CHAPTER TWO
KERALA ON THE EVE OF SATYAGRAHA

Kerala, a pristine state at the southernmost tip of the Indian Peninsula, is known much for its scenic splendour as it is for literary and cultural heritage. Highest literacy rate in the country prevails here and the land is noteworthy for harmony even while it harbours country’s most diverse religious and political sects.

Kerala as an independent linguistic state came into existence on 1 November 1956. The separately existing provinces of Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar of the Madras state and Kasargode taluk of the south Canara district, converged to give the state its present entity. Common language and culture were the deciding factors in Government’s state re-organization program\(^1\). Four southern most taluks of Travancore - Cochin merged with state of Madras as the populace there were predominantly Tamil speaking . Under the British rule, Travancore and Cochin were princely states ruled by Hindu Maharajas who accepted British sovereignty, while the Malabar district and Kasargode taluk were part of Madras presidency under the direct rule of the British-Indian Government.

In the sixteenth century, when European traders first came in for commerce on Malabar coast, these regions were bits of principalities
governed by the local chieftains known as *Naduvazhis* or *Desavashis*. Subsequently, aided by foreign merchants the varied factions re-shaped into three major principalities - the Thiruvithamkur (Travancore), Kochi (Cochin) and Kozhikode (Calicut). However, Calicut and Cochin soon fell prey to conquest by the Mysore Sultans. The British East India Company then liberated Malabar and Cochin from the Mysorean rule only to bring it under British governance. Later however, the kingdom of Cochin was restored to the Maharaja who accepted the over-lordship of the Company Government. Meanwhile the Maharaja of Travancore entered into treaty with East India Company to safeguard his kingdom from the imminent invasion of Tipu Sultan. In 1805, a fresh treaty was concluded and Travancore became a British subordinate entitled to British protection under the Subsidiary Alliance System. The treaty also conferred the British with powers of political interference in Travancore, to protect the imperial interest.

Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century, the whole of Kerala came under the British control i.e. the Malabar district as part of the Madras presidency and the states of Travancore and Cochin as protected states.

Kerala society prior to the British conquest was notoriously caste-ridden. The castes were broadly divided into two, the *Savarna* (caste-
Hindus) and the Avarna (non-caste-Hindus). The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs etc. were considered as savarana jati, while the Ezhavas, Pulayas and Parayas were treated as avarna jati. The Christians, the Muslims and the Jews were the vion-Hindu communities. The caste system had a steeply stratified hierarchy with Malayali Brahmins or Nambudiris at the helm and the untouchables at the bottom. The other castes layered the rungs in between. The caste was again divided in to sub-castes or upa-jati and sub-castes were arranged in a hierarchical order within the main caste.6

The Indian term for caste, jati, specifies a group of people having a specific social rank, claiming a common origin, and linked to one or more traditional occupations. Malayalam, language, has no word to indicate jati, which was imported from Sanskrit, conclusively proves that it was a creation of the Brahmins who settled on the Malabar coast to safeguard their identity and interests. In other words jati may be the result of cultural and intellectual colonization of South India by the migrant Aryans or Brahmins. In the traditional Kerala society, the social institutions and social relations were based on jatimaryada and acharamf

Jatimaryada includes endogamous marriage, strict rules regarding social and personal contacts, occupational homogeneity and structured economic and ritual practices with in each jati. The division of jati in to
upa-jati was due to many reasons. Differences in occupation, social customs, identification with particular religious sects, places of origin were some of the factors for being grouped in distinct upa-jati. The upa-jati determined the relations with in the jati while the jati regulated relations with the rest of the society.9

The Malayali society was not based on the principle of social justice or equality. The Nambudiris stood at the apex of the social ladder and considered themselves more pure and sacred than others. They were also termed Dwijas and Bhumidevas meaning the twice bom and lords of the earth respectively - “He is the holiest of human beings”.10

Purity was the pivot on which the caste system spun. Ritualistic ‘pollution’, which in the rest of India was ‘transmittable’ only by touch, could be in Kerala, communicated over distance.11 A Nambudiri seeing a man of the avama caste a hundred yards away would stand polluted. Their social status was higher than that of the rulers on the Malabar coast. They were supreme custodians of land and controlled agricultural production.

The backward communities were subject to rigors of social customs. They were denied admission to the temples, schools and public services. Obsession with purity led to the practice of untouchability. As a degraded
lot, the untouchables followed a code of conduct whereby they would do nothing that could raise them above their ascribed position.\textsuperscript{12} They were never to dress in resemblance to caste-Hindus nor would they adorn gold or silver ornaments.\textsuperscript{15}

Among the numerous disabilities suffered by the lower castes, a clear distinction must be made between those which were \textit{Prima-facie} non-civic in their character and others. Though all disabilities passed as references to religious sanctions they could be broadly grouped into two:

(i) Those which were civic viz. ban on public utilities like roads, wells, \textit{satrams}, markets, schools and hospitals and conveyances like ferry boats and railway carriages, motor buses, hotels, theaters and

(ii) Those imposed upon them with regard to:

- the entry into religious buildings like temples, markets and fair grounds which lay open to all Hindus except for the untouchables and

- the services of Hindu barbers, washer men, musicians and priests.\textsuperscript{14}

The approach of an untouchable was viewed as a grave offence of a \textit{char am} by the savarnas.
In Kerala, the customs of unseeability and unapproachability were accepted as valid principles of social harmony both by the caste-Hindus and non-caste-Hindus. Custom was the monarch, and the Governmental authority stepped in only where the custom rule was dormant. For telling the lower caste people apart, separate dress code was imposed. The strictures were adhered to strictly so the *avarnas* were readily recognizable to prevent the so called, pollution. Being polluted was derogatory and called for purificatory rites known as *sudhivyavastha*. Even the slightest violation of the caste rules were viewed with serious implications by caste-Hindus and the Government too. Punishments were accorded to the offenders.

The Pulayas, Parayas and Kuravas etc. were agrestic slaves. They were buried in deep ignorance and superstitions. Their children were born in bondage, grew as such to live and die in bondage. During drought, when famine struck, the lower castes were compelled to sell their children to foreign merchants as slaves. Infant slaves were also sold. The price of a slave varied from place to place.

Col. J. Munro, the British Resident Diwan of Travancore reported that, he was shocked to see ‘a number of half starved and naked natives in iron chains in the Dutch settlement at Changanachery’. The question of slavery and the slave trade attracted the Company’s attention as early as
1792 and a Government proclamation against slave trade was issued. 

EDUCATION

It is universally accepted that education plays an important role in administering social justice. Education is a powerful means to overcome inequalities and to establish a new social order based on freedom, equality and justice. Denial of educational opportunity was not only a form of discrimination but also a strategic tool for perpetuation of the exploitive system. From ancient times, educational means was the domain of priestly and ruling classes. They kept others at bay. In the traditional Kerala society, the majority thus lived bereft of educational opportunities.

Literacy, especially English, has had great role to play in socio-religious reforms of Kerala. English provided access to every sphere of knowledge. The new generation youth took to the study of English literature, European history and western political thought with their emphasis on individual liberty and political freedom. They thus got imbued with these noble ideals.

The efforts of the English East India Company in this direction may be said to have begun with the Charter Act of 1813. The Charter Act, allowed the Christian missionaries to work in India anticipating large scale
conversions and subsequent change in consumerism. The Christian missionaries and the Government encouraged English education. Large number of private educational institutions admitted students irrespective of caste or creed. Fee concessions were allowed to the underprivileged by the Government and Christian missionaries. They opened Nair Schools for high castes on request from the Nair community and felt that higher education was one of the effective means of to usher in Christianity into the upper castes. English education thus made rapid strides in Travancore and Cochin.

The London Mission Society, the Church Missionary Society in Travancore and Cochin and the Basel Mission in Malabar started schools imparting modern education. Like elsewhere there were no bars on the admission to these institutions.21

As expected, English education changed the outlook of the natives. They longed for everything western - house, food, dress, manners, luxuries, professions and family lifestyle etc. In social life, it connected educated men in the towns with their rural counterparts of the same caste. New ideas, aspirations and conflicts found free expression between them. Male literacy rate reached all-time high in India. By 1905 the number of newspapers both in Malayalam and English numbered to 20. One found men of all castes and
*desams* reading newspapers, at times aloud in coffee shops or by the roadside. This awakened political thinking.\(^{22}\)

**CASTE ASSOCIATIONS**

Naturally, the educated wanted to replace irrational traditional customs and practices with that of social justice and equality. They were rejuvenated by a new faith in their own abilities and sought satisfaction in making their own achievements. Restrictions imposed by the family or society or the Government seemed unacceptable to them.

British power in Kerala and consequent Governmental reforms from time to time gradually weakened the caste system. Caste lost its domineer in social matters. The personal feudal authority that prevailed in the country was replaced by the impersonal authority of law, a radical change that restored to the individual his legal personality, irrespective of his religion and caste.\(^{23}\)

The old social order that decided employment and provided for a subsistence economy seemed obsolete. Traditional occupation was forsaken for lucrative employment in trade, commerce and manufacturing industries. Still those from the backward castes who stayed illiterate were stuck in their thankless ascriptive occupations.\(^{24}\)
In the changed state of affairs, market became focal point of day-to-day life. The cultivators sold their produce and made purchases from shops or the market. Travel became an essential part of life. People had to travel to attend courts and public offices. Patients commuted to hospitals, students to attend schools and colleges and workers to go to their distant places of work. Roads or public pathways became lifeline to these destinations. But there still existed curbs on the movement of the lower castes. Untouchability lingered as a part of social and religious life and this restricted progress.

The Christian converts who were better educated and prosperous became increasingly resentful of the traditional place of inferiority they were slated to keep. Among discriminations, the restrictions on clothing aroused highest resent. They flouted the caste-law and turned to the European missionaries for support. The Shanar revolt or the breast cover agitations between the Shanars and the Nairs in the late 1850’s pointed to this.25

British model of judicial system came into being in the place of customary laws. They also introduced a well organized bureaucracy in Kerala. British forced the Governments of Cochin and Travancore to make laws to ensure their control in agriculture, trade, commerce and education.
At the same time, the realization of subsidy amount from Travancore and Cochin compelled them to expand agriculture and industry. New job opportunities opened up irrespective of caste origins. Thus the expansion of cash crop cultivation and the industrial development in Travancore and Cochin paved the way for the emergence of a non-caste middle class. Besides, printing and availability of new literature infused modern thinking and meted out a fatal blow to the caste system.26

The higher castes, the custodians of religion and dharma, gradually adjusted themselves to the new socio-economic condition. Keen competition from other religions especially from Christians awakened the Hindu communities from long slumber. The Hindu social order based on caste system yielded to pressure.

The social awakening which largely emerged from the late nineteenth century among various communities was one of the principal factors that forced the state to form social legislations. The inert masses of lower castes who because of their social and economic backwardness, were kept out of the mainstream for centuries, surged to the forefront. In putting an end to old order and usher in a liberal era, enlightened men of all classes took initiatives. They realized that political rights could be bestowed only in an equal society. Hence social justice had to be recognised. Modern Kerala
evolved around this concept.  

A powerful body for social change in the first quarter of the twentieth century was the caste associations. Caste associations were important socio-economic groups and were run on democratic lines. There was hardly any community or caste in the state without an association of its own for self-development. These organisations tried to improve the status and influence of their respective communities by raising their levels in education, Government service and the various professions.

The most significant among these associations was the *Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam* (S.N.D.P). It was established on 15 May 1903, under the guidance of Sree Narayana Guru, the reformer saint of Kerala. Sree Narayana Guru, who was a strong believer of *Upanishadic* thoughts and greatness of human love exposed the hollowness of caste system and Brahmanic priesthood and spread the message of universal love.

The slogan raised by the Guru, “one man, one religion and one God for man” had tremendous impact on the social scenario of Kerala. He exhorted the people to become powerful through unity and enlightened through knowledge. He theorized that a man’s essential quality is humanism. Guru strongly opposed polygamy, polyandry and matrilineal
system and evil customs like *talikettu kalyanam* and drinking. He advocated simplicity in marriage celebrations. The religious reform movements led by Sree Narayana Guru gave identity and self-respect to this economically emerging community. Its first annual session was held at Aruvippuram in 1904 under the guidance of the Guru.

The basic aim of the S.N.D.P. *yogam* has been to popularize the message of Sree Narayana Guru and bring about the social and spiritual regeneration of the Ezhavas and other backward communities. Thus, S.N.D.P. *yogam*, promoted integration of the caste and at the same time became a powerful social organization which presented their demands to the Government. Dr. P. Palpu, N. Kumaran Asan, T.K. Madhavan, and C.V. Kunjuraman were some of the moving spirits of the S.N.D.P. *yogam*.31

In 1907 the *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham* was established by another noted social reformer Ayyankali.32 The awakening of the people groping in darkness, shackled in their superstitions and subjected to social evils was indeed inevitable. The *Sangham* did a lot of work for educating the Pulayas. In 1907, Ayyankali launched an agitation for the freedom of education for the Harijan children. As a result of the consistent agitations, Ayyankali was nominated as the member of *Sree Moolam Praja Sabha* on 5 December 1911 and participated in the Assembly sessions with dignity and
spoke for the downtrodden.

In 1909, the *Yogakshema Sabha* was formed to reform the Nambudiri community. It was launched among the Nambudiris in order to secure the right for the marriage of all the junior Nambudiri males with in the community, to popularise the study of English and to abolish the *Purdah* system from among the Nambudiri: females. The *Unninambudiri* movement led by V.T. Bhattathirippad and his newspaper *Pasupatham* contributed a lot to the awakening of the Nambudiris from their slumber. Two famous dramas *Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekkku* and *Marakkudaykullile Mahanarakam* brought about radical reforms in the Nambudiri *illams*. E.M. Sankaran Nambudirippad, Premji, Mullmangalathu Raman Bhattathirippad, and K.P. Nambudiri, were some of the leaders of this movement. The slogan of the *Yogakshema sabha* was ‘make Nambudiri a human being’.34

The Nair Service Society was formed on 31 October 1914 by Mannathu Padmanabhan and a band of zealous young men under his leadership. It was patterned after The Servants of India Society of Gopalakrishna Gokhale and its motto was service to the society and to Nairs in particular.35
The Nairs, described as *Malayala sudras* had become a socially degenerate and economically impoverished community because of its adherence to old obnoxious social customs and the multiplicity of sub-castes prevalent among them. The matrilineal system of inheritance destroyed the harmony of family life and a lot of money was wasted on intra-family litigations. After the formation of Nair Service Society, it provided effective leadership to many a movement for social reforms like the eradication of the barriers of sub-caste, the abolition of old, decadent and wasteful practices like *Talikettu kalyanam, Tirandukuli* etc. and the mitigation of the evils of the joint family system among the Nairs.³⁶

Elimination of untouchability from the society was prominently placed in the agenda of the Nair Service Society’s action plan. It also took effective steps to popularize *Misra Bhojanam?¹*

Much before the launching of ‘Nair Service Society’, Chattampi Swamikal, a saint and reformist, born in the Nair community in 1853 had reacted against the Brahmin hegemony and superstitious customs and rituals. Being a scholar of *Upanishads* and logic, he strongly opposed the caste system and spread the message of monistic thought. He was known as *Sarva Vidhadhirajan* (Supreme Scholar). Chattampi Swamikal established a good rapport with Sree Narayana Guru and together they worked for the
cause of Hindu social and moral regeneration. Similarly Brahmananda Swamy Sivayogi, Vaikunta Swamikal and Vaghbhatanandan, reformist saints, also conscientised the society.

The Malayali Sabha started in 1886, Keraleeya Nair Samajam established in 1905 were among the earliest of the Nair social organizations, which took efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the Nairs. All these efforts roused the social consciousness of the Nairs and empowered them to fight against the social evils that had crept in to their ranks.39

The Parayas established Brahma Pratyaksha Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham. One of the leaders was Kandan Kumaran Parayan. Similarly the lower-caste Christians also started a separate association called the Christian Sadhu Jana Sangham, in June 1913 at the ‘Diocesan Room’ of the C.M.S in Kottayam.40 Attempts were also made to reform the Muslim community, under the initiative of Veliyankottu Ummar Khasi, a Muslim social reformer of Malabar. He persuaded many young Muslims to shoulder the responsibility of reforming the Muslim society.41

The caste associations were initially aimed at strengthening themselves through caste and religious solidarity. They tried to play down internal differences within the caste or community so as to unite it under
their own leadership. Caste sub-divisions, superstitions and obnoxious practices, obsolescent marriage customs, family organization and inheritance laws were great impediments to progress.\textsuperscript{42}

The caste associations created public opinion against spending money on wasteful ceremonies, which ate away a large part of wealth of the communities. The S.N.D.P. \textit{yogam} and the Nair Service Society urged their members to do away with all expensive and superstitious social observances and ceremonies. Costly ceremonies like \textit{Talikettu kalyanam, Thiranduhuli}, etc. brought great humiliation and caused serious financial loss to the Nairs. Religious ceremonial customs like \textit{Kuthirakettu, Garudan thookkam} etc. was severely criticized by Mannathu Padmanabhan. Many Nair families spent exorbitantly on such ceremonies to the point of bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{43}

The Brahmin community faced problems of polygamy, denial of widow re-marriage, disabilities of women and the dowry system. Ceremonies in connection with \textit{upanayanam}, puberty, marriage, pregnancy and death became increasingly expensive.\textsuperscript{44}

Not only Hindus, but Muslims and Christians though to a lesser degree, participated in the reform movement. Christian reformers sought the abolition of child marriage and the dowry system, while Muslims sought
riddance of expensive marriage and festival ceremonies.\textsuperscript{45}

The age-old institution of the joint family degenerated. The conflict between the individuals and \textit{karnavars} of each \textit{tharavad} became common. Sense of oneness diminished and they lived like different species stuck in one cage. Members of the joint family found access to education and opportunities hard. The western concept of private property and individual freedom motivated members of the joint family to break away. The caste associations too advocated nuclear family and separate living for the betterment of the communities.\textsuperscript{46}

The caste associations, tried to reform the system of marriage such as the \textit{sambandham}, \textit{putavakodukkal} and \textit{talikettu}. There was opposition to polygamy and polyandry. Referring to the sad state of marriage life in the Nair \textit{tharavads} the Malabar Marriage Commission observed:

\begin{quote}
“The husband is not legally bound to maintain the wife and children; conjugal cohabitation is dependent on the sweet will of either party; inheritance follows not and there is no obligation to chastity, for it is admitted that if a woman commits adultery with a member of the same caste, she is not excommunicated. In view of these stem facts the highest tribunal in the land had repeatedly and systematically characterized the
sexual relation existing among the Nair as one of concubinage.  


Having achieved success in self-vitalizing programmes, the caste associations now focused on eliminating the inhuman practice of untouchability. The educated people of all sections of the society supported the abolition of untouchability legally and initiated action in this regard.

Hindu communities together consisted of about 180 castes in 1891. Christians and Muslims were also divided into separate sects or denominations. There were twenty sub-divisions among Christians and ten
among the Muslims. The Nair caste had seventy five sub-divisions and Ezhavas seven. The sub-castes were status groups within the caste.49

One of the greatest achievements of the caste associations during the period was the fusion of sub-castes into the main caste. The census reports of Travancore, Cochin and the Malabar district under the Madras presidency for the year 1931 proved that the division of castes into sub-castes no longer existed among the Hindu communities. Restrictions on inter-marriages and inter-dining among the sub-castes gradually disappeared.50

Thanks to caste associations, the different sections of a caste united all over in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. They served as pressure groups by emphasizing caste identity in order to secure concessions or rights from the respective Governments and empowered their followers through journals and newspapers. Through press, public meetings and debates their members were educated and their grievances were publicised. The development of transport and communications fostered the growth of the community organizations. Thus, touch taboos, eating taboos and endogamy became less rigid through individual and collective actions of the social workers and organisations.51
The rapid spread of education, growth of literacy with consequent unemployment of the educated coupled with increased activities of the caste associations stirred an unrest. The unrepresented and the inadequately represented communities demanded preferential treatment in the matter of recruitment to the Government services. The educated people aspired for Government appointments, which give them social status and economic stability. ‘A safe and steady income, comparative lack of strain and stress, a pension for old age, opportunities for leisure and chances of promotion to position of dignity, power and influence’ were the driving forces. This led to the signing of the *Malayali Memorial* of 1891, which sponsored by all sections of the educated men of Travancore.52

Opposition to outside appointments in Travancore service was expressed in the *Malayali Memorial*, submitted to the Maharaja on 1 January 1891, signed by 10,028 persons belonging to all castes and communities. It roused the political consciousness of the people. Since the Government announced that it was prepared to consider the claim of the *sudras* but not the Ezhavas the *Ezhava Memorial* was signed by 13,176 members of the Ezhava community under the leadership of Dr. P. Palpu and submitted to the Maharaja on 3 September 1896. But the response was negative. A second *Ezhava Memorial* was submitted to Lord Curzon, the
Viceroy of India, during his visit to Thiruvananthapuram in 1900, but met with same result. The rising literacy rates especially in English and the rapid expansion of bureaucracy gave rise to conflicts over appointments.

It was the stigma of untouchability and illiteracy, associated with the lower castes that deprived them of appointments in Governments service. Untouchability denied even the educated, a right to attain coveted jobs in Travancore and Cochin administration. Appointments in the Land Revenue, Palace and Military Departments were exclusively reserved for caste-Hindus. Christians and Muslims were excluded since their social position failed to earn a ‘certain amount of respect’. The policy of the Government in this regard was tantamount to denial of social justice.\textsuperscript{53}

The Colonial Policy of increased association of Indians in every branch of administration embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919 heightened the hopes of the hitherto represented and underrepresented communities. They formed a united organization, the Civic Right League, to fight for equality of opportunity. This Civic Right Agitation (\textit{Powra Samatwavada Prakshobhanam}) was the natural outburst of the aggrieved communities for want of the recognition of their civic rights.\textsuperscript{54}

The immediate cause of the agitation was the denial of appointments
to the *avarna* castes among the Hindus, the Christians and the Muslims in the Land Revenue Department of the state. The ban was based on reasons that the Department administered the *Devaswoms* (temples) in which the members of these classes were disallowed. To end this ancient discrimination, the *avarnas*, Christians and the Muslims joined together to fight under the leadership of T.K. Madhavan and E.J. John for obtaining due share in the administrative machinery of Travancore. Supporting the demands of the Civic Right League, *Malayala Manorama*, wrote:

> “Government in Europe, much stronger than the Travancore Durbar have not been able to withstand or oppose the insistent demand of the people for freedom or equality of civic rights. Nothing contrary to that can happen in Travancore”. 55

Another journal *Sahodaran* also criticized the disinterestedness of the Government asking authorities to envisage consequences.

> “It is impossible for any one to obstruct the course of the man that pleads for equality of civic rights. Justice and reason support him. Neither the canon nor the sword nor imprisonment not the gallows can deter him in the lease. In other countries that plea has overcome difficulties by the shedding of blood.” 56

Subsequently, on 1 January 1920, the League submitted a memorial on behalf of the Ezhavas, Christians, Muslims and other discriminated
communities to the Diwan, M. Krishnan Nair, entreated that representation should be given to them in all Government Departments, including the Department of Revenue which on account of its control over the temples, was entirely closed to them.\textsuperscript{57}

The memorandum discussed the following issues:

1. Admission to all students, irrespective of caste in Government hostels.

2. Opening of all public \textit{satroms} to all classes of people.


4. Entry of all castes and creed in the Travancore state forces.

5. Separation of \textit{Devaswom} from the Land Revenue Department.\textsuperscript{58}

The public meetings and propaganda organized by the Civic Right League leaders in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar won popular support. The Government of Travancore appointed a committee to study the feasibility of bifurcation of the Revenue Department. The Krishna Iyyangar committee recommended the separation of \textit{Devaswom} from the Land Revenue Department and reservation of a few appointments of the \textit{Devaswom} Department for caste-Hindus.\textsuperscript{59} The committee thus observed:
“The Maharaja of Travancore being Padmanabhadasa could not

divest himself of the management of the temple in the state.60

In 1922, the Government bifurcated the Revenue Department into Land Revenue and Devaswom Departments. The avarnas among the Hindus, the Christians and the Muslims were given appointments in the new Land Revenue Department. The discrimination against lower caste-Hindus, Muslims and Christians ended and equality of opportunity in respect of appointment to civil service was granted.61

In Travancore, the Legislative Council was established in 1888 and the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly in 1904. These houses were formed as forums that facilitated communication with the Government on their demands and a feedback on the administrative reforms made from time to time. Though the Maharaja retained the power of promulgating laws independently of the Legislative Council, it remained as the premier law making body in the state.62

In Cochin, there was no legislative machinery prior to 1920. The Raja of Cochin for the enactment of laws sought the opinion of expert committees constituted for that purpose. Since Malabar was part of Madras Presidency, constitutional development in this region was invariably related with that of British India.
Malabar district of Madras Presidency, Cochin and Travancore though administratively separated from one another in the colonial phase, were united by the language they spoke - Malayalam. Hence the voice of conscience of the popular leaders reverberated all over Kerala and a conscientised and empowered caste and religious organizations demanded the nomination of their representatives in the Assembly. The limited franchise system based on landed property, income, profession and education prevented the Assembly from being a truly representative body of the people. When the Government realized that not many Christian, Muslim and Ezhava candidates were likely to get elected, it was decided to increase their representations by nomination. Six Ezhavas, six Christians and four Muslims were nominated to the assembly every year.63

Subsequently, N. Kumaran Asan, General Secretary of S.N.D.P. yogam was nominated to the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly and he advocated vigorously for the cause of depressed classes. The speeches made by Asan as a member of the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly, revealed his personality as a social reformer and pragmatist politician.64

In 1919, T.K. Madhavan who was nominated to the Assembly demanded the removal of theendal-palaka from public roads in its fifteenth session. By addressing and attending public meetings and conferences, T.K.
Madhavan emerged as the most vociferous speaker and by contributing cogent and thought-provoking articles, in invigorating diction to periodicals, he found for himself a foremost place among the journalists of his time.65

Again in 1921, in the seventeenth session of the Assembly, T.K. Madhavan raised his demand for Temple Entry.66 But Dewan T. Raghaviyya denied the move in the floor of Sree Moolam Popular Assembly on the ground that it was a religious subject. This denial paved the way for a re-thinking. Disgusted Madhavan realized the need for an innovative approach. This reflected in the meeting with Mahatma Gandhi at Thirunelveli in 1921. Gandhi sent a message to Kerala in favour of Temple Entry and lent his full support.67

The message of Gandhi had an electrifying effect on the social emancipation movement. The savarnas who formerly opposed the Temple Entry movement now came forward favourably and the press provided a nationwide coverage on the issue. Similarly, in 1922 forty six Hindu members of the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly, who stood against Temple Entry resolution, now changed their attitude and signed a memorial and submitted to the Government in favour of social equality. These, can be considered as the token of Gandhi’s all embracing charisma.68
Gandhi identified himself with the masses, he spoke in their own language in his feeble but inspiring voice. But his voice was somehow different from others. It was quiet and low, and yet it could be heard above the shouts of the multitudes. It was soft and gentle, and yet it seemed reinforced in steel; it was courteous and full of appeal, and yet there was something all pervading and demanding in it; every word uttered was profound in meaning with a tint of deadly earnestness. Underneath the language of peace and friendship, there lay power and the unyielding determination to stick to truth, which attracted masses from lower rungs to the rich and royal.\textsuperscript{69}

In fact the forces of social uprising in Kerala went through a collective revolution after the dynamic influence of Gandhian resolutions and practices that became a catalyst.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


the report says: “His tenants bow down to him not simply as a land lord but as their royal liege and benefactor, their suzerain master, their house hold deity, their very God on earth.... His person is holy; his directions are commands; his movements are processions; his meal is nectar. He is the holiest of human beings. He is the representative of God on earth”. Moreover, the Nambudiris as a class enjoyed immunity from death penalty, while even for ordinary offences like theft the lower castes were given grave punishments.


Mannathu Padmanabhan wrote: The Pulayas and the Parayas had to observe’ *theendaV* or maintain a distance from others. They had also to keep themselves away from each other. A shorter distance than between them, had to be kept by the Ezhavas. The Carpenter, Mason and the Metal Smith too observed *theendal*. These people were brought together within the wide circle of *avarnas* so that they could develop a sense of unity and gain strength. But the different distances they had to keep from one another, and the differences in their professions kept them separate. All those, from Nairs to Nambudiries,
formed the *savarnas*. But *theendal* was practiced among them too. The intrepid Nairs who were related to Kshatriyas, and held themselves as the masters and rulers of Kerala, were kept at a distance by not only the highest ranked Brahmins, but also by those who belonged to the intermediate groups, of *Thampurans*, *Warriers*, and *Pisharodis*. All of them had to wash themselves if they ever touched a Nair. This is all that they had to do even if they came into physical contact with a Pulaya or a Paraya too. Different sections of the Hindus accepted these customs and practices as they had the consolation that there was beneath them another group of untouchables. The clever Brahmins made even the Kings who were all-in-all, accept that the former could practice untouchability, and it was the responsibility of the latter to protect this privilege they enjoyed. The Kings seemed not to know that they themselves were untouchables, as far as the Brahmins, were concerned. But for the difference in the distance they kept from the Brahmins viz. 64 feet for Pulayas 12 feet for Ezhavas, 3 to 4 feet for Nairs and two feet for Kings, all of them were branded ‘untouchables’. Untouchability grew into unapproachability, and both were held as elements contributing to pollution.......It was a serious disease that caused great distress to
the entire Hindu society. Only the Brahmins were free from it. That this was instituted for the sake of a handful of people among the several millions, who inhabit our country, makes one very sad. What surprises and pains me more, is not the intelligence of the Brahmins who devised it, but the foolishness of the non-Brahmins who tolerated it.


13. The lower castes were instructed to speak the achara words only. For example, a Nair speaking to a Nambudiri must not call his own food ‘rice’ but ‘a stony or gritty rice’, his money he must call his ‘copper cash’. (William Logan, (1981) op.cit., p.145).

They were debarred from using the common language. They were not permitted to say I, instead they were to say Atiyen, an acharabhasha. (Prof. Kartha, P.C., (1998) Acharanushtana Kosam, D.C Books, Kottayam, p.59.). The vocative he should use to a Nambudiri is Thirumeni (divine body or your divinity) or Thampuruan (God), and for ‘yes’ the word ‘ran’ or ‘adiye’ (your slave in obedience or slavishly yours) should be respectfully mentioned.

The house of a Nambudiri is Mana while, the house of the
avarna is Kuppamadam or dung heap. (Sadasivan, S.N., (2000) *A Social History of India*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, p.389). At the same time the lower castes were even denied the privilege of having Sanskritic names. The women of the sudra community were prohibited to cover their bosoms (William Logan, (1981) *op.cit.,* pp. 161-63).

It is instructed that ornaments worn by the Pulayas had to be no more valuable than brass or beads. Umbrellas and sandals were not permitted. They were debarred from the use of any but coarse cloths; and so on. (Koji Kawashima, (2000) *op.cit.,* p. 150).


Regarding the condition of the slave castes Rev. Samuel Mateer wrote in 1884: “The men are in wretched filthy clothes. There is much suffering from sickness, the dirt of the house produces vermin
and itch, which deprives them of rest by day and sleep by night. A respectable native must cover his nostrils with his cloth when he enters amongst them, for the stench and the filth. The aged, if there are any, suffer from debility, and may lie helpless day after day until they die; infants suffer from sores, diarehoea, worms and want of food; adults from headache and indigestion, ague, dysentery, and intermittent fever” - Robin Jeffrey, (1994) op.cit, p.22.


28. *Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam* (S.N.D.P.), Nair Service Society (N.S.S.), *Sadhujana Paripalana Yogam*, Araya conference, Kudumbi Association, Muslim Service League, *Arya Samajam*, *Yogakshema Sabha*, *Tandar Mahasabha*, *Kerala Muslim Aikya Samajam*, The Mujahid Movement, *Dheevara Sabha*, *Atma Vidya Sangh*, *Sahodara Samajam*, *Pulaya Maha Sabha*, The Christian Association were some of the important caste and religious organisations established during the colonial period. Leaders like Sree Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal, Mannathu Padmanabhan, Aiyan Kali, and V.T. Bhattathirippad accomplished strange and great tasks for the uplift of their community. Similarly C.V. Kunjuraman, Dr. P. Palpu, Changanachery K. Parameswaran Pillai, and C. Kesavan took relentless efforts to this. N. Kumaran Asan, General Secretary of S.N.D.P. *yogam* and a member of S.M.P.A., through his literary creations and speeches tried to motivate the society.


36. *Talikettu kalyanam* and *Thirandukuli* were two obnoxious practices prevailed in the Nair community.


39. *Malayali Sabha* was founded by C. Krishna Pillai. He organised Malayali social union in 1877 in Maharaja’s College Thiruvananthapuram and soon got changed in to the *Malayali Sabha* in 1886. The *Malayali Sabha* under C. Krishna Pillai organized
agitations for the admission of the Nair students in to Sanskrit schools which has been denied to them on the ground that they were *Sudras* (for details, see article written by Sankarankutty Nair T.P., ‘C. Krishna Pillai and the Malayali Sabha’ published in the *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol.XXXI, March, June, September, December 2004, pp.95-104.). Later in 1903, The Travancore Nair *Samajam* was formed. As against the *Malayali Sabha*, non-Nairs were not allowed to be members of this new association. These two associations joined together in 1905, January as *Keraleeya Nair Samajam*.


43. *Ibid*, p.54. Mannathu Padmanabhan observes: ‘*Kuthirakettu* and *Garudanthookkam* are religious ceremonies in connection with temple festivals. *Kuthira* or horse meant something square in shape. There were horses which were carried namely *Eduppukuthira* and horses that were drawn namely *Valippukuthira*. *Eduppukuthira* were horses carried on the shoulders of Nairs. The custom of horses riding
on humans, instead of humans riding on them, existed only in our part of the country, and among Nairs. Another religious custom practiced by Nairs is Garudanthookkam. When I think of the prevalence of this cruel practice of suspending a Nair by a hook that pierces the flesh on his back from a long pole held at a great height, I am inclined to state that this practice might come to an end only when the Nairs vanish from the surface of the earth.’


45. The reformers like Vakkam Abdul Khadar Maulavi, and K.M. Seetisahib worked for the uplift of Muslims.


51. The importance of journals and news papers in the intellectual life of the Ezhavas was first realized by Paravoor Kesavan Asan. He started the journal, Sujananandini in 1892. In 1904, under the editorship of
the founder secretary of the S.N.D.P. yogam N. Kumaran Asan, the Vivekodayam made its first appearance. Its cardinal objective was to bring about a social revolution through education. The mouthpiece of the S.N.D.P. yogam, the Vivekodayam was a stonch advocate of social reform. Another important journal of the Ezhava community was the Mitavadi. It made vigorous intercession for the rights of the tenants of Malabar. T.K. Madhavan edited the Deshabhimani. Launched in 1914, it stood for equal civic rights, abolition of untouchability, prohibition, Temple Entry and representation for all communities in the state service. K. Ayyappan, published Sahodaran in 1917. C.V. Kunjuraman, with the assistance of Muloor S. Padmanabha Panicker began the publication of Kerala Kaumudi from Mayyanadu, Kollam. For the uplift of the Pulaya community Sadhujana Paripalanasaangham, founded by Ayyankali published a journal named Sadhujana Paripalini. As the mouthpiece of the organization it spread the message ‘progress through education’. The Yogakshema Sabha issued Pasupatham, as their official publication. For reforming the Nair community, Kainikkara Govindapillai started Nair Magazine. Under the ownership of Karuthodi Kannan Nair, a newspaper, Subhashini was also published. Later Nair Service
Society published *Service* and it still continues its publication’.


64. Ravindran, T.K., (1972) *op.cit.*, p.XVIII.
66. Sree Moolam Popular Assembly Proceedings, (1921), *op.cit.*, p. 120.