Chapter 3

Wayanad in Arms: The Revolt of Pazhassi Raja, 1800-1805

The peace reached upon between the English East India Company and Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja, after the first revolt of Pazhassi Raja, was not a comfortable one for both parties concerned. The Company decided to put an end to the problems created by Pazhassi Raja and his rebellion, while the Raja was firmly determined to establish his sovereignty in Kottayam and other parts of his domain. The peace, as observed by Wellesley, was not such a one as to warrant a sentiment of security either, in the Raja’s weakness or in his sincerity.1 The judicious calculations of Wellesley found that the possessions of the East India Company in Malabar would not be safe as long as the rebel chief was not reduced to an unconditional submission to the Company and its authorities.2 So any measure should be taken to avert the possible threat from the part of rebel Raja. Moreover, there existed internal discontent and restlessness among of the people of Malabar and it would drift Malabar into an arena of strife once again.

The calculations and assumptions of Wellesley did not go wrong. After a brief spell of calm lasting for two years, Kottayam once again rose to the notice of the English. The senior Raja of Kottayam, who was appointed according to the late treaty with Pazhassi Raja, for the revenue collection and management of Kottayam, fell in arrears, even though he was ably assisted by the efficient officers of the East India Company. It became apparent that he had not sufficient personal influence or energy to keep the things in order at Kottayam. So the Company pensioned him off and

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2 Ibid.
permitted him to retire to Travancore and the District was placed under the direct management of the Company’s officers.³ In this regard it is found that the Company was merely dismissing or compelling to relinquish the rulers of Malabar according to their whims and fancies. It is to be remembered that the English regarded the Rajas of Malabar as mere Zamindars or as revenue farmers and as a source for the steady flow of revenue to the Company, as elsewhere in other parts of the country. When the revenue collection declined or was truncated, the Company expelled the incumbent and took over the administration of that region. In this respect the Company had no regard for the rights and privileges of these hereditary rulers of Malabar, who were looked upon as mere revenue farmers. The same thing had exactly happened in the case of Kottayam, where the settlements reached upon between the Company and Pazhassi Raja was openly violated by the authorities of the Company itself. Their only concern was the wealth and so they looked for a higher amount from the region. The happenings of such incidents can be seen in the case of similar uprisings that took place in other parts of India during the colonial days.⁴

The expulsion of the senior Raja did not provoke Pazhassi Raja immediately to turn against the East India Company. Yet, he regarded it as a clear violation of the agreement made between the Company and the Raja in 1797. The real factors that prompted Pazhassi, which led to the dramatic developments in Malabar, occurred after the Fourth Anglo-Mysore in 1799. During the war Pazhassi Raja was carrying on clandestine correspondence with Tipu Sultan of Mysore and aided him with men and provisions. On the fall of Seringapatam, Wayanad was put under the partition

Treaty of 1799 and it was a fatal blow to the rebel chief, Pazhassi Raja. The Company by this treaty ceded the district of Wayanad, to the jurisdiction of the Company, which was a hereditary possession of Pazhassi Raja for a long period and he was its legal ruler. After the ceding of Wayanad to the Company’s rule, the question of the administration of Wayanad remained an unsettled issue in front of the Company: whether the newly acquired territory should be placed under the administration under the Province of Canara or Coimbatore or should any Raja’s authority be trusted at all. It was in this context that Pazhassi Raja came forward enthusiastically to represent before the authorities of the Company of his claim over the rule of Wayanad.

The district of Wayanad came under the sway of Kottayam royal family by the right of conquest. During the Mysorean interlude it had passed under the domain of Mysore rulers. Tipu Sultan annexed the district of Wayanad to the state of Mysore in 1787-1788. Wayanad was not specifically mentioned in treaty made between the East India Company and Tipu Sultans in 1792. In this settlement, it was clearly stated that the places like Kathiroor, Pazhassi and Kuttiyadi, which were parts of Kottayam, were ceded to the territories of the Company. But in this agreement Wayanad was not cited, even though it had formed the vital part of Kottayam, before the occupation of Malabar by the Mysorean conquerors. Since the names of other places are mentioned and at the same time the name Wayanad was omitted, it can be asserted

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6 C. Gopalan Nair, *Wynad*, p.18


8 Ibid.
that the District of Wayanad still remained under the jurisdiction of Tipu Sultan, even after the pact signed in 1792. Therefore the Company obviously concluded it as the right of conquest, following its victory over Tipu Sultan in 1799, gave the right to cede the District of Wayanad to its territories in Malabar. Kerala Varma, the ruler of Kottayam, naturally took the opposite view and sought for the restoration of his territory.9 But the Company did not accede to the request made by Pazhassi Raja. Therefore to enforce his claim over Wayanad, Pazhassi Raja raised a large military force consisting of Naiars, Mappilas and the disbanded troops of the forces of Mysore.10 A number of disbanded soldiers of the Mysore ruler, Tipu Sultan joined under the service of Pazhassi Raja. The question arises here is that why the disbanded soldiers of Mysore supported the Malabar rebel chief Pazhassi Raja? It is to be remembered here that the disbanded troops of Tipu Sultan joined under the service of Pazhassi Raja, because of the colonial conquest of Mysore by the East India Company. It is quiet natural, as elsewhere in India, the political conquest made by the English left many people unemployed, particularly the militia class. Due to this conquest, many of the soldier community all over India lost their livelihood and their traditional occupation. This is what exactly happened in the case of disbanded troops of Mysore. So they joined with the rebel chief of Malabar, Pazhassi Raja, because their sources of livelihood and employment were lost.11 The proximity of Wayanad to Mysore may be another added reason for rendering support to Pazhassi. Besides, the vast majority of the population of Wayanad also joined the rebels in support of

Pazhassi Raja, even though they risked the deportation of their families and the confiscation of their properties by the Company, if they were captured.\textsuperscript{12}

The East India Company was not at all willing to give up the territories of Wayanad as it was rich with the best pepper available in Malabar during those days. But the latest developments in the region annoyed the Company and its Government in Bombay. Yet it had a passion for the possession of Wayanad. Wellesley wrote, as early as on 15 January 1800, to Edward Clive, the son of Robert Clive, about the occupation of Wayanad, in the following words:

\ldots\ldots\textsuperscript{13} with respect to Waynad, my decided opinion is that my considerations of the pretensions of the Pazhassi Raja, to our taking possession under the treaty of Mysore would be fatal to the authority of the Company. The authority of the Company must be established in Wayanad as soon as possible.

Again on 28 December, 1800, a letter was despatched to Colonel Stevenson, the Commander of the forces of the East India Company in Mysore, informing him that:

\ldots\ldots\textsuperscript{14} as soon as the adherents of Pazhassi Raja shall have been drawn from the district of Wayanad, it is the intention of the Governor General in Council that it shall be transferred to the authority of the Commissioner of Malabar.

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\textsuperscript{12} Margret Frenz, \textit{From Contact to Conquest}, p.120.

\textsuperscript{13} TNA, \textit{Secret Consultations}, Vol.10, (M S.), pp. 2992-2995.

\textsuperscript{14} TNA, \textit{Military Consultations}, Vol. 294, (M S.), p. 1518.
Thus the Company was very enthusiastic to take over the territories of Malabar as early as possible. It gave orders to station troops to the North and South of Wayanad and to drive out the rebel chief Pazhassi from the land of Wayanad immediately and make him submit to the orders of the East India Company.\textsuperscript{15} The natural question that arises here is that why the Company was so anxious for the annexation and occupation of Wayanad. It is because Wayanad was rich in pepper and cardamom. The pepper and other spices collected from Wayanad formed the major source for the Company’s trade in Malabar. Also the pepper collected from Wayanad was one of the best qualities available during those days. Even today the best quality pepper that is produced in Malabar is from the district of Wayanad. It has been argued, also, that it was to serve the economic interest of the Company and to feed the growing industries of England, the Company occupied territories in India.\textsuperscript{16} It was thus to serve the mercantile interest of the Company, that it tried to keep its control and grip upon Wayanad. Besides this, the geo-political compulsions made the East India Company to occupy the territories, which had mineral resources, even though they did not have any agrarian potential.\textsuperscript{17} When the revenue from the coffee plantations in Wayanad declined, the Europeans found out the gold reserve in Wayanad and they expected great profit from it in the later years.\textsuperscript{18} The places like Pookood, Devala Charambadi and Vythiri were identified as the gold rich places in Wayanad.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} Margret Frenz., \textit{From Contact to Conquest}, pp.120-121.


\textsuperscript{17} See, for a discussion, Dietmer Rothermud and D. C. Wadhwa (Ed.) \textit{Zamindars, Mines and Peasants: Studies in the History of Indian Coalfield and its Rural Hinterland}, New Delhi, 1978. Wayanad was rich is mineral and agricultural resources during the colonial days.

mines were set up in Thariyode, Churamala and Thavinjal in the first half of the
nineteenth century. Many persons from Australia were attracted to Wayanad to
engage in gold mining. The labourers used in the gold mines were the tribal people
of Wayanad like the Kurumas and Paniyas. The treatments of the workers employed
in the gold mines of Wayanad were most inhuman.

The Company also found that Wayanad was a suitable place for establishing
a military station by which they can have a command over Wayanad as well as the
whole of Malabar. The possession and the control of the mountain passes in the
District of Wayanad had certain strategic importance. The reason is, as Immanuel
Wallerstein points out, that the mountainous regions were more conducive and
congenial to serve for banditry. So similar regions, which were prone more to
banditry and uprisings, had to be kept under control. Also, if the English could get
hold of the passes in the Western Ghats, it would be difficult for any external forces to
to enter into Kerala. It was perhaps due to this fact that the English annexed Malabar
only and did not occupy the states of Cochin and Travancore as part of their
territories. The passes in the Ghats facilitated the cheap and quick movement of the
forces as well as it provided the shortest route for the transportation of the hill
products to the plains. The occupation of Wayanad also helped the Company to keep
an eye on the plains as well as on Mysore. Both Wayanad and Mysore were against
the English East India Company and were ready for an uprising against them. Above

19 The Government of Madras appointed Lieutenant Nicolson as the Superintendent in search of gold
in Wayanad. There were 33 Gold mining companies in Wayanad in 1880
20 Reports on the Gold Mines of South-Eastern Portion of Wayanad, p.11.
The people like H. L. Sterne, G. E. Withers and J. W. Minchin were the prominent among them.
22 See, Immanuel Wallenstein, The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of
European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century, London, 1974, pp. 141-142. This is what
actually happened in the first revolt of Pazhassi Raja. The rebels went to the mountains and jungles
and attacked the East India Company from all sides.
all, during the early revolt of Pazhassi Raja, the jungles of Wayanad served him as his
palace of abode and protection from the English. It was from these jungles that he
conducted his guerrilla mode of warfare against the East India Company’s forces.
Therefore, for all these reasons, the Company was very keen and particular to occupy
the District Malabar to their sway and control at any cost.

It was for this strategically and commercially important Wayanad, that Kerala
Varma began to struggle with a desperate intensity. The English was not prepared to
let this territory to the rebel Raja at any cost. His claim over Wayanad was genuine
and legitimate. The Raja and his ancestors were the legitimate rulers of this region. As
early as in March 1794 itself, Sir John Shore had acknowledged the disputed status of
Wayanad and deputed Captain Doveton to make an enquiry into the alleged status of
this region, and an endeavor to bring the whole dubious situation to an amicable
discussion and adjustment.23 Thus, when Kerala Varma was making his claim over
Wayanad, the members of the Second Malabar Commission concluded in June 1798
itself that Wayanad was not ceded to the East India Company by Tipu Sultan by the
treaty of 1792, though its possession was politically and financially a desirable one to
it.24 In short when all these arguments and allegations were taken into consideration,
the claim of Pazhassi Raja over the land of Wayanad appears to be legitimate and just.

The Company without caring for the interests and claims of Pazhassi Raja
annexed Wayanad to its territories by the partition treaty of 1799. Immediately after
the ceding of the district of Wayanad to Malabar, by the East India Company, it was
also proposed to transfer the province of Malabar to the Madras Presidency. So from

23  John Shore Bart, Governor General’s Minutes on the Malabar Commissioners Report, 1792-1794,
(M.S.) Para.48.
24  William Logan, Malabar Manual, Vol. 1 p.2524, see also P.K. Karunakara Menon, A History of
20 May 1800 onwards Malabar became an integral part of the Madras Presidency. With the transfer of Malabar to Madras Presidency, the Commissionership was abolished and it was placed under the administration of a Principal Collector and two subordinate Collectors.

It was to be asked, in this context that, why did the East India Company make such a hasty transfer of Malabar, from Bombay Presidency to Madras Presidency, when the region was almost on the verge of a revolt? What prompted the Company officials to make such a hasty decision? It may be because the administration of Malabar under the Commissioners was highly corrupt and inefficient. Thus, Arthur Wellesley had complained to the supreme authorities of the East India Company by declaring himself that:

………. our possessions on the coast of Malabar become an encumbrance to us, if they are not speedily brought into some condition of order. A more active and vigorous control is necessary as well over the corruptions of our own servants in that province as over the refractory spirit of the native princess and landholders.

The Company officials in Malabar were engaging in private trade and making profits at the expense of the Company. The private trade and the exploitation by the officials of the Company, was quiet common in Malabar, as elsewhere in India,

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26 Edward Ingram (Ed), Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley, 1798-1801, Somerset, 1970, P.39. Arthur Wellesley, (1769-1852), the brother of Governor General Richard Wellesley, was the British administrator in Mysore and the regent of Seringapatam from 1799 to 1802, and later become the famous duke of Wellington.
during those days. So Wellesley decided to put an end to this corruptive practice followed by the subordinates of the Company because it made many people, particularly in Malabar, against the British and their administration. Besides, the Malabar situated far off from Bombay and the distance from Bombay to Malabar acted as a hindrance for the quick movement and the deployment of Company’s militia in the Malabar region. It remained as an obstacle for easy communication between the forces and its commanders and the authorities of the East India Company at Bombay. It was one of the major reasons for the failure of the Company in suppressing the first revolt of Pazhassi Raja against the English. In addition, the Province of Malabar was more close to the Presidency of Madras than the Bombay Presidency. Madras could, therefore, exercise more effective and efficient control on the affairs of the Malabar Province. The Company also hoped for an effective collection of revenue from Malabar and for this they desired a peaceful and calm atmosphere in the region. So, with all these considerations, the Government of Bombay, through a proclamation informed the Rajas, chiefs and the general public of Malabar that the administration and Government of the Malabar Province was transferred to the Government of Madras. 27 In September 1801, the Malabar Commission was abolished and the District was placed under a Principal Collector assisted by two subordinate Collectors. Thus the challenges faced by the Company’s administrators during the early phase of its occupation of Malabar were ended through this transfer.

The Government of Madras, with a view of bringing the situation in Malabar under control, appointed Arthur Wellesley as the Commander-in-Chief of the forces

27 William Logon, Treaties and Engagements, 2, 213,p. 335. It was on 20th May 1800, Malabar was transferred under the administration of Madras Presidency.
of Malabar, South Canara and Mysore, with the primary objective of suppressing the growing rebellion in the region.\textsuperscript{28} He himself had written:

\begin{quote}
\ldots\ldots Whatever may be our ultimate determination with respect to the power of the several Rajahs, it must appear to flow from the generosity, justice and power of the British Government, and not to be derived from a timid submission to the refractory spirit of any rebellious tributary.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

When Wellesley reached Malabar, he found that the typical geo-political situation of the District, the dense forests and the mountainous regions, impeded the easy and rapid movement of the Company’s armed forces through the rebellion-affected areas. As a first step, therefore, he constructed a chain of roads for the quick and easy transportation of the Company’s regular forces. Thus, roads were constructed to Kannavam and Manathana and stationed troops in different parts of Wayanad. He also introduced a system called ‘Block House’ system in Malabar, by building up a chain of forts throughout Malabar.\textsuperscript{30} The intention of the construction of such forts was to send light detachments from these forts to all directions of the country to chase and hunt the rebels. To counter the strategy adopted by the Company, Pazhassi Raja had stationed his men at different junctions of the road networks to obstruct the easy movement of the Company’s men. The military strategy devised by Wellesley had remarkable impact in suppressing the uprising in the course of time. Wellesley attacked Kottayam and Wayanad from Mysore and from the coastal region to encircle the rebels. In this attempt Pallur Emmen Nair, a follower of Pazhassi Raja, who

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{28} William Logon, \textit{Malabar Manual}, Vol.1, p. 527
\item\textsuperscript{29} David Ingram (Ed.) \textit{Two Views of British India}, pp. 250-251.
\item\textsuperscript{30} A. Sreedhara Menon, \textit{A Survey of Kerala History}, p. 271.
\end{itemize}
defected him, helped the British very much. With his support, Wellesley was able to capture the Periya Ghat and to re-establish the Company’s communication network with Tellicherry.

The sole mission of Wellesley, an advocate of preventive imperialism, in Wayanad was to subjugate the rebel prince, Pazhassi Raja. In one of his letters to Colonel Kirkpatrick, he had made it clear:

……… the destruction of Pazhassi will have a great effect on the minds of the disaffected with which the province of Malabar abounds. There never was a country, which from it people and its Government was so well calculated for turbulence, but the fall of Pazhassi and the reduction of Wayanad will curb it considerably and I shall direct my enquiries to ascertain the means of setting the other parts of this province which are disturbed.

Wellesley, when he reached Malabar he could not act immediately due to the onset of monsoon in Malabar, and was confined to merely strengthening the military posts during the rainy season. He constructed military roads in Malabar and set up additional military posts in different parts of Malabar. He amalgamated large quantities of supplies in Koothparambu under the protection of two regiments of Indian soldiers. So in the initial stages of his arrival he could not achieve anything concretely in dealing with the rebellious prince, Pazhassi Raja.

While the East India Company, under Wellesley, was preparing for subduing the insurgents, the rebels were not keeping idle. Pazhassi Raja raised a large body of

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31 K. Rajayyan, *South Indian Rebellion*, p.179.
militia consisting of Nairs, Mappilas and Muslims. The Muslims were the disbanded
troops of the late Tipu Sultan, after its conquest by the Company. Their grudge
towards the English and the Company might have instigated them to join with
Pazhassi Raja against the Company. Due to the onset of monsoon in Malabar,
Wellesley left for Seringapatam. The Raja took advantage of the situation and
descended the Ghats of Kuttiyadi. Here he was joined by the Mappila leader, Unni
Mootha Mooppan and several chief land holders of Malabar like Kampuratt Nambiar,
Peruvayal Nambiar and Kannavath Nambiar.33 In the Southern part of Malabar, the
Mappilas led by their leaders like Athan Gurukkal and Chempan Pokker, took their
position against the Company.34 Their combination became alarming to the East India
Company and they repulsed the forces under Mr. Baber. Chempan Pokker even made
a daring attempt on the life of Mr. G. Waddell, the Southern Superintendent.35 The
rebel army succeeded in cutting off the British communications between Kurumgoth
and Koothparambu and surprised the supply posts of the Company and spread
themselves into the interior of the province and established their authority.36 Inspired
by these successes, the rebels decided to attack the military post of the Company at
Manathana.37 A force led by Edachena Kungan, Changoteri Chandoo and Kannavath
Nambiar appeared before the Pagoda (temple) of Manathana. When they reached
there, they felt the need for the presence of the Raja to lead the attack. He
accordingly proceeded to there and ordered the attack of the post. But before actually

33 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No, 2315, Revenue Consultations, 4 May 1801, Vol. 282,
(M.S.), pp. 5265-5267.
35 Ibid.
36 K. Rajayyan, South Indian Rebellion, p. 175.
37 Manathana., an amsam of the Kottayam taluk was one of the strongholds of the East India
Company. It was also one of the important military posts in the interior of Kottayam under the
East India Company.
attacking the post, they decided to know what will happen, if they would attack the
Manathana post, by consulting the *Velichapadu* (oracle) of the *Bhagavati* temple of
Manathana on 3 July 1800.\(^38\)

The belief in the *Velichapadu* was a common custom among the people of
Malabar, especially of the Hindu community, during the pre-colonial days. It is
believed and was a tradition that, when the calamity is a personal one, people used to
consult an astrologer for the remedy. But when the predicament is common one to the
whole society, it was the *Velichapadu* of the local deity that they consulted. The
*Velichapadu* who falls in a trance, became inspired and points out the remedy to the
problem faced by the multitude who are assembled in front of him. This practice of
consulting the astrologer and the *Velichapadu* is held by the people of Malabar even
today. The consulting of a *Velichapadu* is nothing more than a ‘relic of a long night
of the early feudalism’.\(^39\)

The *Velichapadu* is a religious personality associated with Hindu temples of
Malabar. The performer, ostensibly inspired by certain deities, dances and apparently
in a trance, utters many things. His utterances are considered to be the utterances of
the deity. When he act upon this curious dance like performance, he will have a
curious sickle like shaped object in his hand. In many of the temples of Malabar,
especially during the festivals, the *Velichapadu* performs this act. At the peak of his
trance, when he is supposed to have been possessed by the deity, he makes oracular
utterances. These utterances are regarded as the utterances of the deity. Finally, at

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\(^{38}\) Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2602, Translation of a palm leaf letter from a Nambiar to

\(^{39}\) See, for a discussion, Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: A Ninetieth Century
Agenda in and its Implications*, Delhi, 1988, p.3. In this the author discusses in detail about the
persistence of diverse religious cults India.
the peak of the trances he falls down and then it is assumed that the deity is said to have left him.

Such religious beliefs in omens and prophecies appear to reflect the ignorance and backwardness of the rural masses and their inability to transcend beyond the feudal bonds as argued by Kwang Ching Liu. Similar incidents and consultations can be seen in various popular uprisings in different parts of India and other parts of the world. Whatever be its, nature or purpose, people even today also have faith in such Velichapadu and similar religious rituals in Malabar, particularly in the rural areas. Thus the rebels went to the Velichapadu and engaged in a dialogue with him.

**The Velichapadu:** Wherefore have the eight clans of Wayanad descended into this place in arms? If without the orders of the Gods, you will be punished.

**Rebels:** We have descended agreeable to the Raja’s command, but in obedience also to the Gods’ of Poratera (the family deity of Kottayam royal family).

**The Velichapadu:** Appear in a small body at the small pagoda (temple) in the early morning.

As indicated by the Velichapadu, the rebels launched their attack on the military post at Manathana. Soon the spirited insurgents dispersed and instituted a

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blockade. Two hundred of them were stationed near Manathana to guard the roads and thousands of them proceeded to the westward and the rest to Pazhassi.\textsuperscript{43} However, the English immediately sent a relief expedition and dispersed the attacking parties from Manathana.\textsuperscript{44}

The consultation with the \textit{Velichapadu} by the rebels and similar other rituals had a negative impact upon the colonial people. This may, as Ranajit Guha points out, may be because of their fear of the unknown power of such indigenous beliefs and rituals. It generated in them a sense of insecurity and apprehension while they were, far away from their native lands, in Asia and Africa.\textsuperscript{45} It created a sense of apathy and disheartens among them and often tended them to give up their projects in the alien nation.

The ritualistic performance of the \textit{Velichapadu} and the consultation of it had, on the contrary, a great positive impact upon the people of Malabar. They used the spirit of religion to rally the people, in and around the rebels, against the Company. It was from this spiritual justification that the rebellion of Pazhassi Raja derived much of its drive and fury. This definitely exhibits the open and public character of the rebellion. The belief in such religious rituals and its performance definitely had a role in gathering the primitive and illiterate tribals of Wayanad - the Kurichyas and Kurumbas - and others to the ranks of the rebels. Thus the consultation of the oracles served the religious purpose as well as the mobilizing of the people against English East India Company.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.} August, 1800, p.13.

\textsuperscript{45} Ranajit Guha, \textit{An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth Century Agenda and its Implications}. p. 10.
Above all the invoking of the people and appealing to them in the name of religion and by such ritualistic acts had two basic objectives for the rebels, as argued by David Arnold. Firstly, it expresses the rebel’s dissatisfaction with their subjugation and offered a means by which they hoped deliverance from the oppression. Secondly, it also served as a source to give courage and a sense of identity with their own fellowmen, a forged solidarity enabling them to fight against their materially more powerful opponent.46

The rebel chief, Pazhassi Raja, also called upon the people in the name of their deities to join his ranks to protect the country from the evils and exploitations of the Company. He appealed through his letters to the influential leaders and to the inhabitants in different centers to rally to his standard.47 In one such letter, he wrote:

If the gods of the country, perumal and Bhagavathy, influence thy mind, and if you have regard for me, and if you have regard for me, you will now manifest your friendship. It does not concern me what those enemies of mine may do or say to my prejudice, I will not change ..........let all people know that it is on the side of our religion, I stand, as we all ought to do firm.48

This tharaka (letter) of Pazhassi Raja had helped him to invoke the people against the English in Malabar. Similar letters invoking the people in the name of religion can be seen in various similar uprisings all over India. For example, in the

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47 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2610, Diary of Mr. R. Hodgson, Collector, (M.S.), p. 64.
Santhal uprising of 1855-1857, Sido and Kanhu, the rebel leaders issued orders (parwanha) announcing their decision to take up arms against the British Raj. Describing it as the Thacoor’s Parwanha, it was a sort of heavenly ultimatum communicated through the two leaders to take up arms against the government of the British in India.⁴⁹

Due to the invoking of religion and other religious exercises, the rebels gathered more strength and enthusiasm. They now began to collect revenue from the people. Since the whole Province was in turbulence, the Company found it difficult to collect the revenue from the people. So the Company issued a proclamation stating that:

Due to the present circumstances of rebellion in Kottayam, the civil functions of the Government being interrupted, especially in the interior of the country, a notice is given to the people of Kottayam district, asking them not to pay any revenue for the present year 976 M.E. (1800), but to retain it in their hands.⁵⁰

Again to cut off the rebels from obtaining the supplies of rice and other provisions of consumption, the Company passed orders for severe punishment to those persons helping the rebels with such things.⁵¹ In addition to these measures, the Company even gave notice to the general public of Malabar, forbidding them and on the most positive terms, prohibiting the inhabitants of Iruvilanad, and its adjacent

⁴⁹ See for details, Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, pp. 12ff.
regions particularly, from holding any intercourse or transacting any business with the people of Kottayam.\textsuperscript{52}

All these proclamations and notices were issued and prohibitions were made to cut off all supplies to the rebels and to undermine the social base of the rebels. But, in fact, these measures and steps initiated by the Company indicate the inability and weakness of the British system in Malabar and the widespread support extended by the people of Malabar to the rebels. The natural outcome of all these prohibitions and proclamations was that they made the life of the common people more miserable as evidenced from a letter written by one of the rebels:

\textit{………. If we compare former times, when the favour of the Gods perumal and Bhagavathi and gracious countenance of our Raja (Royal) family and right sovereign spread their happy influence over us, with the time which have come, we must bewail the difference and say it is lamentable.}\textsuperscript{53}

In order to counteract the strategies of the Company, the rebels evolved their own tactics. They resorted to looting and plundering of the Company’s stores and arsenals for weapons and ammunitions, and plundering the shops of the rich merchants for their daily necessities and provisions.\textsuperscript{54} The rebel chief, Kerala Varma, had appointed Elambulam Kunjan and other rebels of Kottayam to plunder Irikkur and more particularly the Company’s military store at that place.\textsuperscript{55} Looting and plundering the enemy’s arsenal is one of the modes of guerilla warfare, adopted by the rebels in

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 10 October, 1800 (M.S.), pp. 86-87.
\textsuperscript{55} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2610, Letter from R.Hodgson to Colonel Sartorius, 6 September, 1800, \textit{Diary of Mr. R. Hodgson, Collector} (M.S.), pp. 38-39.
similar uprisings. This provided them with arms andammunitions and at the same
time enabled them to destroy the enemy’s resources. Attacks on military outposts and
armories served in fact two functions. Not only, did they, when successful, yielded
to the rebels a rich haul of necessary arms and ammunitions, but they also were
powerful ideological stimuli. Such out posts and armories were seen as symbols of
oppression and domination and therefore attacks on them were also perceived as
attacks on the authority of the dominant class who oppressed and exploited them.
Similar perception could be seen, not surprisingly, in similar uprisings against the
English East India Company in India as well as against any foreign dominance
anywhere else in the world.56

The plundering of the bazaars, in order to secure provisions was one of the
most common strategies of guerilla warfare adopted by the insurgents. On 16th
October, 1800, the rebels had plundered entirely the Viatoor bazaar in Viatoor plain.57
It was because the colonial authorities curtailed all the means of supply and
provisions to the rebels. For example, in the Ummencherry Taraha of the Periya
Hobily, a considerable quantity of salt was laid up. The Commissioner, J. Smee,
fears that if not removed immediately, it may possibly pass into the hands of the
rebels. So he ordered the Collector of Kottayam that if the removal of the salt was not

56 See, for a detailed discussion, David Arnold, Rebellious Hillmen: The Gudem-Rampa Risings 1839-
1924, B. Reddy Prasad Reddy, ‘The Tribals in Revolt: A Study of the Rampa Uprising of 1879-
1880,’ unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, University of Hyderabad, 1987, N. Raghavendra,
‘Narasimha Reddy Rebellion of 1846’, unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, University of Hyderabad,
1986; also see, Rosalina Rios Zoniya,’ Popular Uprising and Political Culture in Zacatecas: The
Sombrerete Uprising’ (1829); see also R.P. Rana, ‘Agrarian Revolts in Northern India During the
late 17th and Early 18th Century’, The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. XVIII,
Nos. 3 and 4, pp. 287-326.

57 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2610, Translation of an ola from Kalliad Moonaman
Parbutty of Nalataraha to Collector R. Hodgson, 18 October, 1800, Diary of Mr. R. Hodgson,
Collector, (M.S.), p. 83.
conveniently practicable, it should be destroyed on the spot itself.\textsuperscript{58} Due to these and other severe measures adopted by the Company, the rebels found it difficult to get the provisions and other daily requirements. The colonial rulers, thus, created an artificial scarcity in Malabar. The scarcity thus created by the diverse measures initiated by the Company adversely affected the rebels and so they naturally turned to the plunder of bazaars for the provisions.

Another major strategy adopted by the insurgents was the kidnapping of the well to do and influential persons from various parts of the district in order to secure money from them. The Company knew that the Raja approved of the rebels coming into the district to seize and carry off the wealthy inhabitants for the purpose of extorting money and wealth for their release. For this purpose alone, the rebels detailed 500 men, who were supplied with ammunitions at Koothuparambu near Peruvayal.\textsuperscript{59} Since all other sources of income had been closed to the rebels, they had to resort to this as the only alternative possible means for their income. This was a major strategy adopted by the rebels to secure money and wealth for the organization of the rebellion. Also the money, thus, extorted from such kidnapped people was used for the subsistence of the rebels, since they were cut off from the local sources of supply by the colonial authorities.

From Wellesley, who was temporarily transferred to Ceylon, the command of Malabar, Mysore and Canara devolved upon Colonel Stevenson.\textsuperscript{60} He entered the district with more vigour and enthusiasm to suppress the rebellion. He constructed a


\textsuperscript{59} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2602, Translation of an \textit{ola} from Kunhy Pairoo of Kombarrath Hobily of Iravinad to Collector J. Wilson, 15 September, 1800, \textit{Diary of the Collector of Cotiote}, (M.S.), pp. 54-55.

\textsuperscript{60} W.J. Wilson, \textit{History of the Madras Army}, Vol. 3, Madras, 1882, pp. 28-30.
line of military centers from Edathara to Thamarasseri pass.\textsuperscript{61} The erection of such military centers helped the Company to cut off Pazhassi Raja from his followers in South Malabar. Thus the Company successfully precluded the interaction of the rebels with the people as well as the supply of provisions from the low country was blocked. Isolating the rebels from the common people and segregating them was one of the major tactics followed by the Company in Malabar. This was a significant strategic victory for the English in Malabar. Colonel Stevenson followed the policy of segregating the masses from the insurgents. He even requested the people to dissociate themselves from the hold of the rebels. He initiated a policy of disarming the masses through a proclamation.\textsuperscript{62} Thus the Company was countering the rebellion with all care and caution. This can be clearly discerned from the records of the East India Company, as one letter reads:

\begin{displayquote}
\ldots\ldots\ldots\text{operation of the army against the rebellious Pazhassi have been conducted with the greatest degree of discretion, zeal and activity, that the rebel has in consequence fled before the Company’s troops and his adherents were reduced to a small number.}\textsuperscript{63}
\end{displayquote}

In order to exploit the weakened condition of the rebels colonel Stevenson enforced another proclamation seeking to spread suspicion and division among the rebels. It was through this proclamation, he communicated to the public that the rule of the Company would be a lenient one to the inhabitants of Malabar. At the same time, the proclamation declared that the English was very keen to impress the locals with the Justice and Impartiality as the character of the British Administration;

\textsuperscript{61} T.P. Sankaranurutty Nair, \textit{A Tragic Decade in Kerala History}, p. 15.


\textsuperscript{63} TNA, \textit{Secret Dispatches to England}, 1 April, 1800, (M.S.), pp. 77-78.
Protection of Persons and Property is the Test of this system. The proclamation guaranteed the return of all property to those rebels who submitted and swore allegiance to the East India Company’s forces. At the same time the announcement was also coupled with severe punishment to the supporters of the rebels and indicated liberal rewards to the deserters from the rebel ranks.

The proclamation and threats of punishment made by the Company had no impact upon the rebels and the people. The rebels made a determined attempt to check the Company’s expedition. They launched counter attacks and ambushed the hostile columns. This forced Colonel Stevenson to withdraw to Periakulam from Irikkur and then to Lakkidikota. The rebels and the public totally disregarded the threats and proclamations of the Company and steadfastly clung to the cause of the rebel chief Pazhassi Raja. The general public even refused to help the Company to differentiate the rebels from among the ordinary people. On the other hand, they gave shelter and support to the rebels and to the Raja, and supplied them with stores of provisions. Evidently, despite of the obvious power of the Company to punish them, the peasantry continued to support the insurgents. Here we find that the general public stood for the cause of the rebels even at the cost of Company’s punishment and torturing. This extension of support to the rebels and the Raja was, because of their kinship or community or even their co-residence. Indeed, as Ranajith Guha has

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64 Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, p. 122.
66 Ibid. p. 3022.
argued, it was such primordial ties that facilitated the autonomous mobilization of the peasantry in similar uprisings.\textsuperscript{69}

Thus, as the situation was going beyond the control of the Company, Colonel Stevenson started an intense tracking down of the rebel prince Pazhassi Raja.\textsuperscript{70} The Company’s forces then advanced to Ayankana and captured large number cartridges and other ammunitions.\textsuperscript{71} But the chase was futile as the Raja escaped from Ayankana and so the troop returned to Manathana. The army now moved to Nellikhan, but before their arrival the insurgents took shelter in the Parlie Hills of Kottayam.\textsuperscript{72} The Company now employed a policy of divide and rule of the rebels in Malabar. It was in such a situation, that the Company made another proclamation granting full and unequivocal pardon to everybody involved in the recent outbreaks, except the seven rebels who were involved in it actively.\textsuperscript{73} But even then, it did not work as expected by the Company and did not secure the anticipated results. So the Company now began to enforce vigorous measures to eradicate the insurgents at all costs. They began to capture the rebels from their hideouts and decided to execute them. At Irikkur, Chattappan Nambiar and Choyan Chandoo - two active rebels of that region were put to death by the Company.\textsuperscript{74} In the open bazaar of Wayanad four active rebels, Pootillathu Roshmyn, Kallu Chama, Puthiyam Kunjappan and

\textsuperscript{69} Ranajit Guha, \textit{Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India}, p- 118.

\textsuperscript{70} TNA, \textit{Military Consultations}, Vol. 282, pp. 3139-3144.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.} pp. 3177-3178.

\textsuperscript{72} William Logan, \textit{Treaties and Engagements}, 2, 229, pp. 343-344.

\textsuperscript{73} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, \textit{Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Rajas Rebellion}, 23, July, 1801, (M.S.), pp. 17-18. The seven active rebels, who fought against the Company on the side of Pazhassi Raja, and were exempted from pardon were, Kerala Varma, Kannavath Nambiar, Chathan Nambiar, Edechena Kungan, Changotteri Chandoo, Pullyan Shanalu and Punathil Nambiar.

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Ibid}, 9 November, 1801, (M.S.), p. 93.
Kannamcherry Nambiar were captured and hanged to death by the Company publically, particularly to create apprehension among the supporters of the rebellion. Though Kerala Varma was not seized, it appeared that the rebels lost much of their influence, as they evacuated the plains and fled to the mountains. Why did the English East India Company adhere to such stringent measures against the rebels? The logic of implementing such dire punishments was the logic of terror. The basic objective of such terrorism was the intimidation of the common people and thereby to keep the people away from the rebels. The authorities of the Company obviously decided that these severe measures of punishment would force the common people to withdraw from the insurgency and lead a peaceful life and thereby they can reduce the influence of the rebels. All these stringent procedures have their impact on the Malabar society.

When we analyze such policies of the English in Malabar, one can see that the colonial authorities were following very enthusiastically the policy of extermination. They never hesitated to wipe away all those who opposed the exploitative and suppressive policy of the colonial power. The undercurrent of all these drastic measures was the annihilation of the spirit of independence and the power of resistance, so that they could more easily employ their policy, to quote the terms often used by Ranajit Guha, the ‘domination’ and ‘subordination’ to extract the maximum from the people. A number of such parallels can be seen for similar policies adopted by the Company in India against the insurgents during the colonial period. In the

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Poligar insurrections, in Tamil Nadu, Kattabomman, the Poligar of Panjalamkurichi, was executed along with many other rebels.\textsuperscript{78}

The execution of several rebel leaders and the diverse punitive measures adopted by the English in Malabar adversely affected the insurgents. In the face of this tremendous pressure from the side of the Company, the rebels had to turn back to the hills and jungles temporarily, at least for time being.\textsuperscript{79} Withdrawal from the open fields and returning to the background is one of the tactics usually followed by the rebels in the guerilla mode of warfare. Similar \textit{modus operandi} of guerilla warfare can be seen in related resistance movements in India and outside India. Mao-Tse-Tung had pointed out that he had been employing this tactics in his guerilla attacks in China as he declares:

\begin{quote}
\textcolor{gray}{\ldots when the enemy advances, we retreat, the enemy halts, we harass, the enemy tires, we attack, the enemy retreats, we pursue.\textsuperscript{80}}
\end{quote}

The retreat of the rebels from the open rebellion resulted in a lull for a short period over the country spread below the Ghats. The rebels were compelled to retreat, primarily because their number had dwindled and due to the stern and severe measures adopted by the Company in the rebellion affected region. Also they found that retreating may be a source for recouping their lost vigour and enthusiasm and thereby to gather more strength.

\textsuperscript{78} See for a discussion, \textit{South Indian Rebellion}, pp. 82 – 84.


\textsuperscript{80} For a discussion on Mao -Tse- Tung and the guerrilla warfare, see, Jerome Che’n,\textit{Mao and the Chinese Revolution}, London, 1965., pp. 150 – 151 and 160 – 163.
Meanwhile, Major Macleod was appointed as the Principal Collector of Malabar. As a first step to put down the rebellion he tried to disarm the whole district. Through a proclamation he asked the people to hand over their arms to the Company and if not he warned that the death penalty would be the punishment to the disobedient ones.\(^8\) Due to this the Company could collect as many as 2,715 muskets, 543 Nair Knives, and 1,862 swords besides some other articles from the people.\(^2\) Though the Company could collect so many weapons from the people by way of force it is an indirect indication of the popular support they had rendered to the revolt and to the rebels.

**Major Macleod’s Reforms and its Impact on the Pazhassi Revolt**

It was at this juncture, when the revolt was in a quiet period that Major Macleod brought about some administrative changes in the administration of Malabar. He was very much anxious to replenish the coffers of the Company, exhausted due to the prolonged military actions in the province. He found that the revenue collection from Malabar was too little compared to the rates prevailing in other parts of the territories of the Company. He therefore enforced a sudden enhancement of the land tax by twenty per cent of the existing rates and implemented alteration in the rates of exchange.\(^3\) The unfortunate cultivator when he paid into the treasury his assessment in *fanam*, found that a balance was still due from him owing to the introduction of the new table of exchange. Thus these administrative measures by the Company – Macleod’s August amendment – virtually pauperized the inhabitants of Malabar.

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Since the tax collection was carried out in a harsh way, they found themselves in a state of difficulty to meet their demands itself. Thus, these rash measures, together with the smoldering disaffection, again threw the Province of Malabar into the vortex of strife.84

These administrative changes introduced by Major Macleod, at a time, when the country was in commotion, helped the rebels to gather, once again, the momentum of insurrection. The leaders, who were languishing under fallen hopes, again emerged to spearhead the movement. It enabled them to mobilize all categories of people, including the tribals of Wayanad to the cause of the rebels. The great body of inhabitants and peasants took arms in support of the Raja against the Company and dispersed amongst the hills and jungles.85 They also supplied the necessary arms and ammunitions required for the insurrection. The Mappilas of Era nad and Cannanore supported the rebels and furnished weapons and other fighting materials to the rebels.86 Thus in the early part of 1803, virtually the entire province rose against the East India Company. Their response was spontaneous. They even dropped the social barriers prevalent among the communities and classes and rose up against the Company in support of the rebels.87 One major reason for this was the drastic increase in the revenue by twenty per cent by the Company. The peasants hesitated to pay the revenue. Even the tribes like the Kurichyas of Wayanad, refused to pay the rent owed to the Company. For instance, when the Company’s agent went to the hut of a Kurichya for the collection of revenue, Edachana Kungan, a rebel chief, who

84 TNA, Court of Directors, 24 August, 1804, Revenue Despatches to Madras, Vol. 1, p.534.
86 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion, (M.S.), pp.323 – 327 and 405.
happened to be there retaliated to it. The Kurichiyan refused to give revenue to the
agent of the Company. Instead he gave it to Edachena Kungan. The agent who went
for the collection of revenue was got humiliated, and tried to seize the paddy from the
Kurichya forcibly, upon which Edachena Kungan caught hold of him and
exterminated him.\textsuperscript{88} With this act of Kungan, the whole of the Kurichya tribes
identified with him and supported the rebel cause. These Kurichyas, as the Company
records puts them, are a separate race that at the call of the rebel chief, rallied behind
him within a very short span of time. The Kurichyas as the Company writings depict
them were obviously capable of acting by themselves in any serious occasion.\textsuperscript{89} Thus
we find that the diverse categories of people in Malabar supported the rebel chieftain
Pazhassi Raja and his men against the East India Company.

When the peasants were in such an agitated mood, Edachana Kungan led a
band of Kurichyas under the leadership of Talakkal Chandoo, to the English post at
Panamaram, otherwise called Panamarattakotta. They seized the fort and procured
from it 112 muskets, 6 boxes of ammunition and Rs. 6,000.\textsuperscript{90} The invaders demolished
all buildings at the Panamaram post. This supineness of the military on the spot had
its natural effect upon the people of the region and it led to the rousing of the
countryside as a whole in favour of Pazhassi Raja. Edachana Kungan caused orders
to be issued from the Pulpally \textit{Pagoda} (temple) calling the inhabitants of the country
to took up arms against the enemies.\textsuperscript{91} About 3,000 men armed with muskets,
matchlocks, bows and arrows, Nair knives and swords assembled there and took hold

\textsuperscript{88} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, \textit{Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Ibid.} pp. 323 – 327.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.} pp. 113 – 116.

\textsuperscript{91} William Logan, \textit{Malabar Manuel}, Vol.1, p. 537.
of many posts of the Company in Wayanad.92 These armed men took the post at Vallur Kavu, the well known Fish Pagoda near Mananthawady, the Motimjarra on the Karkankotta road and at Edappady. The rebels also occupied the Kottiyur Pass and blocked the Periah Pass. Thus the rebels had victory at various places and occupied the various British posts extending from Dindimal to the Fish Pagoda in Wayanad.93 Thus the peasants and the all other categories of people were very active and enthusiastic in the demolition of the Company’s posts in Malabar as they were considered as the symbols of exploitation and oppression.

The rebellion, by this time, took a mass character. The rebels descended hills and embarked upon extensive depredations in Cannanore, Makkeri, Kodoli, Anjarakandi and Tellicherry.94 The English even apprehended a rebel assault at Kozhikkode as the imprisoned insurgents at this place, made an attempt to occupy the prison and many of them were assisted by armed parties and affected their escape in February 1803.95 The people of Payyoormala began to express their solidarity and support openly to the rebels. The insurgents now advanced to Randatara, demolished the cutcherry in Thamarassery, infested Payyaoormala and established themselves in Koothparambu.96 In Kurumbranad the rebels became daring enough to fight openly against the Company and its men. The Company, found the situation uncontrollable


94 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion, November, 1805, (M.S.), pp.409 – 410.


and so it was forced to declare martial law in Wayanad. But the people disregarded
the imposition of martial law and they continued with their rebellious activities
leading the entire district into total rebellion. The Company wanted, at any cost, to
suppress the rebellion. It took all possible measures to put down the resistance. So it
ordered for the destruction of the crops in Wayanad. The destruction of the crops was
basically intended to extinguish the supplies to the rebels and their followers. The
prudence of the Company in executing such rash and cruel methods for the
suppression of the rebels has to be doubted and questioned. It indirectly increased the
support and popularity of the rebel chiefs and his followers in Malabar.

It was at this juncture that the rebels moved to the Company’s jail at Calicut,
to seize it and free the imprisoned insurgents in the prison. They made a surprise
attack on the guards of the jail and affected the escape of the prisoners. All most all
the prisoners in the jail escaped. But the sudden arrival of the Company’s forces
under Major Howden frustrated the rebels and their motives. The Company’s forces
shot down about forty prisoners and thirty eight prisoners were recaptured. But a
good number of the imprisoned escaped by running away. The rebels considered the
attacking of the prison as the negation and inversion of the colonial authority. The
prison, according to the rebels, was an object of pillage, destruction and arson. It was
the symbol of colonial oppression and persecution. Hence in every such uprising, we
could see the rebels attacking jails and liberating the prisoners. For example in the
Birasaite revolt, the rebels stormed the police station at Khunti and released many of

99 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, *Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s
the rebels in the station.\textsuperscript{101} Even in the rebellion of 1857 in Allahabad, there occurred similar incidences where the insurgents plundered and looted the police station and freed the prisoners.\textsuperscript{102} Similar incidents can be seen in the Kol and Santhal insurrections where they never lag behind in similar activities.\textsuperscript{103} In short the idea behind the wrecking of prisons and police stations was to destroy the colonial insignias of exploitation and oppression. The rebels regarded them as instruments of colonial appropriation.

Major Macleod, who found himself a failure in suppressing the rebellion, resigned from the office of Collectorship.\textsuperscript{104} Robert Rickards who succeeded him rescinded the innovations; made by his predecessor, but coupled it with the gesture of conciliation, along with a policy of coercion.\textsuperscript{105} He employed parties for the total destruction of crops in Malabar region and commenced the campaign against the insurgents on a major scale. In order to pacify the people he announced his willingness to restore the status quo which existed prior to the Collectorship of Major Macleod in Malabar.\textsuperscript{106} As a first step he annulled the administrative reforms introduced by Macleod. He held a conference with the principal landlords and chieftains of Malabar to discuss the revenue affairs in Malabar.\textsuperscript{107} After long consultations and discussions, certain agreements were reached upon the assessing of the land and the revenue collections. This agreement was accepted by all and it was


\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.} p. 25.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Ibid.} pp. 139-140.


\textsuperscript{105} TNA, Court of Directors, 24 August, 18004, \textit{Revenue Despatches to Madras}, Vol. 2, pp.399-401.


\textsuperscript{107} Thomas Warden, \textit{Report on the Revenue System in Malabar}, (M.S.), Para. 28.
made known to the inhabitants of Malabar in 1805. The introduction of this new settlement enabled the Company to put down the rebellion shortly.

The pacificatory measures of the East India Company helped to blunt the edge of the militancy of the rebels to certain extent. Even then, the rebels attacked and devastated the Company’s, pepper plantation at Anjarakandy. The Company’s forces posted in the estate were ambushed by the rebel armies and destroyed the pepper vines. The devastation of estates and the crops was one of the symbols of the demolition of the authority and power of the enemy. In all most all such movements, the rebels followed similar strategies in different parts of the country. For example, in the Santhal uprising and in the Kol insurrection the rebels did the same thing. They attacked the plantations of the Company and devastated them. In such instances, we perceive the recognition of the rebels that the colonial establishment had both a political and an economic aspect. Politically, the colonial intruders had established their political dominance over the Indians. At the same time the Company was constantly exploiting the wealth of the people. It was this recognition that prompted the rebels all over India, at the time of anti-colonial uprisings, to turn against the East India Company’s properties to loot, plunder and even to destroy them.

The rebellion by this time had spread even to the coastal areas of Malabar. In order to safeguard the European settlements in the coastal areas, the Company had to

109 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion, (M.S.), pp. 221-222.
110 Anjarakandy in North Malabar was the earliest spice plantation started by the East India Company in Malabar in 1798, under the leadership of Mr. Murdoch Brown, a servant of the Company.
111 Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, pp. 143-145.
deploy its troops there. So Colonel Motresor, the officer in command in Malabar had requested the Madras Government to send fresh reinforcement of 5,000 armed troops to Malabar. But the Company’s administration at Madras was not in a position to comply with the request made by the Malabar authorities. Meanwhile the Company’s forces in Malabar became weak and inefficient, particularly in the fever-stricken district of Wayanad. So in the course of time the forces of the East India Company were to be relieved and fresh reinforcements were to be made. The Company therefore, in addition to the regular troops, recruited a body of 1,200 local men called Kolkars. The Kolkars literally meant only a police force recruited from the people of the locality. It was Captain Watson who recruited them and trained them in the western warfare and organized them into an effective body of force. The Kolkars recruited from different parts of Malabar, especially from Tellicherry and its surrounding areas, had rendered the most conspicuous services in dealing with the small parties of rebels who infested the country and laid waste of the property of all peaceably disposed persons.

The Kolkars, since they were the natives of the region, were of great help to the Company in waging war against the insurgents in Wayanad. They knew the geography of the locality in detail and hence they could easily move through the thick jungles of Wayanad. But it is interesting to observe that at times, these forces misguided the English militia, engaged in the search or skirmish of the rebels, to the wrong direction. In another instance, one of the rebel chieftains, Erumbalen Chandoo,

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112 W. J. Wilson, *History of Madras Army*, p. 46.
threatened the **Kolkars** who were deployed in search of the rebels in Wayanad, as reported by the official of the East India Company in North Malabar that:

……. Unless they immediately submit their muskets to him, he will make them pay individually a fine of Rs.20 for each musket and in apprehension of the consequences of obedience to Chandoo’s orders, has induced several of them to go to their houses and an inclination on the others to follow their examples.\(^{115}\)

Due to this threat from rebels and their inclination towards the insurgents, prompted them even to run away from the service of the East India Company as **Kolkars**. All these clearly demonstrate that the people of Malabar, even if they were under the service of the Company, their mind and body was with their rebel chief, Pazhassi Raja. They tried to render all types of helps and support to the rebels at any time. It was because of this support of the people of the locale, that rebels could persist their rebellion for such a prolonged period. The very fact that a number of people supported the rebellion is evidenced from the Company’s own records itself. For example, from the Northern Division of Malabar itself 62 **Kolkars** escaped from their service and 12 **Kolkars** under the service of Lieutenant Sykes took away their muskets and joined the side of the rebels.\(^{116}\)

Meanwhile, by the beginning of 1804, Mr. Rickards was succeeded by Mr. Thomas Warden as the Principal Collector of Malabar.\(^{117}\) He appointed Thomas

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\(^{115}\) Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, Letter from the assistant in charge of Northern Division of Malabar to the Collector of Malabar, 21 February, 1804, *Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion*, (M.S.), pp. 255-260.


Harvey Baber an officer of exceptional energy, as his Sub-Collector in charge of North Malabar, with specific instructions to suppress the rebellion of Pazhassi Raja. From the very beginning of his appointment, Baber was trying to ascertain each and every movement of Pazhassi Raja and his followers. Baber, as a first step implemented measures to cut off the passage of provisions to the rebels. His enquiries found that there was a considerable intercourse and trade was going on between the rebels and the inhabitants of the Mappila villages, which were under the protection and jurisdiction of the Company. He knew that the rebels got their ammunitions from the local traders and business people. He in his inspection found that the Mappilas of Irikkur, Kallayi and Venkat were supplying ammunitions and arms to the rebels in exchange of pepper. The coastal merchants also lent their support to the rebels by supplying them with a steady delivery of provisions and arms. Thus we observe that different categories of people in the Malabar society supported the rebel chief Pazhassi Raja and his compatriots.

Why the Mappilas did provide a helping hand to the rebels of Malabar and what prompted them to turn against the English East India Company? The Mappila Muslims of Malabar thought of extinguishing the English from the Coast of Malabar so that they could regain their lost control over the trade on the products of Malabar. The Mappilas, by profession and tradition were a class of merchants from long time ago. When the Europeans came to Malabar and occupied it, the commercial and the mercantile interests of the Mappilas were adversely affected. They lost their hold in

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118 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion, (M.S.), p.237.

119 Ibid. PP. 239-241

Malabar trade. The East India Company monopolized all the rights of trade in Malabar. This naturally created an antagonism between the English and the Mappilas. So the Mappilas sought the eviction of the Company and its men from the Malabar Coast. It was for this end that the Mappilas have rendered their support to the rebels and supplied them regularly with provisions and ammunitions. Also, they found that during the time of commotions, they could make enormous profit through the trade, particularly when the supply of products were limited or controlled by some external agencies or forces.

The basic objective of Baber in Malabar was to thwart the uninterrupted supply of provisions to the rebels from the local people. He tried to restrict the illegal transportation of pepper and other articles of consumption in Kottayam and the surrounding region. For this purpose he had introduced a new system of passport.\textsuperscript{121} The license for the export of goods was only given out to a very limited number of people and he appointed officers to check the various transportation routes in the region very strictly.\textsuperscript{122} The Company also entrusted the people of each locality with the responsibility of passing the details and information about insurgents to the authorities of the Company. The purport of such a measure was to put off the people from co-operating with the rebels and declared that it was the duty of the people of the respective region to maintain peace and order in their locality. This was in a way, a policy of dividing and ruling the people, a policy that was adopted by the Company, throughout their carrier in India for their survival and existence. The outcome of such stringent measures was that by April 1804, there was no longer any sign of concrete


\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Ibid.}
All these measures, along with the employment of Kolkars, enabled the Company to free the plains from the rebels and their influence. This forced the rebels to get back into the jungles of Wayanad and to adhere to the rebellion from there. The re-enforced Madras army under Colonel Macleod pursued them into the thick forests of Wayanad. He was entrusted with powers to try by summary process under the martial law and even to carry out sentences of death without reference to the Government. The detachments were sent to every nook and corner of the country in pursuit of the rebels and redoubts were constructed at Vellaud in the North Wayanad and at Koiladdy and Kunnyote in the South Wayanad. The troops marched into every part of the district and dispersed the rebels. These vigorous and stringent activities of the troops of the Company resulted in the apprehension of many rebels like Kolliyad Nambiar, Kolangarata Koman and Aaddapy Kannan.

When the Company was making definite progress in suppressing the revolt, it made another proclamation on 24 May, 1805. It was intended against the harbouring of the rebels in Wayanad or assisting them by supplying provisions, arms and ammunitions. Through this policy, the Company was able to collect 2,715 muskets, 543 Nair knives and 1862 swords apart from a number of other articles. Even when the rebel influence was dwindling in different regions, there were a

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123 Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, p. 124.
124 W. J. Wilson, *History of Madras Army*, p. 147
126 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, *Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion*, (M. S.), pp. 303-304.
number of supporters to the rebel cause in Malabar and more particularly in the Wayanad region. This secret support rendered by the people of Malabar is evidenced from the procured weapons and other war materials. But by these measures and proceedings introduced by Company, it was able to restore the confidence of the people in most of the rebellious tracts and undermined the influence of the rebel leaders by representing them in the worst light as the enemies of the society.\textsuperscript{128} Along with these preventive measures, the Company made another proclamation on 16 June, 1805, offering rewards for the apprehension of the rebel chief and several other leaders who kept the district in a constant state of tumult, regardless of the warning of the East India Company and its authorities in Malabar.\textsuperscript{129}

In such a situation, the rebels found it hard to continue their resistance against the English in Wayanad. So they held a conference at Wayanad to plan for their future operations against enemies. The conference held at Wayanad tried to restore the lost vigour and enthusiasm of the rebels and their supporters. Inspired by this assemblage, the rebels with great enthusiasm attacked the English post at Churikunjee in Waynad.\textsuperscript{130} The attack was affected by the Kurumba tribe of Wayanad, who


\textsuperscript{129} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, \textit{Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion}, (M.S.), PP. 335-337. The East India Company had announced rewards for the apprehension of the following rebels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rewards in Pagoda</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kerala Varma</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Veera Varma</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ravi Varma</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Pullor Emmen</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Edachena Kungan</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Pullor Rayarappan</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Edachena Othenan</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Edachena Komappan</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Edechena Eman</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Karveyallari Kannan</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Yogimoola Machen</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ittykombattu Kelappan Nambiar</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{One Pagoda} = Rs. 3.50/-
persistently supported Pazhassi Raja in the revolt against the English. In similar uprisings, as we find elsewhere in India, the sequence of assembling, conferencing, planning and attacking, was the often resorted strategy by the insurgents. In the initial meetings the leaders of the insurgent community assembled and formulated their course of action and prepared the masses to face the forthcoming hostilities. Similar instances can be seen in the revolt of Tit Mir in the Muda, Kol and Santhal insurrections against the East India Company.

In the conference, the rebel chief Pazhassi Raja and his followers decided to stir up the people against the Company, even in their destabilized situation. So they detached small groups of people to various parts of the country with the mission of rousing the people. Edachena Komappan and Karatte Kannan, with some Kurichya followers and Karveryallari Kannan with a group of other rebels were deputed to the Northern and Western divisions of the country by the rebel leaders. This, once again is a universally adopted guerilla tactics by the insurgents in any anti-colonial rebellions. These rebels divided up their forces into small units so as to preserve their strength and moved these detachments into different parts of Wayanad to arouse the masses against the English East India Company. This was the method followed by Mao-Tse-Tung in his guerilla warfare during the Chinese Revolution. With the dispersal of various groups into different parts of country, three of the principal Nairs of Nalloornad, nearly the whole of the Kurichya and Kurumba tribes of Wayanad and

133 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No2636, *Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion*, (M.S.), pp.409-432.
some of the untrained Kolkars joined into the rebel side.\textsuperscript{135} But these attempts made by the revolutionaries could not reach up to the expectations of the rebel leaders.

Threatened with discomfiture, Edathara Kunjan, sent a rebel party to the Northern region of Malabar and a second column to the Western region in order to reorganize the defenses. They carried with them the \textit{niyogam} or address from the Murikanmar or the tutelary deities of Wayanad.\textsuperscript{136} The outcome was that more inhabitants of Wayanad joined the side of rebellion. The Kurichiyas, who had already made their submission, again embroiled and rose up against the Company according to the injunctions contained in the \textit{niyogam}. Even though there were many people who rose up against the Company, they could not withstand against the well equipped and well trained forces of the East India Company. Moreover, the introduction of trade restrictions caused difficulties in getting supplies to the rebels and they rarely received any extra supplies. By now most of the rebels were sprinkled and it became difficult for them to exchange any information among the scattered insurgents. All these enabled the Company to lead a successful expedition against the insurgents in Wayanad.

By the end of October 1805, the rebels had been defeated at various places. During the depredation at Kakki ketti, the Kurichya leader Thalackal Chandoo, who had led the attack on Panamaram post of the East India Company, was taken as a prisoner.\textsuperscript{137} The capture of Chandoo was a great shock to the rebels. It was a setback to the insurgents as he was the one who organized and mobilized the tribals of

\textsuperscript{135} Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion, (M.S.), pp.409-432.


\textsuperscript{137} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636 \textit{Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Rebellion}, (M.S.), pp.430-432.
Waynad against the English East India Company. Meanwhile the rebels, who were reduced to small numbers moved to Pulppally and from there to the borders of Mysore. A small detachment under Captain Baber and Captain Claphom went in search of Pazhassi Raja and his adherents to Pulppally. After a tedious journey of fifteen hours, the forces had come up with Kerala Varma and few followers on the bank of river Kanguara, very close to the border of Mysore. After a small resistance, the rebels were routed and the principal rebel Chief Kerala Varma and a proscribed rebel leader Aralat Kutty Nambiar along with a few others were killed in the engagement that followed. In another attack at Pulinjal rebel, leaders like Edathara Yemoo, Palloor Rayarappan and Tondara Velappan lost their lives. Edachana Kungan, who was sick at this time, despairing of being able to evade capture by the people of the Company, committed suicide. Even Palloor Emmen Nair, who had at one time been a loyal friend of Wellesley, was captured and deported to the Prince of Wales Island in 1806 along with few other rebels. Zamoothiri, who gave shelter to the two junior princes of the Pazhassi Kovilakam was captured and sent as a prisoner to Dindigal, where they died later. The properties of the rebels were seized and confiscated by the Company.

Regarding the date of the death of the rebel Chief Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja, the report of the East India Company presents two different versions. Captain Baber, when he reported from the camp at Pulppally, on 30 November 1805,

139 Ibid. p. 433.
140 Ibid. 10 March, 1806, pp. 453-475.
141 W. J. Wilson, History of Madras Army, Vol. 3, p.149.
stated that the Raja was killed before the noon of 30 November 1805. However in his report to the principal Collector on 31 December 1805, it has been stated that the death occurred before the noon of 1 December 1805. The proclamation of the principal Collector about the death of the rebel chief on 8 December 1805 has stated the latter date. How such an error has occurred on the death of such a great rebel remains even today as a question? It has been commonly believed by the people Malabar that the death of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja was on the 30 November 1805. Certain writers like Pallippattu Kunjikrishna Menon, Kappana Krishna Menon and N. Gopinatha Menon also support the view that the death occurred on the 30 of November. The English author, W.J. Wilson also accepts this date as the day on which the death of Pazhassi Raja happened. The Pazhassi Foundation and Research Centre situated at Mananthawady, in the Wayanad district, celebrates the death anniversary of this great hero on 30 November, every year. Above all the inscription on the grave stone of Pazhassi Raja reads like this “Veera Kerala Varma Pazhassi Rajan evide antyavisramam kollunnu, Mananthawady 1805, November 30. It is translated as Veera Kerala Pazhassi Raja found here his last resting place, Mananthawady, 30.11.1805. Therefore, it would seem that the most probable date on

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143 Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636 Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Raja’s Rebellion, (M.S.), pp.433-434.


146 Pallippattu Kunjikrishna Menon, Mahacharitha Samgraham, Kottayam,1975, p465ff; Kappana Krishna Menon, Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja, (a play on the life of Pazhassi Raja); N. Gopinatha Menon, Mahacharithamala, Kottayam, 1985,pp.41-72.


148 It is a centre instituted by the Kerala State Archives Department in 1989.
which the Raja had died is 30 November 1805 as Captain Baber reported from the camp at Pulpally in Wayanad.\footnote{149}

The local tradition and belief of Malabar goes against all these arguments and tells an entirely different version of the story. According to this, the Raja had died after swallowing the diamond of his ring, for he wanted to avoid the humiliation of being captured alive by the British.\footnote{150} The same version has been followed by Sardar K.M. Panikkar also.\footnote{151} A second legend goes that he took his own life with the golden dagger, that he used to carry with him always, after realizing that it was impossible for him to escape.\footnote{152} It is against all these popular belief that the British boast themselves that they had killed Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and crushed the resistance. The question here is regarding the veracity of the folklore. Often, the ordinary folks do not like to believe that the popular heroes, like Pazhassi Raja, had been killed by their opponents. It is something unacceptable to the common folk during those days. Therefore they created stories about their heroes that they are beyond death or that they are superhuman beings. In the case of Pazhassi Raja also, we find that the legend of his invincibility followed him even after his death.

The death of Pazhassi Raja and his allies completely extinguished the Pazhassi rebellions, leaving the path open to the uninhibited exploitation of the region by the English East India Company. The suppression of the rebellion did not perhaps mean

\footnote{149} Malabar Collectorate Records, KRA, No 2636, \textit{Correspondence Relating to Pazhassi Rebellion}, (M.S.), pp.433-434.


\footnote{151} K. M. Panikkar, \textit{KeralaSimham}, Trichur, 1955.

\footnote{152} Margret Frenz, \textit{From Contact to Conquest}, p.125.
the extinction of the rebellious tradition of Malabar and its people, for the years to come were to witness many uprisings against all oppressions in the region.

It is interesting here to look into the motivation of the two rulers of Malabar, Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and Veera Kerala Varma of Kurumbranad, to behave in a diametrically opposite way against the English East India Company, at the beginning of their career in Malabar. Pazhassi Raja believed firmly that Kottayam and Wayanad belonged to him and he had the sovereign right over it. Also he was sure that it was his duty and obligation to look after his subjects and their wealth. So he regarded that the relinquishing of the sovereignty in these regions meant the relinquishing of the responsibility of Governmental affairs in Kottayam and Wayanad and it would be the neglect of his duty as a ruler. Pazhassi Raja was not prepared to give up these rights and so did all his best to maintain the power and the territory. Once all the attempts and diplomacy failed, he was forced to take up arms against the Company. So he was compelled to wage war against the English from 1796 to 1805. It was only after a massive attack that the Company could defeat Pazhassi and consolidate their power in the region. If Pazhassi was not defeated, it would have been impossible for the East India Company to consolidate their power and the establishment of their political supremacy in Malabar.

At the same time Veera Varma of Kurumbranad followed an opposite strategy pursued by Pazhassi Raja. He was one of the first rulers in Malabar region to enter into agreement with the English East India Company. His motive behind all these was to maintain his authority and power in his realm at any cost. He was concerned only about his material benefits and not of his subjects. He had no commitment to his subjects. This makes the basic difference between the two rulers of Malabar. Veera Varma always tried to portray Pazhassi Raja as a rebel, who could not be controlled
by anybody; Veera Varma was expecting that the English would support him and thereby possess the political power in the territories of Pazhassi Raja also. So Veera Varma was concerned about his personal gain and was guided by his self interest.

From the analysis of these two rulers regarding their claims over rulership and territory in Malabar, it is understood that the various rulers of Malabar took different stand against the East India Company and its men, when the Company was consolidating its political dominance in Malabar. It was this difference of opinion among the rulers of Malabar enabled the English East India Company an easy foothold in this region and established their power. The policy of opposition followed by Pazhassi Raja and the policy of friendship and cooperation by other rulers clearly depict the attitude of the Indian rulers towards the Company. It was through these vigourous and stringent measures that the Company rooted herself in an alien land like India and it ultimately led to the rise of anti-colonial sentiments and feelings against them in course of time.