.

> get ready for more sacrifice. This shows that the awareness of women had reached home and kitchen alike.[66]

The Kayyur struggle of 1941 was a great upsurge against imperialism and feudalism. The peasant union in Kayyur in Kasargode taluk organized widespread protest rallies against the high-handedness and vandalism of the landlords.[67] In order to tide the growing influence of the people's movement the police took into custody a number of peasant leaders. On 28 March 1941 there was a massive rally to protest against these arrests. They clashed with a police officer called Subrayan. To escape the protesters he jumped into the river and got drowned.[68]Following this incident the police unleashed a reign of terror in Kayyur. Most of the activists were arrested and the court sentenced four of them to death. On 29 March 1943 four activists of the peasant union, Appu, Chirukantan, Abubaker and Kunjambu Nair were hanged.[69]

One of the first woman to come to the forefront of the peasant struggles was Karthyayanikutty Amma, the wife of T. S. Tirumunpu, an

---

[66] Moyarath Sankaran, *op.cit.*, p.185.
[67] V.V. Kunjambu, *Kayyur Samara Charithram*,(Mal.) p.54
[68] K.K.N.Kurup, *'The Peasant Movement in Kasargod Taluk 1935-1942'*, in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol.II, March 1975, p.102.
[69] V.V.K.Kunjambu, *op.cit.*,p.143

organizer of the Kayyur peasant movement. She had to lead a life of sufferings. The police asked her to keep the doors always open, as they had to search for her husband. In November 1942, the police under Jamendar Madhavan Nair came at night to conduct a raid. They smashed and threw out every thing in the house. Karthyayani Amma fled from the house and escaped taking her son, who had fallen ill and was on the verge of death shocked by the police atrocities and harassment. She played a decisive role in rallying the women of Kayyur behind the peasant union. In spite of constant threats from the police and property owners' *goondas* she traveled the length and breadth of the countryside-organizing peasants.[70] The women's organization led by Kunju Madhavi honoured her with a gift of a wooden pestle as a symbol of resistance. It shows the solidarity and vibrancy of the women at the time.

Another courageous woman who supported the peasant movement was Chiruthevi Amma. Born in a traditional family she was the mother of Podera Kunjambu Nair, one of the four Kayyur martyrs. During the Kayyur struggle and the 1948 *Nelladuppu Samaram* (Rice seizure agitation), the tortures she suffered were beyond words. The

[70] K.K.N. Kurup, (Compl), *T.S. Tirumump, Smaranakal, Kavithakal,*(Mal.) p.60

police used to conduct raids almost every day in search of her son Kunjambu. She had to report at police station with her husband every day for a month. She had to undergo the agony of seeing her son being sent to the gallows.[71]

The parents of other martyrs, Appu, Chirukantan and Abubakker too had to suffer similar physical and mental agony. They had shouldered the responsibility of giving safe shelters to the peasant leaders. It was their job to carry letters and messages to proper destinations. For this, they sought the help of traveling sales men. In this context the selfless service of Karichi of Madikai must be mentioned. Her house served as an undercover post office. Letters to different destinations went from there. Later the police discovered it. She was arrested and subjected to serve torture. But she never disclosed anything, though her face was disfigured in police torture she showed amazing fortitude. The police demolished her house. Another lady who had to undergo severe torture was Lakshmi, the wife of K. V. Kammaran of Udinur. So also was Karumbi, the wife of Kadayangan Kunhikannan.

---

[71] K. Madhavan, *op. cit.*, p.239

A major portion of their income was spent on feeding the leaders of the peasant movement.[72]

The anti- imperialist, anti-feudal struggle in Malabar was sustained by the self-sacrifices of a number of women like Chemmarathi, Koyithatil Paru, Madathil Manikkam and Parvathi Teacher. On one occasion the police who had come to look for Madathil Raghavan beat up the woman activist Manikam, T.V.Kunhuraman's sister, Korumbi's legs were smashed in front of him. Korumbi and her mother fled and took shelter in Njangadi forest. They had to remain there without food for a week. On March 28, 1943 when the people of Kayyur village[73] decided to take a protest rally against police atrocities from Pookanam Vayal, it turned out to be a massive march of men, women and children. Police resorted to serve repression. The women in Kayyur had to pay a heavy price for taking part in the rally. Rape and severe torture followed.

Their experience reveals how the police became oppressive machinery in the hands of a colonial state. When the police set fire to the

---

[72] *Ibid.*, p.240

[73] The Kayyur village was not in Malabar proper but belonged in the Kasaragod taluk of South Canara. However, the movement gained momentum with the support of the Communist Party of India and its Kerala leaders. Soth Canara and Malabar were under the British power.

house of Choorikadan Krishnan Nair, a prominent leader of the Kayyur struggle, Lakshmi Amma of Unippiradath Vengayil came running to the spot. The police tied her to a tree and bayoneted her. Lakshmi Amma had taken up the charge of distributing sharp knives to all houses from where men were taken away by the police.

Kodakaravalapil Chemmarathy was seventeen years at the time. She was in charge of the men who had gone underground. She was adept in the use of both knives and country guns. It was the duty of the women to prepare food and wash cloths. They did all this work with a rare conviction in the service of the people and the cause of nationalism. To them it was an inalienable part of political work.

It is surprising how these women took care of their children. They were taught to keep secrecy and not to disclose anything about new visitors. C.H. Kanaran is quite well known in Malabar's political history[74]. But there is no mention of the sufferings of his wife Parvathi teacher in any history book. She had to suffer just because she was C.H. Kanaran's wife; she had to undergo continuous torture at the hands of the police for 365 days. At the time she had been the mother of a three

[74] C.H. Kanaran, a prominent communist leader and rationalist took initiative in organizing peasants and workers in Malabar

month old child. She says that she had to bear up half of the torture that Kanaran suffered.

The Second World War brought in its wake severe famine in the countryside. Even in those days, the feudal family of Chirakkal Kovilakam and their minions continued to oppress the people. The Karivellur[75] struggle was set in this background. A. V. Kunhambu was the leader of this struggle. By marrying him K.Devayani also was drawn into the leadership of the Malabar peasant organizatiuon as well as the Karivellur struggle.

K. Devayani belonged to Alleppey and later she shifted to Punnappra where her sister-in-law's house was situated. Her sister's husband was an active *Atmavidhya Sangham* worker. When Devayani was in the nineth standard, her education was stopped. Along with her sister, Devayani also came forward as a *Mahila Sangham* worker. When the *Atmavidhya Mahila Sangham* conducted a *Mahila Sangham* conference at Punnappra, it was Devayani who sang the prayer song. Later she

[75] Karivellur, a Northern village of Malabar had played a significant role in the nationalist and peasant movements in this region. Associations like the *Abhinava Bharat Yuvak Sangham* under the leadership of Kunjambu, V.V. Kunjambu and other political activists were responsible for mobilizing peasants of this village in the anti-imperialist movement, K.K.N. Kurup, *Agrarian Struggles in Kerala*, p.26.

became the secretary of the *Atmavidhya Mahila Sangham*. In the initial phase, she used to recite Aryabataswami's written speech and later she became a good orator. During the period, the coir workers formed a union of their own under the name of 'Ambalappuzha Taluk Coir Workers Union' and she became the secretary of the union at the age of fifteen. During that period the women coir workers acted as both coir workers and agricultural workers. From 8am to 6pm, they worked hard in the field and no leisure time was allowed to them even for lunch. The women of Kalarkot started a strike and after this, thirty minutes leisure was allowed to them and this incident greatly influenced Devayani.

Following the advice of Comrade P. Krishna Pillai she joined the peasant movement and took part in the Karivellur struggle. During the post-World War II period of famine and misery the granaries of the feudal lords were full and overflowing. The peasants decided to forcibly seize the grain and distribute it among the poor and needy peasants. In this struggle the women valiantly resisted the landlord's goonda army and the specially constituted Malabar Special Police, notorious for their brutality. Devayani organized and led a number of women's rallies around Karivellur. She was pregnant at the time. Police followed her

everywhere, showering her with abuses. She knew that they were torturing her in order to capture her husband, A. V. Kunhambu who had gone understand. She steadfastly resisted the police harassment. Karivellur was teeming with police and their informers. All the men folk had gone into hiding. In those harrowing conditions she gave birth to a girl child and brought it up. She braced herself to face the ordeal.

It was a glorious saga of perseverance and determination. At times she had to take shelter in graveyards to escape police harassment. She has described those days in her memoirs called *'Chorayum Kanneerum Nananja Vazhikal'*. She calls her daughter the first martyr in the peasant struggles of Kerala. However, her sufferings involving isolation, abject poverty, disease and the loss of her child are never visible in the male dominated history of Kerala.[76]

There were a large number of women who took an active part in the movement by arranging shelters and providing food to the peasant leaders. Among them were Kodoth Remani Ammma (wife of Rawanneswaram Narathath Kunjikkan) Melath Janaki Amma, and Akku Amma. In this context Yasodha Teacher, wife of Kanthalot

---

[76] K. Devayani, *Chorayum Kannirum Nananja Vazhikal* (Mal.)p.126

Kunjambu, needs special mention as one who had to undergo innumerable ordeals.[77] She started her political career by working in the Congress movement. Just after matriculation in 1937 she along with Kannoth Madhavi Amma and M. V. Meenakshi Amma formed a women's organization in Pappinisseri. She tried to educate her colleagues on the need for national freedom and Gandhi's role in the movement. Later she became an active worker of the Communist Party.

Then she became a reporter of *Deshabhimani* newspaper. Her reports mostly carried the news of the atrocities of the M.S.P.men and the struggle of Kunhakkamma. These reports helped to a great extent to spread the message of resistance among the people. Her articles criticizing the British government so provoked the police that they were ordered to be seized. But they could not do so as she kept it safe it under her bed. Therefore, the police spent all their rage and frustration on her. In 1952, she married Kanthalot Kunhambu and continued with her political activities.

In the eastern region of Chirakkal taluk sharecropping was the prevalent system of farming. But most of the landlords were not

---

[77] K. Madhavan, *op.cit.*, p.241

prepared to lease out their land for cultivation.[78] When the actual farmers were prevented from cultivation, the whole countryside lay waste and barren and scarcity of food and starvation became the order of the day. The peasant organizations decided to affirm the farmer's right to cultivate the waste and barren lands. The police and landlords went on to suppress the movement. There followed beating up of peasants and lathycharges. Thousands of farmers stayed a huge protest rally before the Irikkur police station. Under the pretext of arresting them, the M.S.P. raided their homes, ill-treated and manhandled the womenfolk. On many occasions the women bravely retaliated. One of the women who valiantly resisted the police atrocities was Cheriamma.

During 1935-36 it was Cheriamma who supplied milk and milk products like curd to the Karakatidam landlords. Every day she used to pass by the peasant union office. One day someone from the office ridiculed her for doing that menial job. She duly reported it to the landlord. He asked her to sign a few blank papers. Thereafter a case of rape was registered against the peasant leaders. They were arrested. But when Cheriamma realized that she was trapped and cheated by the landlord, she informed the police that such an incident had not occurred

[78] K.K.N. Kurup, *op.cit.*, pp.30-32

at all. Thus, she foiled the vicious plan of the landlords to suppress the peasant movement.[79]

Such were the numerous tricks and treachery the landlords played on the peasants. A.K.Gopalan in his autobiography narrates the plight of women in those days. He says:

> One of the landlords belonging to the Kalyat family one day raped a peasant woman who was afflicted with an eye disease, and permanently blinded her. When she pleaded piteously with the brute to spare her as she was suffering from an eye disease, he duly replied that it was not her eyes that he wanted.[80]

Hundreds of women had lost their maidenhood at the hands of such monsters from feudal families.

Cheriyamma played her role in both the 1940 Morazha struggle and the 1941 struggle against the stoppage of sharecropping. When a women's union was formed in Malabar during 1942-43, Cheriamma become its President and A. V. Kalyanikutty Amma, its Secretary in the Irikkur region. P. Yesodha Teacher used to visit these areas in order to organize women. In these activities Cheriamma and A.V.Kalyanikutty Amma were her close associates. While the leaders of the Kavumbayi

---

[79] A.V. Kunhikrishnan, 'DheeraKarshaka Vanithakal:Cheriyamma Oru Anusmaranam', *Swathanthriya Badan*, (Mal.), 1983 Decmber 31, p.9

[80] A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Kadha*,(Mal.) p.275

struggle went into hiding in 1946, it was Cheriamma who served as a courier and passed on necessary information on the police moves and new arrests. Suspecting her involvement in the movement the police threatened her too. When an enquiry commission visited Irukkur to enquire into the police highhandedness Cheriamma came forward to testify before it.

On one occasion, a notorious landlord in north Malabar recruited an army of thugs to be employed at Kavumbayi, Kanhileri, Eruvessi and even as far as Payyanur. Once they entered Cheriamma's house, unleashed a reign of terror and left ransacking everything they could lay their hands on. But it could not break her conviction and determination. She continued to stand in the forefront of all the mass movements. She had been a nightmare to the oppressors and a beacon of hope and inspiration to the people. The history of the struggle of the Irukkur peasants is the life story of Cheriamma.[81]

In the numerous struggles in North Malabar to occupy and cultivate the dry lands, those at Cheemeni and Kandakai were led by

---

[81] A.V. Kunjikrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.10

women alone.[82] In 1942 one George Thomas bought the 6036 acre waste land at Cheemeni in Hosdurg Taluk from the Kottukappalli Thazhakkattumana and Kuttamath Kanniyoor families. He prevented peasant women from collecting foliage and firewood from the land. He imposed a price for each bundle of the materials. It triggered off a mass struggle in 1946.[83]

In November, the peasant women entered the estate and collected the foliage and firewood. Police came and intervened on behalf of the estate owner and unleashed oppressive measures.[84] Karthiyayani Amma took an active part in organizing these women for the struggle.[85] Among those who participated in the struggle were Chettichi Paru, Marathi Parvathi, Edatodom Veettil Madhavi, M.V. Cheria and V.Cheria. An interesting and inspiring marching song recited by them was composed by K.A.Keraleeyan, an activist of the *Kisan Sangham.* Some of its lines were:

"We will procure leaves and fire wood
Even if the god of death comes

---

[82] 79 A.K. Gopalan, *Ente Jeevitha Kadha,*(Mal.) p.275
[83] A.V. Kunjikrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.10
[84] A.K. Gopalan, *op.cit.*, p.87
[85] A.K. Pothuval, *op. cit.*, p.71

The forest is like an ocean,

Planted and nurtured by none.

The stickles that we carry in our hands,

Are not for reaping leaves alone!"[86]

The Kandakai grassland struggle was in 1946. When the landlord in Kandakai village wanted to evict one Kannan Nair, the village officials miserably failed to do so because of the resistance of the peasant organizations. The peasants forcibly harvested grass. The M.S.P. was called and they raided peasant homes and destroyed everything including clothes. Kunhakkamma and Cheriamma led the march.[87] It is interesting to note that the former was a relative of the oppressor landlord.[88] When he saw that the procession had maligned him, he initiated legal proceedings against Kunhakkamma and ten others.[89]She was arrested in February 1947 and detained till 5 April. She had to undergo severe torture. Her steadfastness and organizing ability contributed much to the awakening of the women in the region. Her support emboldened the peasants to face the guns of the Malabar SpecialPolice "Kill us if you want. But we will reap the field where we

---

[86] K.K.N. Kurup, *Keralathile Karshaka Samarangal* 1946-52, (Mal.), p.50
[87] V.V. Kunjambu, *Kayyur Samara Charithram*,(Mal.) p.169
[88] K.K.N. Kurup, *op. cit.*, p.37-38
[89] A.K. Pothuval, *op. cit.*, p.96

have sweated," they declared.[90] The M.S.P. withdrew before the organized strength of the women. Kunhakkamma remained with them until her death in 1961 at the age of seventy-two. Women were victims of state violence and faced abuse of state power bravely.

By 1947, almost all farm workers had joined the peasant's union. They waged valiant struggles against feudal lords and colonial forces. Malabar witnessed a wave of struggles at the time. In all these struggles the role of women was crucial and decisive. Yet, unfortunately, none of these heroines has found a place in recorded history. This is one of the most important tasks to be fulfilled. [91]

The colonial intervention enabled them to realize their inferior status and they become that aware of their role in the transformation of society. It served as a kind of political education. It was for the first time that the women in Malabar realized that they had a role of to play in the historical process. Nevertheless, the social and political upheavals brought to light the basic fact that the colonial powers demanded their subjugation. The anti-colonial struggles proved to be liberating as far as

---

[90] K. K. N. Kurup, *op. cit.*, p.34.
[91] A. K. Pothuval, *op. cit.*, p.96.

the women was concerned with out which they would never have reached the centre stage of history. In fact, the innumerable struggles that followed the colonial subjugation were the most crucial for the women.

The participation of women in various movements was the result of socio-economic necessity of the material condition. From the period of colonial subjugation the people of Malabar resisted against foreign domination. The Pazassi revolt and Kurichya rebellions were suppressed the British forces and countless people were attained martyrdom and widows were created and their children became orphans. The tribal people valiantly resisted against the colonial oppression where the women folk joined hand with their men.

When the nationalist ideology disseminated among the people the Gandhian method of agitation was widely accepted. Mahatma Gandhi, was a rallying point of freedom fighters in Kerala and was an unending source of inspiration. He attracted the masses irrespective of caste, religion or sex. His position in the minds of people was unique.

P Narayanan Nair observes:

> In India during the last four decades it was Gandhi's voice that had resounded every-where more than anything else. It was his wish that was respected and his commands that prevailed. His ideology of non-violence was felt as a formidable revolutionary force in the objective conditions at the time.[92]

Gandhian constructive programme was a great impetus to attract the women folk. A remarkable feature of the women who participated in the movement was belonged to the upper strata of the society. The propagation of khadi and Hindi was a major campaign related with Gandhian constructive programme. The orthodox sections and the colonial government identified khadi as a symbol of protest. By wearing khadi it had become a nationwide dress code the freedom lovers everywhere in India during this period showed their allegiance to nationalism and thus became participants in the anti-colonial struggle. In Kerala, especially in Malabar, the khadi spinning and weaving centres stood as vital points of nationalism.[93] The large scale participation of women in Malabar in these movement attained national level attention.

As other items in Gandhian constructive programmes, propagation of Hindi was also one of the motive forces of anti-colonial politics. In order to communicate with each other a national language

---

[92] 23 P.Narayanan Nair, *Aranoottandiloode,*(Mal.), p.178.

[93] A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala and Freedom Struggle,* pp. 143-44.

was essential and the desire to do so was pervasive among the freedom fighters. K. Madhavan in his autobiography tells "The thought that studying Hindi which is used by a majority of the people in India would be more useful to strengthen the national movement became very strong in my mind."[94] The campaign for popularizing Hindi was conducted not by rejecting English as a foreign language but by presenting a national language as an alternative. Gandhiji was publishing *Young India* in English. Therefore there was a no rejection or hatred of English. He understood the limitation of English as he took into consideration both the educated and the common illiterate masses.[95] So he chose Hindi as the medium of his campaigns. Thus it became the linguistic symbol of national sentiment and unity.

Gandhiji also understood that other regional languages *(Mathrubasha)* should be promoted and strengthened along with Hindi. He thought that the best method to promote the regional languages was the adult and women education. Those programmes were taken up enthusiastically by the educated youth at local levels. Those programmes targeted the aged people who could not get formal

---

[94] K. Madhavan, *Oru Gandhian Communistine Ormakal,* (Mal.) p. 40. His autobiography published initially in 1987 in the title of *Payaswiniyude Theerathu* (Mal.) by Prabhat Book House, Thiruvanthapuram. The present autobiography is the revised edition of *Payaswiniyude Theerathu.*

[95] Vidwan. K.C. Madhava Menon, 'Nammude Rashtrabhasha –Hindi' (Mal.), in *Mathrubhumi Weekly,* 1932, March, pp. 7-8.

schooling and the downtrodden who were denied schooling because of social taboos. Thus they helped the all-round development and progress of the basic classes.[96]

Anti- liquor campaign was another nationwide movement which was launched as part of the Gandhian constructive programme. In Kerala Sree Narayana Guru had already started such a campaign.[97] The picketing of toddy shops served as a major programme and attracted the people towards the movement. Such agitations played an important role in educating the people against the danger of liquor consumption. Though the struggles were not fully successful and the toddy shops were not closed for ever, they could create a good amount of public opinion against the social evil of alchoholism.[98] Though the police and the *goondas* of the toddy shop owners tried to obstruct the struggle and provoked the volunteers, it continued to grow with more and more vigour and people's participation. The ill effect of liquor had

---

[96] Vidwan. K.C. Madhava Menon, 'Nammude Rashtrabhasha –Hindi' (Mal.), in *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 1932, March, pp. 7-8.

[97] It is recoded that in 1787 the ruler of Travancore formally prohibited the use of *Takara* or palm brandy on pain of forfeiture of property. A Sreedara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, p. 412. Before a decade of Gandhiji's prohibition movement, Sree Narayana Guru had started his anti-liquor campaign at Trivandrum. On the occasion of his birth day celebrations on the asterisms of *Chathayam* in *Chingam* 1096 K.E. (1921) he exhorted his followers "Alcohol is poison. One should not make it, should not sell, should not give, give up the consumption of liquor" Puthuppalli Raghavan, *Viplava Smaranakal*, (Mal.), Vol. I, p. 158.

[98] See the details of anti-liquor programs including picketing of foreign textile shops, Moyyarath Sankaran, *op.cit.*, K.P. Kesava Menon, *op.cit.*,etc.

badly affected people mostly from the backward sections of the society.[3995] These campaigns helped to bring to the common people the idea that public persons and political workers should be models and they should choose the Gandhian way of life. Through these methods the national movement posed a national alternative in place of colonial moral concepts.

The campaign for the removal of untouchability, inter-dining *(Misrabhojana)*, the struggle for right to worship, especially for temple entry and the use of public roads by lower castes etc. played an important role in unifying the people and promoted nationalism. Social discriminations and differences among various sections of the people were obstacles for social solidarity. Popular committees were formed to conduct campaigns for the removal of untouchability, and conscious efforts were made to get the support of the upper castes for its abolition. A vast majority of the upper caste people supported and encouraged the campaigns for temple entry to all Hindus and the use of public roads by all.[100] Thus the oppressed people gained self confidence and began to

---

[99] A.K. Gopalans explains the example of a toddy shop picketing and laymen approach against it, *Ente Jeevitha Kadha*, pp. 28-29. It is observed that the toddy shops worked as a public space in Kerala, there was no restriction of caste or religion. See Dileep M. Menon, 'Anandathilninnu Vilakkilekku:Madyavum Malabar Samoohavaum – 1909-1940'. (Mal.), *Kerala Padanangal* ,Vol.III, October- December 1993, pp.302 -323.

[100]A.K. Gopalan, *op.cit.*,p. 53 also see the details of referendum, *Mathrubhumi, Ksahetrapravesana Suppliment*, (Mal.)1938.

trust in the honesty and progressive ideals of the national movement. Though social discrimination had prevented the entry of the lower strata of society into the political arena, with the growth of national movement those separate identities were united and integrated into the main stream.

According to Moyyarath Sankaran, a salient feature of the national movement was the massive participation of women in it.[101] Women had to suffer brutal police tortures and countless sacrifices. At the time of the Malabar rebellion there were numerous instances when women were raped and small children and even pregnant women were lynched to death.[102] Later, when the socialist and communist leaders went underground, again it was the women who bore the brunt of police high-handedness. They worked as couriers at the risk of their own life when the Communist Party set-up alternate postal system.[103] In the Congress led national movement the women did not have to suffer as much as they were subjected to during the agitation led by the Communist Party.[104] The mothers, wives and sisters of the Communist

---

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 185

[102] Madhavan Nair, *op.cit.*,p. 216

[103] K. Madhavan, *op.cit.*, p. 240.

[104] Thulasi Bhaskaran, 'Indian Desiya Prasthanathil Sthreekalude Panku' in C. Bhaskaran (ed.), *Indian Swathantra Samaram :Vividha Dharakal,* (Mal.) pp. 161-165.

activists and leaders were persistently subjected to severe torture. Their valiant resistance and sense of self-sacrifice represented a high degree of nationalist consciousness. Special mention must be made about the sacrifices of Devayani, and Yesodha teacher.[105] As the leadership of the nationalist movement passed from the Indian National Congress to the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party in Kerala, women's participation also changed accordingly. In Kerala women became the most active propagandists of nationalism. Their role is unparalleled in the annals of the national struggle in terms of the intensity of their experience and allegiance to the cause of the oppressed and the poor.[106]

In Malabar, the nationalist movement simultaneously worked for political emancipation from foreign rule and age-old oppressive social system. The experience of each class in the society was different, but the anti- colonial struggle worked as a cohesive force and provided space for each section of the society. As a fragment of the nation, women had

---

[105]K.Devayani a front row women activist in the Communist Party took pains for national independence. Her husband A.V.Kunhanmbu was a prominent leader of the Communist Party and actively participated in the Kayyur struggle. Her reminiscence *Chorayum Kaneerum Nananja Vazhikal,* (Mal.) provides a detailed account of her sufferings. Yasoda teacher, wife of Kanthalottu Kunhambu suffered a lot of miseries during the period of freedom movement. She was also an active member in the teachers' movement in Malabar.

[106] K.Madhavan, *op.cit.,* pp. 237 – 241.

to play a vital role in nation making and they had done it satisfactorily. They realized the fact that without political entry they will not be emancipated. The tradition of anti-colonial movement paved the way for the construction of politically defined identity of women, which is an integral part of their social identity.

CONCLUSION

The pre-colonial Kerala society was steeped in tradition, and Malabar was not an exception. In such a society, the status of women was pre determined. The Mysorean occupation acted as a brake and shook the traditional society.[1] It gained momentum with the establishment of British supremacy in Malabar. However the British rule had influenced the society and the individual alike.[2] The nationalist movement arose out of the colonial context set for itself the task of reforming the society by removing social and legal disparities from which the women suffered.[3]

The establishment of British power in 1792 was a significant event in the history of Malabar. It led to fundamental changes in the socio-economic settings of the region and it also affected the life of women. The colonial administrators nurtured the ambition of the everlasting existence of their power in the occupied regions. They realized that trade was no longer to be maintained and revenue farming was a better way for acquiring maximum wealth. The British rulers through different measures brought the landlords

---

[1] See for more details of the inter-relation between the changing direction of trade relation with colonial powers and local rulers in the context of Mysorean invasion of Malabar, Ashin Das Guptha, *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800*, pp.112-114.

[2] S.Ramachandran Nair, *Social and Cultural History of Colonial Kerala*,p.139

[3] The legal redefinition of the land tenures and households in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries transformed the powers of the custodians of Hindu social order. It changed the relationship of mutual dependence between men and women created through a network of material and ritual bonds that had been built up over generations. See for more details, Dileep.M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India 1900-1948*

under their control and introduced reforms at different levels. Their interference was reflected in the grass root level and these reform measures were able to influence the life of women.

The administrative re-structuring was an urgent need of the colonial rulers as they had to remodel the traditional society to fulfill their capitalist ambitions. The social and political practices of the newly occupied region were unfamiliar to them which necessitated the introduction of extensive reforms. The intention behind the appointment of the Joint Commissioners and their reports also validated and reflected this fact. In fact, the realization that land revenue was the major source of income led to the establishment of well-defined executive machinery and various government posts for the smooth functioning of the administrative system. Revenue system functioned under the District Collector and this unit was named as a revenue district. Under the revenue district *thaluks* were formed under a *thahasildar*. Below these administrative units the entire land was divided into *amsams* and *desams* headed by *amsam adikaries* and village officers. For a better understanding of the resourses, the settlement areas were classified and documented. These colonial settlement registers are valuable sources for the reconstruction of the history of colonial Malabar. The introduction of a hierarchy of officials and subordinate services in a systematic manner and its functioning with well

defined principles of administration was a new experiment which was unfamiliar to the people of Malabar. Through this administrative setup the extracted revenue was considerably increased and it provided a strong economic foundation for the Raj.

The introduction of administrative machinery included a network of law courts and supportive machineries, including police and jails. The different layers of courts took charge of the maintenance of law and order. The European legal principles were enacted and the 'rule of law' was imposed. The traditional discriminative laws were replaced by secular laws. The traditional intolerance to women's entry into public sphere began to disappear and laws were favourable to women which treated them as essential fragments of society. The new legal procedures had the effect of delaying justice and judicial remedy because it proved to be a costly enterprise. The strength of evidence and money power determined the merit of judicial action, which was badly, affected the lower sections of the society, including women.

The enactment of social laws was another important development in the colonial period. This had far reaching effect on family relation and inheritance. The social laws ensured individual freedom and bestowed a certain responsibility for the individual to his family. The law of inheritance

gave right to property and right to manage it on one's own choice. The protection of law was an important aspect in individual freedom, though women were not able to enjoy its benefit to a great extent. The corporate life had continued to be a significant feature of the joint family system in Kerala. The disappearance of corporate life was visible, and in its place the concept of nuclear family came to be widespread in society. It is observed that the emergence of nuclear family was a colonial agenda aimed at the dissolution of the collective life of the people.[4]

The introduction of the police system was an important step towards the maintenance of law and order in Malabar. The basic nature of the police in colonial Malabar was repression and it worked as a tool in the hands of colonial authorities. Partiality and harassment were the hallmarks of the colonial police. But their presence in society made irrelevant the role of landlords and their *goondas* in the handling of law and order. Later the police and landlords together posed a serious threat to peace and security of the women and common people of Malabar.

The transformation of society on the basis of market economy was another significant change in the colonial period. It is well-known that competition is the inherent feature of the market which determines the price

[4] Nizar Ahamaed, 'Keralathile Adhunikadha: Chila Saidhantika Parigananakal', in *Pachakuthira*,(Mal.) Issue XII, Kottayam, July 2005.

mechanism. The rule of demand and supply further increased cut-throat competitions. The social status of an individual was decided by wealth. Though it was applicable in the traditional society it had not gained such a prominence.

The growing influence of market economy had also transformed the entire system of transactions. Money determined everything which necessitated banking and credit concepts. The harvest season had been the affluent period of the common people. The affluence of certain groups also increased the miseries of the common people. This further deteriorated the condition of the common people depriving women of their basic necessities of life. It resulted in widespread unemployment and untold miseries, especially among women and children. The labour of women was never taken into account, and it was safely forgotten that the existence of the society solely depended on women. It has to be noted that the scarcity of food had never affected the society as a whole, but it was the women who had to bear the whole burden. It is a fact of history that women have shown such resilience that humanity has not yet repaid its debt to them.

The women's struggle for independent vocations and personal freedom gained legitimacy in society, in the same manner as the struggle of

the working class for freedom. The newly emerged middle class supported the call for the emancipation of the female from the bondage of tradition and obnoxious social practices. The colonial mode of production demanded a high rate of labour force in order that production on a large scale might attain its utmost development. Malabar had been a major exporter of a wide variety of agricultural products to Europe for more than two thousand years and consequently was exposed to influences from abroad and consequently it remained as an underdeveloped region.[5] In Malabar, the colonial authorities functioned and tried to release the work force, mainly from the rural areas, to fulfill their capitalist ambitions. By levying taxes the British authorities transformed the material foundations of the society.[6] The escalating employment opportunities of women in different fields and their participation in accordance with their qualification and interest can be considered as the parameter of their social mobility.

The capitalist economy under the lego-political framework of the Raj was based on the right to property and freedom of contract. The British government had to overcome the resistance of the reactionary forces in society

---

[5] B. A. Prakash, 'Agricultural Backwardness of Malabar during the Colonial Period: An analysis of Economic Process', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 16, No. 6/7, 1988. Pp. 51-76. www.jstor.org

[6] Francois Houtart and Genevieve Lemercinier, 'Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala: A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production' *Social Scientist*, Vol. 6, No. 11 (Jun., 1978), pp. 3-34

to enact laws to make women and men equal in matters of civic rights. The involvement for removal of the disabilities of women and their emancipation was supported by the progressive section of the society. The conservatives raised the banner of revolt and threatened them with social ostracism and severe suppression. Progressive ideas disseminated among the educated youngsters in the urban areas who were dissatisfied with the existing social order. It influenced the matrilineal system where some heads of families might have been ineffectual and nephews leading an irresponsible life. For a large number of Nair reformers, the Malabar Wills Act of 1898 was but a small gain, and was insufficient to ensure the right of a man to leave his self-acquired property to his wife and children after his death. However, the movement gained major victories and gathered more and more strength day-by- day. The movement for progressive and upward social mobility of the people based on the principle of equality was an attack not only on foreign rule but also on unsympathetic and inhuman ideas of the caste-ridden society.

The English language schools that developed after 1850 produced a group of people who were thoroughly integrated into the dominant liberal ideology of the colonizing power.[7] During this period, a new awareness in society, which upheld equal rights of women in education and other civic

[7] Francois Houtart and Genevieve Lemercinier, *op.cit.*,p. 5

rights, was accepted almost universally. The progressive role of education was recognized and beginning was made for the rapid growth of female education. The conventional withdrawal of girls from education began to disappear thanks to emerging socio-political insights. The conscious efforts of Christian missionaries and the colonial government, especially, the activities of the Basel Evangelical Mission, played a significant role in the field of education of women and their social uplift.[8] In the early stage the parents from the downtrodden families were not ready to send their female children to schools. The duty of a female child was supposed to be to attend the household duties and for that literacy was not a necessary qualification. Over and above, the students from the lower castes were not allowed to sit together with the higher caste children.

The Basel Mission conducted house-to-house campaign and convinced the people about the positive aspects of education that would ensure a better future for their children. In fact, it could result in cultural alienation or to

---

[8] During the period ending with the outbreak of the First World War, the mission was involved in a number of activities, which eventually culminated in the establishment of modern industrial units in weaving and tile making, in the erstwhile districts of Malabar and South Canara. These industries were the first capitalist industries established in the region which used the latest technologies in Europe. These industries were established to give employment to converts who could not go back to the previous caste related occupation. Women were also accommodated in these industries started by the Basel Evangelical Mission. See for more details Jaiprakash Raghavaiah, *Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara: 1834-1914, A Study of its Social and Economic Impact.*

some extent a social boycott. Even if they entered such educational institutions, being denied education for centuries, it would require more than a generation to actually learn and to feel free.[9] The Mission started a network of schools and admitted students irrespective of caste or religion. The government also supported the missionaries by providing generous grants and scholarships. The colonial government supported the Christian missionaries both financially and morally, more than other native educational agencies. The existing school system was renewed and a new-curriculum was introduced to attain the colonial mission. Nevertheless, the educational development was reflected in the growing number of female candidates in different levels of learning.[10] Modern education contributed to the development of free thinking in the society.

The great attraction of education was its vocational value, and distribution of offices helped the administrators to foster the tendency of dependence of the public on the educated. There was a rush for appointment in the public service, which gave the aspirants a social status and access to power. It provided "a safe and steady income, a comparative lack of strain and stress, a pension for old age, opportunities for leisure and chances of

---

[9] Jaiprakash Raghavaiah, *op.cit.*,p.90

[10] See for more details, Third chapter, ' Modern Education and Women'

promotion to the position of dignity, power and influence."[11] The British administrators made educational qualification the only criterion for government for jobs. In the later period men and women irrespective of caste or religion were provided entry to schools, which opened for them a chance to enter the public sphere. The education had broken hereditary ties and liberated them. Women also were able to get jobs in government service which helped their upward social mobility.

With the establishment of the British rule, the prevailing socio-economic order in Malabar underwent vertical and horizontal change. The extension of the colonial rule had led to the reconstruction of minds and ideas.[12] Hitherto the concepts of individual family, private sphere and social status have been either ambiguous or ignored. Now these concepts came to the forefront. Moreover, the male-centered worldview of the middle class was related to the social structure of Kerala in the context of colonial modernity.[13]

The British rule in Malabar heralded a new phase of reconstruction and transformation of the society and economy. The feudal lords and

---

[11] *The Travancore Unemployment Inquiry Committee Report*, p.36

[12] Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, p. 2.

[13] Filiippo Osella and Caroline Osella, *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*, pp.247-262

chieftains accepted the colonial rule and as long as they did not oppose it, they got special treatment. In this regard colonialism has to be viewed as an alliance between imperial and local chieftains, an alliance which is dictated by a small number of local feudatories and the imperial factor to economize their efforts which were on the other hand amalgamated.[14] These local rulers were the watchdogs of social customs. They were the pillars of a caste-dominated ideological system. At a time when the caste-power-gender equation remained at the center of social discourse and safeguarded the given system, the women community as a whole was relegated to subordinate status. Society always looked upon them with suspicion and their bondage compelled them to obey the social customs. Lalithambika Antharjanam the Malayalam novelist narrates how wearing of modern dress and participating social activities provoked the orthodox Namboothiries in her village:

> When I went to temple, I was wearing the modern dress, hidden under the traditional umbrella (*Marakkuda*), a khadi *dothi* and a jacket and a green khadi shawl. Among the Namboothiri women in the place, I alone covered my breast. They would criticize it. I heard some Namboothiries who, while chanting mantras (offerings prayers) were ridiculing me 'we will have to throw them out. Let them go and speak in a fish market. Don't we want to purify the temple; these people are bent upon bringing the untouchables also, no doubt. Why do they need the temple when they chant Gandhi mantras'?[15]

---

[14] Bonaventuri Swai, Notes on Colonial State with reference to Malabar in 18th and 19th centuries, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 6, No 12, 1978 pp. 44-65, www.jstor.org

[15] Lalithambika Antharjanam, *Atmakathakkoru Amugham*, (Mal). p.136

The lower-caste women enjoyed a little more freedom and therefore their social relations were more meaningful. The strict observation of customary rules made the women of higher castes more subservient than the lower caste women. In the case of lower castes, both women and men had to work and earn together to maintain the family. Changing levels of female employment and the persistence of a gendered work structure have limited women's claims to "self acquired" or independent source of wealth. Though both women and men toiled in the soil the household responsibility was solely on the women. Underlying these changes is the conceptions of masculinity and femininity, which privilege the male working subject and female domesticity.[16] A series of legislations in the early twentieth century introduced measures 'recognizing' the conjugal family and defining relations of protection and dependence between husband and wife, father and children, thus facilitating a patriarchal family among the matrilineal Hindu families. Hindu women now had individual rights over their share of family property but this right was achieved within a legal framework of dependence on men as husbands.[17]

---

[16] Mridul Eapen and Praveena Kodoth, Family Structure, Women's Education and Work: Re-Examining the High Status of Women in Kerala, *CDS Working Paper. 341*,p.1, www.cds.edu

[17] *Ibid.*,p.4

The dissolution of the joint family marked a change in the organization of the family. Men were entrusted with the task of earning money and contact with the outside world, and women were entrusted with home management. It became the duty of the women to meet the requirements of the family out of the limited resources.[18] In effect they remained either fully or semi-starved. The womenfolk, including girls, had to be satisfied with less food both qualitatively and quantitatively.[19] Women hardly achieved any upward mobility in terms of status /occupation. More importantly, it is needed to include women's domestic work as a category of work in such an economic analysis.[20] They lacked economic freedom, had no source of income, and were completely tied to the family.

The employment opportunities brought about by the changes in the agrarian system also adversely affected the life of the female agricultural workers. The fact that men received higher wages compelled the society to believe that men were physically superior to women. These views on physical

---

[18] See for more details of this scarce family situation in the reminiscences Kartyayanikkutty Amma, *Thirumunpinoppam* (M al)

[19] E.M.S.Namboodiripad , *Atmakatha,*(Mal.), p.186

[20] Mridul Eapen does such an economic analysis, in 'Women and Work Mobility: Some Disquestioning Evidences from the Indian Data.' *CDS Working Paper* 358 pp.3-5. She argues that a growing proportion of (or working days of women) moving into the activity 'not in the labour force whether voluntary or involuntary reduces their mobility. It tends to enhance women's dependence, making them economically vulnerable and hence weakens their 'bargaining position' within the household and outside it.

ability and the division of labour further restricted the women's job opportunities. It became more and more seasonal. The loss of working days through the seasonal work system affected the family income as well as production. Hitherto agriculture had been the enterprise of the whole family and all the members of a family including women and children had to work in the fields. With the spread of education, children were sent to schools and their share of work was lost. After their education, services of such people were limited to sectors other than agricultural which weakened the agricultural sector. The emergence of large-scale plantation further limited the job opportunities for women in the long run.

In any society, the status of the women is the yardstick to determine the level of social development in general. As the basic unit of society and a major participant in the organization of the family, the role of women cannot be neglected. Social transformation becomes a reality only when the changes resulting from the colonial rule are felt at the lowest strata of society, i.e., the family. The social change in Malabar had been reflected in the family structure, and that too appeared as a reaction to the prevailing economic system. It still adversely affected the status of women in the divided families in decision-making and managing the family income, and growing

consumerist attitude too created constraints for the women for increasing family expenditure.

The ideological content provided by colonial modernity engaged the orthodox native systems and enabled the evolution of a new ideological climate.[21] This resulted in a sort of a hybrid between colonial modernity and the transformation of the indigenous social system[22]. The native societies did not adopt the stereotypes of colonial modernity as such, but tried to infuse modernity in the traditional framework. The colonial experience of Malabar shows that a particular social order cannot be transplanted.

The colonial period was a transitional phase in Malabar, during which the concepts of individuality was redefined. The colonial subjectification and its different strategies worked out efficiently and it had made a tectonic pressure at the bottom of social settings. The advent of new concepts, ideologies and life-styles created tension and confusion in the society, which resulted in a judicious selection or modification of the existing system.

---

[21] The theoretical roots of this position are to be found in the theories of 'compartmentalization' as proposed by Milton Singer in his work *When a great Tradition Modernizes*. Compartmentalization suggest a schizoid (hence ultimately non-modern , non unified) self in which caste and other aspects of village identity are left at the door of the work place and resumed them on going home, in a strategy permitting comfortable movement in different arenas. Workers could develop class-consciousness within the work place without losing their caste consciousness, operative outside it. The consciousness created in the minds of women is not an exception in this regard.

[22] S.Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*,p.140

Though women could redefine their position in social edifice it did not enable them to join the mainstream as a result of the patriarchal form of social existence borrowed from colonial concepts of women empowerment. Hence it demands political entry of women a must to remove obstacles on the way.

Initiatives taken up by social reformers like Swami Vaghbhadananda gave birth to new social awareness among the people of Malabar. He mainly addressed the people hailing from the lower strata of the society and tried to empower women to meet social realities. The tradition of self -reliance and readiness to take initiatives in labour process and related matters distinguished them from the rest of their counter-parts in southern Kerala. The women in Malabar had labour potential; they worked in the fields along with the agricultural labourers even though they belonged to the rich families of the region.[23] At the same time, they were engaged in household activities. It shows that the theory of public and private spheres truly worked out only in the case of female labourers in Malabar[24].

---

[23] Sreevidhya. V, *Women in Labour Process, Production Relation and Social Change: A Study of North Malabar,* Unpublished PhD Thesis, Calicut University, 2006, p. 197

[24] The dominant legal discourse of the later half of the nineteenth century attempted to create a distinction between 'public' and 'private' spheres based on gendered differences in rights to property, authority and work. The impact of public /private divide in real terms often meant disallowing women in undertaking property transactions or managing the household economy. See for more details G.Arunima, *There comes Papa:Colonialism and the transformation of Matriliny in Kerala, Malabar C. 1850-1940,* pp.97-98

The national movement began to take root in Kerala at a time when the various sources of exploitation had alienated the subjectivity of women. It was an attempt to oppose every kind of exploitation and to make social progress meaningful. The women attracted by the nationalist ideology and believing in its emancipating character increased their participation in the nationalist movement. It found its expression as a reaction to and resistance against the multi-faceted exploitative system that prevailed in the colonial society. The experience of each class in the society was different, but the anti-colonial feelings and nationalism worked as cohesive forces and provided space for each section of the society. As a fragment of the nation, women had to play a vital role in nation-making and they had done it satisfactorily.

The women activists for the most part were educated and took leadership in social activities and gave direction to their fellow workers. P. Yasoda Teacher, Nani Teacher, Gracy Aron, Kadathanattu Madhavi Amma K. Devayani, Kuttimalu Amma, etc. played a pivotal role in the organization of women and their entry into social sphere.[25] Some of the women leaders got national reputation owing to their activism. In Malabar, the women organizations worked as outsource of mainstream political parties or factions. The assigned duty of these organizations were collecting funds for party

[25] Moyyarath Sankaran, *Ente Jeevithakatha,* (Mal.), p.185, K. Madhavan, *Oru Gandhian Communistinte Ormakal*(Mal.)pp.237-241

functions (*Pidiyari Sekharanam*), conducting propaganda campaigns (*Desabhimani Mela*), selling pamphlets, charity works, cultural activities and health awareness programmes. Nevertheless, it is a fact that women were not allowed to hold any key posts in the Indian National Congress or the Communist Party.

The nature of women's issues in the colonial period were quite complex. The women came under a traditional order, which restricted them within their social and public sphere. Western ideas and legislations by the colonial authorities under pressure from reformers and political struggle sought to create conditions, which were conducive to the emancipation of women. The elevated status of women in the early phase of the British power in Malabar was not a result of their conscious effort to upgrade their position. But colonialism consciously tried to fulfill their ambition and sustain their prestige forever introduced various measures in the subjugated regions in the form of administrative re-structuring, judicial re-organization, spread of education, etc. The argument that the colonial forces had played a vital role in the uplift of women in colonial world becomes invalid while considering the status of women in their parent countries. The women in Western countries suffered discrimination and only enjoyed lower position even in twentieth

century. The re-organization of colonized region caused inevitable changes both in subjective and objective conditions of the colony.

Nationalism as a mission had enabled the people to purge most of the obnoxious and obsolete things from their life and to make the society more dynamic, progressive and egalitarian. The individual was emancipated and empowered and strove to protect her rights by providing equal opportunity. At the same time it prevented western modernization from short-circuiting other processes of transformation. Colonial modernity was welcomed and practiced but they longed for modernity. The joint family system was rejected, but primordial relations were maintained. All the social associations were for self-advancement of their members but had an eye on the wellbeing of all and progress of the society as a whole. English, the language of the colonial master was taken as a blessing, but they stood for the development of *Mathrubhasha.* The dual nature of the Malayalis in thinking and living reflects not duplicity or hypocrisy but flexibility and viability in their approaches to the problems of life.

National movement as it aimed to make an actual and potential nation state by ending alien rule adopted different measures to achieve the end. The movement had two broader objectives, one was the liquidation of the alien rule, and the other was the elimination of indigenous autocratic princely

governments for democratic government. The divergent streams of the struggle merged with the main stream nationalist movement. They conducted both the nation-wide and local level agitations. When it gained momentum, the social base of the national movement further expanded.

The nationalist agenda on women operated around in its initial phase as reform of women's condition and empowerment. Gandhian constructive programmes provided much space for women to play a creative role in social transformation. While the nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress attracted a large number of women from the upper strata of the society, it was the Communist movement which educated and emboldened those from the lower strata. It was a visible change that reflected in the status of women. The large scale participation of women in the anti-colonial and anti-feudal movement was the result and reflection of their self-confidence and willingness to take risk for political and social change. The progressive and democratic forces led by the Communist party took the leadership of the national movement in the early days of the 1940s and worked in the same role of the social reform movements in the princely states of Travancore and Cochin.

The reformative outlook and political agenda for social action are the necessary pre-condition for any reform initiative. The Communist party and

its broader outlook for revolutionary change attracted women mostly from the lower strata of the society. The high-handedness and harassment of the *janmis* and their supporters were not tolerated by the cadres of the Communist party and they retaliated in the same manner. The removal of insecurity feeling and rapid growth of self-confidence among the women resulted in their active involvement in the social arena. It can be viewed that the problem faced by women and lower sections of the society could not be removed without bringing them to the public sphere and without collective effort to do away with their disabilities. The saga of women in Malabar is one of changing currents of priorities. Once they had identified the genuine issues they began to organize themselves to fight for their rights.

GLOSSARY

Adhikari	: Village (Amsam) officer with some powers and function related to revenue collection and maintenance of law and order hereditary post assigned to Janmi or influential person of the locality by the British officers in Malabar.
Amsam	: An administrative unit in Malabar district, sub-division of a taluk
Anchampura	: An outhouse especially erected to accommodate the suspect in connected with Smarthavicharam
Anantharavan	: Nephew, derived from the generic root Anantharavar, meaning nephews
Antharjanam	: Women belonging to the Nambuthiri Brahmin community, literally 'the one who lives inside'
Atiyara	: Presents made to the king or chieftain in token of respect and loyalty.
Atmakadha	: Autobiography
Bhagavathi	: Women goddess in Hindu mythology
Brahmaswam	:Property belongs to Brahmin Janmis

Cheruman	: A tribal group in Kerala. One belonging to agrestric slave caste that was formerly considered as untouchable.
Chettathi	: Elder sister of Hindu goddess Mahalakshmi, goddess of untidiness
Chekon	: A person who was trained in martial arts
Chettis	: Merchants
Desam	: Smallest administrative unit in Malabar, sub-division of Amsam
Devadasi/Kudikkari	: A women who has dedicated herself to the deity of a temple.
Devaswam	: Properties belonging to temples
Diwan	: Chief Minister or chief executive officer of princely state.
Ezhuthupalli	: Village school
Fanam	: British variant of Panam(money)
Goonda	: Scoundrel
Guru	: Religious preceptor; teacher in Gurukula system of education.

Gurukulam : Abode of the teacher where the students are lodged with the teacher for teaching

Kalyanam : Marriage

Kanam : Peculiar Malabar tenure having the nature of mortgage and lease

Kalaripanikkars : Traditional teachers attached to village schools, Kalarippanikkar and Kuttippatters both claimed descent from degraded sections of Tamil Brahmin

Karanavan : Elder men of the household, Nair or Nambuthiri . Derived from the generic term Karanavar,used to refer to an older generation. By the mid-nineteenth century it was interpreted largely to mean the head of the household.

Kavus : Eco-forest zones in village, a worship cente of the lower castes

Kovilakam : Residence of a royal family

Kudiyan : Tenant

Kudiyiruppu : tents right to offer to purchase landlords right

Kudipallikutams: Village , single master schools

Kuttipatters : Young male members in a Patter's family(sub-division of Brahmin caste) assigned duty is teaching.

Harijan : Literally means 'God's own men' was used by Gandhiji referring to the untouchables, or the members of the lowest castes among Hindus.

Illam : House of Namboothiri Brahmin's.

Jatha : Procession.

Kalari : Gymnasium or military academy.

Kallumala : Stone necklace

Kanam : A system of land tenure under which the tenant holds land by paying a fixed sum to Janmi for a specified period.

Kandezhuthu : A kind of revenue settlement.

Kovilakam : Residence of a chieftain.

Kudiyan : A kanam tenant.

Kuzhikkanam :Lease of waste land infavour of a cultivator who has to make improvements in the land.

Madrassa : The basic Islamic religious School. It is indented for the teaching of the Quran and other religious texts

Makkathayam	: Patrilineal system of inheritance.
Mappila	: The Muslims of Malabar.
Marakuda	: Head gear
Marumakkathayam	: System of inheritance and descent through the female line.
Melcharth	: The transfer by the landlord of part of his interest in any land held by his tenant by which the transferee is entitled to evict such tenant
Mimamsakaras	: Namboothiri Brahmin who are well versed in Vedic practices
Misrabhojanam	: Inter-dining
Munsif	: Judge.
Nadus	: Village unit
Naduvazhi	: A local chieftain or Raja.
Nazhi	: A grain measurement
Onam	: A national festival of Kerala which falls in Chingam (August- September) every year
Para	: Measure(of paddy, rice etc.)
Salais	: Vedic college.

Samajam	: Association
Saraswathi	: Goddess of learning
Sathyagraha	: Civil Disobedience movement, a method of agitation introdused by Mahathma Gandhi.
Smaranakal	: Reminiscences.
Sudra	: The people belonging to the fourth order in the Hindu four-fold caste system. A general application given to non-Brahmin castes other than Harijans in Kerala.
Takils	: A traditional drum, Musical instrument
Tali	: A neck ornament tied as marriage locket, made of gold, shaped like a leaf of a banyan tree.
Thandan	: Hereditary head position in caste, sub-caste in Ezhava
Tahsil	: Revenue sub-district
Tahsildar	: Thaluk officer
Thirandukuli	: The ceremony performed on the occasion of a girls' first menstruation

Thiruvathira	: A classical dance performed by upper caste women in connection with the celebration of oustraism thiruvathira on the month of *thulam.*
Vadakkanpattukal	: Northern ballads
Vazhunnor	: Hereditary chieftain
Vishu	: Harvest festival on the first day of *Medem,* Beginning of the new year in some places.
Vrishali	: A woman who renounces her own husband, for the company of other men
Yagam	: Vedic sacrifice

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. TAMILNADU STATE ARCHIVES

Files Relating to Malabar District

Malabar Collectorate Records

Public Consultations

G. O. No.44, *Education*, February 15, 1882

G.O.No.143,*Education*, March 15,1883.

G.O.Nos.215, 216,Education,April 16,1904.

G.O.No.643, Education, October 22,1904.

G.O.No.841-842, Education, November 30,1911

G.O.No.53, Education ,January 20,1913.

G.O.No.446, Education, April 30, 1916.

G.O.No.1012, Education, November, 16, 1912.

B. REGIONAL ARCHIVES, KOZHIKKODE.

File No.404, Madras Education Department 1898,

File No.1564, Madras Education Department, 1920

File No.1449, Madras Education Department, 1924

File No.786, Law Education Department, 1925

File No.357, Law Education Department, 1925

File No.521, Law Education Department, 1925

File No.611, Madras Education Department.1925

File No.1987, Madras Education Department, 1926

File No.293, Political Section Files. 1928

File No.1043, Political Section Files,1931.

D. OTHER OFFICIAL RECORDS

Records of Fort St.George, Tellichery Consultations: 1727-28, Vol.111

Dairy of the Tellichery Factory, 1730

Tellichery consultations: 1732-33

Dairy 5 October 1734,

Dairy 14 October 1734

Dairy 10 March 1735

Letters from Tellichery: 1734-36, Vol.1V

Letters to Tellichery: 1736-38, Vol.11

Bombay Commissioners' Dairy, 4 May 1792

Dairy of the Malabar Supervisor, 28 October 1793

Report on the Development of women's Education in the Madras Presidency

Dairy and consultations of Tellichery Factory August 1789

Dairy and consultation of Tellichery Factory, October 1792,

Dairy of the Malabar Supervisor September 1793.

Cochin Commission Dairy

Letters to Tellicherry, Vol.X1,letter No. 117, July 1750

Dairy and consultations of Tellichery Factory, 19 May 1767

Report of Public Instruction, 1882,

Report of the Malabar Land and Tenures, 1884.

*Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission,*1891

Malabar Tenancy Act of 1929, Madras Act XIV of 1030,

*Report on the Travancore Education Reform Committee,*Vol.III,1932.

Report of the Travancore Public Service Recruitment Committee, 1934.

Proceedings of the Director of Public Instruction, 1895.

Census Report on the Malabar in the year of 1911-1921.

E. MANUALS AND GAZETTERS

Innes,C.A, *Malabar Gazetteer,*(Reprint) Kerala Gazetteer's Department, Thiruvananthapuram,1997.

Kareem,C.K.,(ed) *The District Gazetteers Malappuram,* State Editor Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram,1986.

Logan, William, *Malabar Manual* (Reprint) Asian Educational services, New Delhi,1995.

MacLean, C.D.,(ed.) *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency,*Vol.1, (Reprint) Asian Educational Service, New Delhi,1987.

Menon, Achyutha, C., *The Cochin State Manual,* (Reprint) Asian Educational Services, New Delhi,1995.

Nagam, Aiya, V, *The Travancore State Manuals* 3 Vols, (Reprint) Kerala State Gazetteers Department, Thiruvanathapuram, 1999.

Ramachandran Nair, K.K., *Kerala State Gazetteers* Vol.11, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram,1986.

Velu Pillai, T.K., *Travancore State Manuals* 4 Vols, (Reprint) Kerala State Gazetteers Department, Thiruvanathapuram, 1999.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS IN ENGLISH

Ashroft, Bill, et. al. (eds.), *Post-colonial Reader,* Rutledge, London, 2001.

Aiyappan, *A Social Revolution in a Kerala Village: A Study in Culture Change*-- Asian Education Services, Bombay: 1956

Aiyar, S Subbarama *Economic Life in a Malabar Village: A Study in Indian Rural Economic Organization,* Bangalore Printing and Pub., Bangalore: 1925.

Aiyar, P R Sundara *Treatise on Malabar and Aliyasanthana Law,* Madras Law Journal Office, Madras, 1922

Baak Paul Erick, *Plantation Production and Political Power: Plantation Development in South West India in a Long term Historical Perspective 1743-1963,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi,1985

Basu,B.D., *History of Education in India Under Rule of the East India Company*, Cosmo, New Delhi,1993.

Balachandran, G, (ed.), *India and the World Economy 1850-1950*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

Balakrishnan Nair,A., *The Government and Politics of Kerala*, Indira Publications, Thiruvanathapuram, 1994.

Bhasham,A.L., (ed), *A Cultural History of India*, Oxford University press, Culcutta,1997.

Bruke, Peter, (ed.), *The New Perspectives on Historical Writings*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1993.

Caring, Edward, (Gen.ed.), *Rutledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. V., Rutledge, London, 1999.

Chakiar, A.M.N, *The Last Caste Inquisition. A Victims Reminiscences*, ST. Raddiar & Sons, Ernakulam, 1999.

Chand, Tara, *History of Freedom Movement in India* Vol.II, The Director of Public Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, New Delhi,1992.

Chandra, Bipan, (ed.), *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989.

....., *Essays on Colonialism*, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 1999.

Chandra Sekhar, S, *Colonialism Conflict and Nationalism, South India : 1857-1947*, Viswaprakashan, New Delhi, 1995.

Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and Colonial World*, Zed Press, New Delhi 1986.

....., *The Nation and its Fragments, Colonial and Post Colonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1995.

Chawdhari, A.Ghafur, *Some Aspects of Islamic Education*, Adam Publishers, New Delhi,1999.

Cheriyan,P.J., (ed.) *Essays on the Cultural Formation of Kerala*, Kerala State Gazetteers Deparment,Thiruvanantapuram,1999.

Chopra, P.N, *History of South India*, Vol. III, S. Chand & Company, New Delhi, 1976.

.....,et.al., *A social Cultural and Economic History of India*,Vol.111, Macmillan India Limited, Madras,1994.

Cohn, Bernad, S, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, The *British in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997.

Cohn, Anthony, P, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Rutledge, London, 1985.

Cuddson, J.A, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, 1998.

Dale, Frederic, Stephen, *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922*, Oxford University, Newyork,1999

Day, Francis, *The Land of Perumal or Cochin its Past and Present,* Asian Educational services, New Delhi,1990.

Dhanagare, D.N, *Peasant Movement in India, 1920-1950.* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1954.

Deane, Seamus, et.al, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature,* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Department of Public Relations (Publ.) *Kerala through the Ages,* Thiruvananthapuram, 1976.

Desai, A.R, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism,* Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1996.

Devi, Laxmi, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Change,* Vol. I, Rawat Publication, New Delhi, 1997.

Dutt, R.P, *India Today,* Manisha, Calcutta, 1997.

Dutta, Amanesh, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Indian Literature,* Sahitya Akademy, New Delhi, 1987.

Engineer, Ali, Asgar ,(ed), *Problems of Muslim Women in India,* Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1995

Entwistle, Neol, *Hand Book of Educational Ideas and Practices,* Rutledge, London, 1990.

Fielding, Nigel, (ed.), *Interviewing,* 5 Vols., Sage Publication, London, 2003.

Fox, Elizabeth and Lasch, Quinn Elizabeth, *Reconstructing History: The Emergence of New Historical Society,* Rutledge, New York, 1999.

Gangadharan,M., *The Malabar Rebellion,* Vohra Publishers,Vallahabad,1989.

Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism,* Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983.

Garraty, John A, *The Nature of Biography,* Jonathan Cape, London, 1958.

George ,K.M, (ed.), (ed.) *Malayalis, The People, Their History and Culture,* Vol. 5, Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 2002.

Ghosh,Chandra,Sureh, *The History of Education in Modern India 1757-1998* Orient Longman, New Delhi,2000

Guha, Ranajith, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies, Writings on South Asian History and Society,* Vol.I, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982.

....., *Dominance without Hegemony, History and Power in Colonial India,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.

Gupta, Partha Sarathi, (ed.) *Towards Freedom, Documents on the Movement for Independence in India,* Vols. 1-3, 1943 -44, ICHR, Delhi, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997.

Hitchcock,R.H, *Peasant Revolt in Malabar; A History of the Malabar Rebellion 1921,* (re-print) Usha Jain New Delhi, 1983

Hobsbawm, E.J, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870 : Programme, Myth, Reality,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

Habib, Irfan, *Essays on Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception,* Tulika, New Delhi, 1998.

Ibrahimkunju, A.P., *Mappila Muslims of Kerala their History and Culture,* Sandhya publications,Thiruvanathapuram,1989.

Indira Devi, M.G, *Kerala and Quit India Movement,* Mullasseri Publishers, Alappuzha, 2005.

Jeffrey, Robin, *Politics, Women and Well-being, How Kerala Became a Model,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001.

Jenkins, Keith, *Why History?,* Rutledge, New York, 2000.

Jones, Kenneth, W, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India,* Cambridge University Press, New York, 1994

Jones, Kenneth, N, *Cambridge History of India,* Vol. III, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

Kareem,C.K., *Kerala and Her Culture An Introduction,* State Editor, Kerala Gazetters,Thiruvananthapuram,1971.

Kerala Publication (Publ.) *Kerala Muslim Directory,* Cochin, 1960.

Kerala Society (Publ.) *Kerala Society Papers,* Vol.I, Series 1,2. (Re-print) Kerala Gazetteers Department Thiruvanathapuram, 1997

Kotani, H, (ed.), *Caste System: Untochability, The Depressed,* Manohar, New Delhi, 1999.

Koya, Muhammed,S.M., *Mappilas of Malabar,*Sandya,Calicut,1983.

Kumar, Dharma, *Land and Caste in South India: Agricultural Labour in Madras Presidency during the Nineteenth Century*. Manohar, New Delhi, 1992

Kurup, K.K.N., *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, College Book House, Thiruvanathapuram,1975.

.....*Kayyur Riot*, Sandhya Publications, Calicut, 1978.

....., (ed.) *Last Decade of India's Freedom Struggle* Indis, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994.

Kusuman, K.K, (ed.), *Issues in Kerala Historiography*, International Centre for Kerala Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 2003.

Magil, Frank, N, (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, F.D. Publishers, Chicago, 1995.

Majumdar, R.C, (ed.), *The History and Culture of Indian People*, Vol. V. Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Bombay, 1987.

Marx, Karl, Engels, Fredrick, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1982.

Massccoss, Jim, *Indian Nationalism : A History*. APH Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997.

Mateer, Samuel, *The Land of Charity : A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People*, John Snow& Co. London, 1915.

Mathew, A, *History of Educational Development in Kerala*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987.

Mathew,K.S., *Society in Medieval Malabar*, Jafle Book,Kottayam,1979.

Mayer, Andriyan, C, *Land and Society in Malabar*, Oxford University Press, London, 1952.

Menon, Dileep, M, *Caste, Nationalism and Communalism in South India, 1900-1948*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1994.

Menon, P.K.K, (ed.), *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol. II, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1984.

Menon, Pathmanabha, K.P., *History of Kerala* Vols 1, 11, Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1993.

Menon, Sreedharan,A., *A Survey of Kerala History*, S.Viswanathan,Madrass,2000.

Miller, Roland, E, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala, A Study in Islamic Trends*, Orient Longman, Madras, 1976.

Monroes, Paul, *Encyclopedia of History of Education* Vol.II, Cosmo publications, New Delhi,2000.

Nambiar, E.K.G., The *Malabar*, Vol 1,University of Calicut,Calicut,2001.

Nambodiripad, E.M.S, *Kerala: Past Present and Future*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1968.

....., *Kerala Society and Politics*, National Book Centre, New Delhi, 1984.

....., *A History of Indian Freedom Struggle*, Social Scientist Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1986.

Omman, M.A, (ed), *Re-thinking Development: Development Experience In Kerala*, Vol. I, Asok Kumar Mital, New Delhi, 1999.

Osella, Filippo, Osella Carolina, *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*, Pluto Press, London, 2000.

Panikkar, K.M, *History of Kerala 1498-1801*, Annamalai University, Madras, 1960.

Panikkar, K.N, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836 -1921*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi,1972.

....., *Culture and Consciousness in Modern India: a Historical Perspective*, People's publishing House, 1990.

....., (ed.) *Peasant Protest and Revolt in Malabar*, ICHR and People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990.

....., *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony, Intellectuals, and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, Tulika, New Delhi, 1998.

....., et.al, (eds.) *The Making of History; Essays Presented to Irfan Habib*, Tulika, New Delhi, 2000.

Parekh, Bikhu, *Colonialism Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Dominance*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000.

Puthen, Kalam, J, *The Marriage and The Family in Kerala with Special reference to Matrilineal Classes*, University of Calgrao Alberta, 1977.

Radhakrishnan, R, *Peasant Struggle Land Reforms and Social Change, Malabar, 1836-1982*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1989.

Raimon, S, (ed.), *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala* , Vol. III, State Archives Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006.

Rajendran, N, *Establishment of British Power in Malabar, 1664 – 1793*, Chough Publication, Allahabad, 1979.

Ramachandran Nair, Adoor K.K, *Slavery in Kerala*. Mitra Publications, New Delhi, 1984.

Ramachandran Nair, S, *Social Consequences of Agrarian Change*, Printwell, Jaipur, 1991.

....., *Social and Cultural History of Colonial Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999.

....., *The State and Economy in Colonial Kerala*, Lipi Books Thiruvananthapuram, 1998.

....., *Freedom Struggle in Colonial Kerala*, Kalady, 2004.

Ravindran,T.K., *Malabar Under Bombay Presidency; A Study of the early British Judicial System in Malabar 1792-1802*, Mascut Press,Calicut,1969.

Sapna, Samel, H, *Dalit Movements in South India 1857-1950*, Serial Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Saradamoni, K, *Emergence of Slave Caste – Pulayas of Kerala*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980.

Seal, Anil, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge, University Press, Cambridge, 1971.

Sen, S.P, (ed.), *Sources of History of India*, Vol. VI, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1988.

Shah, Ghonshy, (ed.), *Social Transformation in India*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1997.

Singh, Nagendra Kumar, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Indian Biography*, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2000.

Singlal, Damodar, P, *Nationalism in India and other Historical Essays*, Rawat, New Delhi, 1967.

Sreedhara Menon, A, *A Survey of Kerala History*, S. Viswanathan, Madras, 1987.

Steuwart, Victoria, *Women's Autobiographies, War and Trauma*, Palgrave, London, 2003.

Sankhdher,B.M.,(ed),*Education System From William Hunters Commission To 1888*, Deep& Deep, New Delhi,1999.

Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past - Oral History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978.

Thurston, Edgar, *Castes and Tribes of South India,* Vol. III, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1993.

Varghese, T.C, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences: Land Tenures in Kerala, 1850-1960,* Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1970.

Verma, B.N, *Eminent English Letter writers, XVIII Century,* Shirpa, New Delhi, 1999.

Woolf, D.R, *A Global Encyclopedia of Historical Writing* , Garland Publishers, New York, 1998.

B. BOOKS IN MALAYALAM

Ayirukkuzhiyil, Abraham, M.M., *Swami Ananda Theerthan Ayitham – Gandhiyan Pariharam Vicharanayil,* Dialogue Books, Kannur.

Balakrishnan, K, *Vidvan P. Kelu Nair, Jeevithavum Kritikalum.* National Book Stall, Kottayam,1992.

Balakrishnan, C, *Charitrathinte Samarathyil,* Chinta, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996.

Balaram, N.E, *Keralathile Communist Prastanam,* Prabhat Book House, Thiruvananthapurm.1973.

Bhaskaran, C, (ed.), *Indian Swathantrya Samaram: Vivida Darakal,* Chinta Publication, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997.

Bhaskarannuni, P, *Pathonpatham Noottandile Keralam*, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trissur, 2000.

Damodaran, K, Narayana Pillai, C, *Keralathile Swathantrya Samaram*, Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997.

George, K.M, *Jeevacharitra Sahityam*, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1982.

Gopalakrishnan, Naduvattom, *Atmakadha Sahityam Malayalathil*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998.

Govindhapilla,P., *Kerala Navodhanam Oru Marxist Veekshanam* Vol.I, Chintha Publications, Thiruvanathapuram, 2004.

Kesava Menon, K.P, *Irumbazikkullil*, (re-print) Mathrubhumi, Kozhikode, 1997.

.....*Kazhinjakalam*, Mathrubhumi, Kozhikode, 1995

Krishna Ayyar,K.V.,*The Zamorins of Calicut (from the earliest times down to A.D.1806)*, University of Calicut,Calicut,1999.

Kumaran, Moorkoth, *Theyyarude Nila*, Kannur Printing work, Kannur, 1934.

.....*Sree Narayana Guru Swamikal*, Kerala Bhanu Puthukkad 1935.

Kurup, (Compl.), *Smaranakal Kavithakal*, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trissur, 1989.

....., *Pazhassi Samarangal.* Kerala Bhasha Institute Thiruvananthapuram, 1998.

Madhavan Nair, K, *Malabar Kalapam*, Mathrubumi, Kozhikode, 2002.

Nambair, Rairu, V, *Swarajya Chinta*, Mathrubhumi, Achukoodam, Kozhikode, 1925.

Namboodiripad, E.M.S, *Keralam Malayalikude Mathurbhumi*, Chinta Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1984.

....., *Kerala Charitram Marxist Veekshanathil*, Chinta, Thiruvananthapuram.1998.

Namboothirippad, Brahmadathan Mozhikkunnath, *Khilaft Smarankal*, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trissur, 1993.

Panikkassery,Velayudan, *Keralam Pathinanchum Pathinarum Noottandukalil*, Current Books,Kottayam,1997.

.....*Sancharikal Kanda Keralam*,Current Books, Kottayam,2001.

Pillai, A.K, *Congressum Keralavum*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1935.

Pothuval, A.K, *Keralathile Karshaka Prastanam*, Prabhat Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989

Pillai,Kunjan,P.N., Elamkulam, *Annathe Kralam*, Sahithya Pravarthaka-co-Operative Society,Kottayam,1959

Venugopal, T, (ed.), *Patralokam*, Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000.

C. UNPUBLISHED M.PHIL/PH.D. THESIS

Asokakumar, N, 'The Press and National Movement in Kerala' (M.Phil) University of Calicut, Calicut, 1993.

Ismail, V, 'Revenue Administration in Malabar under English East India Company' (PhD). University of Calicut, Calicut, 1999.

Padmanabhan, N, 'Role of Muslims in the National Movement in Malabar 1921-1947,' (PhD.) University of Calicut, Calicut, 1993.

Vasanthakumari, C, 'State and Social Change, The Role of Judiciary – A case study of Malabar 1792 -1940' (PhD) University of Calicut, Calicut, 2003.

D. WORKING PAPERS

Devika, J, 'Family Planning as Liberation: The ambiguities of Emancipation from Biology in Kerala'. *C.D.S. Working* Paper, 279

..... Domesticating Malayalees: Family Planning, the Nation and the Home Centered Anxieties in mid20th Century Keralam', *C.D.S. Working* Paper, 340.

Eapen, Mridul and Kodoth, Praveena , 'Family Structure, Women's Education and Work: Re-Examining the High Status of Women in Kerala,, *CDS Working Paper. 341*

Eapen, Mridul 'Women and Work Mobility: Some Disquestioning Evidences from the Indian Data.' *CDS Working Paper* 358

D. ARTICLES

A. ENGLISH

Achyuthan. K. R. 'The Social Spectrum of Kerala', *Journal of Kerala Studies,*

Ahamed, Nizar, 'A Note on Gandhi, Nation and Modernity' in *Social Scientist,* Vol. 34, New Delhi, November – June, 2006.

Ahammed Kutty, E.K, 'Islam and Social Reform Movements in Kerala', *Journal of Kerala Studies,* Thiruvananthapuram, Vol. V. December 1978.

Bhaskaran, N.K, 'Social Reform Movements and Politics in Kerala,' in *Journal of Kerala Studies,* Thiruvananthapuram, Vol. XI, 1984.

Edwin,P.G, British Impact on Kerala, in *Journal of Kerala Studies,* Thiruvananthapuram, June, 1978.

Karuna Channa Ahamed, *Gandhi, Women's Role and the Freedom Movement,* No-XIX. 'Occasional Papers on History and Society', *Nehru Memorial Museum and Library,* 1984 December

Kunhi Krishnan, V.V, 'Tenancy Movements in Kerala: Trends and Dimensions 1915- 1930,' in International *Congress on Kerala Studies,* Vol. 3, AKG Centre for Research and Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994.

Kurup, K.K.N, 'The Peasant Movement in Kasargod Taluk 1935-1942' *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol.II, March 1975

....., 'Significance of the Studies on the Archival Collections in the Mission House in Basel with Special Reference to Kerala,' Journal *of Kerala Studies*, Vol. V. December, Thiruvananthapuram, 1978.

..... 'The Peasant Aspirations and Land Reforms in Kerala' in *Abstract*, International Congress on Kerala Studies, Vol. 3, AKG Centre for Research and Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994.

K. K. Kusuman, V. T. Bhattathiripad and Social Transformation of the Namboodiris, *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. XIII, December, Thiruvananthapuram, 1986.

Muthar, R. G. 'Smartha Vicharam Among the Namboodiri Brahmins of Kerala', *Journals of Kerala Studies*, Vol.II, September 1975

Mohammad Ali, K.T, 'Development of Western Education among the Mappilas of Malabar,' in Journal *of Kerala Studies*, Vol.III, Thiruvananthapuram, 1993.

Padmanabhan, N, 'Non-Co-operation and Khilafat Movement in Malabar; A Study' in *Indian Historical Studies*, Vol.I, Issue 2, St. Joseph College, Department of History, Thiruchirappalli, April – 2005.

Panikkar, K.N, 'Colonialism Culture and Revivalism' in *Social Scientist,* Vol. 31, New Delhi, January – February, 2003.

Ramachandran Nair, S, 'Colonialism A study in Kerala Context' in South Indian *History Congress Proceedings,* 1998

Ramakers, Hilde, Change and Continuity in a Matrilineal System, *Journal of Kerala Studies* Vol.I,1982

Sankaran Nair. V 'Women in Nationalistic Politics', *Proceedings of Sixth Annual Conference,* 1988

Tharamangalam, Joseph, 'The Perils of Social Development without Economic Growth; the Development Debacle of Kerala, India', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars,* Vol. 30, Oakland, California, November -January 1999.

Valsala Kumari, P, 'Programmes for the Uplift of Women in Kerala with Special Emphasis on their Political Awareness and Social Welfare, *Journal of Kerala History.*

Vijaya Lakshmi, K.G, 'Role of Women in Kerala Politics', *Journal of Kerala Studies,* Vol. XII, Decembe1985,

Yesudas, R.N, 'Pulapedi in Kerala', *Journal of Kerala Studies,* Vol.II, Part-I, March 1975,

....., 'The English and Christians of Kerala' in *Journal of Kerala Studies,* Vol.V., Thiruvananthapuram, 1979.

.....'Christian Missionaries and Social Awakening in Kerala', in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. VIII, Thiruvananthapuram, 1980.

B. MALAYALAM

Ahamaed, Nizar, 'Keralathile Adhunikadha: Chila Saidhantika Parigananakal', in *Pachakuthira*, Issue XII, Kottayam, July 2005.

Chandrika C. S, 'Keralathinte Sthree Charithram', *Samakalika Malayalam Varika*, January, 2000

Kunhikrishnan, A.V. 'DheeraKarshaka Vanithakal Cheriymma Oru Anusmaranam', *Swathanthriya Badan*, (Mal.), December, 1983

Kunjamma, P.V. 'Malabarile Deshiya Prasthanangalile Sthreekalude Pank', in A.K.G. Padanna Gaveshna Kendram, *Keralathile Sthreekal Innale Innu*, Government College for Women's Development Centre, 1995,

Narayan Nambiar, M.P, 'Adhunika Karshaka Prasthanathinte Utbhavavum Valarchyum Keralathil', *Kerala Karshaka Sangham Suvarna Jubile Souinier*, 1986

E. SUPPLEMENTS/SOUVENIRS

Abstract International Congress on Kerala Studies, Vol. 4, A.K.G. Centre for Research and Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994.

Kerala Karshaka Sangham Suvarna Jubile Souinier, 1986

Swatantra Suvarna Jubilee Supplement, Mathrubumi, Kozhikode, 1997.

Samakalika Malayalam Varshika Pathippu, 2000.

F. JOURNALS/PERIODICALS/WEEKLIES/NEWS PAPERS

Janmi

Economic and Political Weekly

Kerala Padanangal

Mathrubumi Weekly

Mathrubumi Daily

New Left Review

Pachakuthira

Prabhatam Daily

Review of Social Sciences

Sahitya Parishat (Dwaimasikam , Trimasikam)

Swathanthriya Badan

Social Scientist

Vijnanakairali

G. WEBSITES

www.cds.edu

www.cwds.org/research.htm

www.jstor.org.

www. wasa. strange.za.net.



01388