CHAPTER 3

MAPPING

THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF KERALA
It is really an enigmatic task to interrogate the signboards of Kerala culture in the poems written in English, for the reasons already stated. Mapping the Kerala history, with an intentional stress on its cultural and social changes brought about in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may work as a helpful preface. Much space or time is not wasted on pre-colonial Kerala since the poets under study belong to the post-independence era. I think an exhaustive exploration of Kerala history may suit a different context. Still, maximum care is taken not to omit whatever seems to be relevant to the topic.

Though the pre-history of Kerala is a *terra incognita*, the megalithic culture of the land is an undisputed fact. The main problems associated with the historiography of Kerala are the lack of evidence and the confusion regarding the interpretation of the available evidence on ancient Kerala. It is the scattered or fragmentary nature of evidence that poses problems in presenting a framework for categorizing political, social and economic relations. However, history writing in Kerala is becoming more active and various research works are giving new insights and interpretations. Free, objective enquiry into these interpretations rather than negative predispositions would be helpful in integrating the available sources.
Trade with foreign countries has always played a crucial role in transforming the feudal to the capitalist mode of production everywhere. Kerala was no exception to this. As the legendary land of spices, Kerala had a charisma of its own to the foreign world and these commercial relations led in course of time to the establishment of extensive cultural contacts with the foreign countries. The first European power to come into direct contact with the Malabar Coast is considered to be the Portuguese since they discovered the sea route to India. By the time the Portuguese landed on the Malabar Coast, the political authority in Kerala was much fragmented with more than thirty rulers, “big and small of whom some were called Swarupam” (Sudhakaran 228). There were regular feuds among these ruling families that took out the economic resources of these chiefs with no scope of territorial expansion and consolidation. The tactics of the Portuguese worked well in this typical feudal scene and they exploited the inherent weakness of the political system. Their interests were commercial and religious, “pepper and Christians” (230) and politics was only incidental. The Samutiris' emerged to be the most powerful rulers in Kerala towards the close of the fifteenth century and were immensely aided by the Muslim merchants--the local Mappilas. For a long time, they were the brokers at the Kozhikode port. The Portuguese had a long history of hating the Muslims and thinking that the Samutiris were Christians, they appealed to the Samutiri to oust the Muslim traders from Kozhikode immediately. While many other “chiefs such as

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1 Samutiris: Zamorins, ‘Naduvazhis’ or the local rulers of Calicut. Kunjhalli Marakars were strong supporters of them.
Perumpatappu, Purakkad, Kollam and Kolathiri made much headway” (230), the Samutiris decided to stand by their proven allies who were almost a spent force, and consequently lagged behind. Here, a process of change got initiated which transformed the culture of Kerala, including its traditional features of polity, economy and society. In the political field, there was a realignment of relations with the fall of the hitherto powerful Samutiris and the rise of many other ruling families. The prolonged influence of the caste system in Kerala society witnessed changes with the arrival of the Portuguese.

The beginnings of Western influence on Malayalam literature may be said to have commenced with the Portuguese period. In this context, it is impertinent not to mention Arnos Patiri, the German missionary, who came to Kerala in 1669, for he contributed a Grammar and a Dictionary to Malayalam. Interestingly, the first Malayalam book on Kerala history, viz. “Kerala Pazhama” was written by a foreigner--Gundert.

The name "Malayalam" as applied to the language of the people of Kerala is of relatively recent origin. According to some etymologists, the first component of the word, viz. "mala" means hill or mountain, and "alam" could mean land or place. This would make Malayalam “a land abounding in hills”, which means the same as “Malabar” or “Malanadu” (Menon 211). There is a difference of opinion among the etymologists regarding the second component of the word, viz. "alam", as whether it is identical with "azham" meaning “sea” or “deep”, which would make Malayala Nadu the land lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. In any case, it is an
accepted fact that among the four Dravidian languages, Malayalam evolved at a later stage and though with its impressive record of literary output, there exists a regular and acute controversy regarding the origin of the language. In the story of cultural synthesis, the synthesis of Dravidian and Aryan cultures and the rise and fall of religions like Jainism and Buddhism in ancient Kerala is of particular interest as part of cultural studies. At the same time, with the earlier mentioned commercial contacts with foreign countries, “world religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam were also introduced in the land, and they helped considerably in shaping the composite culture of the land” (Menon 10). Following their Dravidian way of life, people with all these religious faiths co-existed side by side and got interwoven into the main fabric of Kerala society. However, the story of the rise of Hinduism in Kerala and its relationship with other religions prevalent in the Kerala society deserves special attention.

The Hindu Reform Movement originated in Kerala and gradually gathered momentum in the eighth century, whereby the Hindu scholars established the hold of Hinduism among the people which foreshadowed the decline of Buddhism and Jainism in Keralam. Among these scholars, the teachings of Sankaracharya (AD 788-820) purified Hinduism of its irrational customs and his system of “Advaita Vedanta” (the oneness of the individual soul with the “Brahman”- the all-pervading cosmic force – with its roots in “Upanishads”) has actually sown the seeds of mysticism in the later poets of Malayalam literature. Sankara’s advocacy of extreme monism and his
repudiation of all semblance of duality have laid the foundations of the attempts at cultural synthesis. It may not be wrong to assume that this intellectual giant steered his movements of Hindu Reformation for the upsurge of national identity and awakening. While the teachings of Sankara appealed only to the intelligentsia, and not to the common masses, a new Bhakti school evolved in the ninth century. The new wave of religious enthusiasm generated among the masses by this Bhakti cult gave the coup de grace to Jainism and Buddhism in Kerala. Hinduism in Kerala, with its assimilation of Aryan and Dravidian ideas had a specifically non-Aryan practice of Naga worship involved in it. As Menon observes: “The very concept of ‘Ananathasayanam’, i.e. Vishnu reclining on the Serpent King, Ananta, bears evidence to the wide influence exercised by Naga worship, so popular in Kerala, in the moulding of the Hindu religion” (17). Similarly, the Dravidian custom of ancestor worship also came to be accepted as part of Hindu religious practices. Apart from these, the various hill tribes practiced a religion with a strange mixture of animism, black magic and crude polytheism.

Kerala society remained fundamentally static for around 700 years until the missionaries stepped in with their sweeping ideas of equality and fraternity. In the pre-colonial or pre-British Kerala, “Brahmins were supposed to dwell at the pinnacle of ‘Chathurvarnya’ or ‘Caste system’” (Gopalakrishnan 220). In other words, the caste system had its origin in
Kerala way back in the eighth century. when the influx of the Aryan immigrants reached its peak. The rigid caste system was promulgated by none other than the educated Brahmins who had advantage on winning over the ignorant, poor and polluted “untouchables”. The Chola-Chera war of the eleventh century led to the total mobilization of the resources of the state with resultant collapse of the existing socio-economic order. Due to the preoccupation of large sections of society with the conduct of the war, those Namboothiris who were trustees (*Uralar*) of the temples mismanaged the temple properties and misappropriated for themselves all the revenues from there. Meanwhile, many ordinary tenants had to transfer their lands and properties *in toto* to the Namboothiris to enjoy freedom from devastation by the enemy forces in times of war. Circumstantially, these Namboothiri Brahmins acquired the status of wealthy and powerful landlords or *Janmis* and enjoyed primacy in social and religious matters being the apex of the caste hierarchy. But they amounted probably only to one percentage of the population of Travancore. They were patrilineal and practiced primogeniture with a view of preventing the fragmentation of their family estates. Only the eldest son in a Namboothiri family married formally in his own caste. All others “visited” the Nair women and the children of such unions were Nairs and were not permitted to touch their fathers. On the other hand, only a few *Malayali* Brahmin women were allowed to marry, while all others were expected to live as spinsters and die virgins.
Then came a few thousand Kshathriyas in the hierarchy of ritual status who constituted the ruling class and were kept by the Namboothiris under their effective control. The next ring of the ladder was formed of Nairs who accounted for 20 to 25% of the population and were recognized as Sudras, inferior in ritual status to the former ones, but enjoyed power and privileges and in some cases, even executive power. "They were a martial class and being famous for their fidelity, were employed by the Portuguese as ‘Changatam’--suicide squads--for protecting their lives and properties" (Menon 270). But, the King of Satire in Malayalam literature--Kunjan Nambiar, who satirized most of the groups in Kerala, gave a vigorous trouncing to the Nair-soldiers in his very popular “Thullal Poems”. All the sub castes or lineages among the Nairs followed the matrilineal marumakkathayam system of inheritance, based on the matrilocal joint-family called the Tharawad. The system was matrilineal, not matriarchal. The tharawad was a joint family consisting of all the descendents of a common ancestress, including the mother, and all her children, all grandchildren by the daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendents on the sister’s side and enjoyed a common kitchen and shared a common property. The children of a male member had no rights within his own tharawad, since they belonged to his wife’s family. The eldest male member of the family, called Karanavar was vested with the right of managing the family property. Yet, the assets were held in common by all members, and no individual could
claim his share of the joint property. Marriages were contracted and ended without many formalities. Somebody interested in a Nair woman would "negotiate with" her Karanavar, obtain “the woman’s agreement and present her with a cloth” (Jeffrey 15) which was called Sambandham. A woman could have sambandham with as many men at the same time. Anyway, they took pride in welcoming Malayali Brahmins as their “evening visitors”.

The “Tiyyas” or “Ezhavas”, the largest single category among the polluting castes, amounting to about 15% of the total population of Travancore came under the Nairs in the hierarchy, and had toddy tapping as their main occupation. They were forbidden the dignity of an umbrella or shoulder cloth (as the Nairs used), and their women were prohibited from covering their breasts and from wearing certain jewellery. Ezhavas of the north Travancore followed the matrilineal system, but there were no grand houses, unwieldy Tharawads or large areas of ancestral property like the Nairs had. In the areas south of Quilon, however, a mixed system of inheritance was followed. “The girl lived with her husband, and she and her children were entitled to half of his self-acquired property on his death, the other half passing to his nephews. When the matrilineal system became burdensome, Iravas had little difficulty in casting it aside” (21).

The "slave castes" like “Pulayas”, “Parayas” and “Kuravas” formed the base of this ignominious pyramid, amounting to 13% of the population and were denied access to the temples, schools and places of public resort. They
were the most oppressed and the most despised. They carried out all the arduous agricultural labour, in return for which they received food. The Government or Sirkar “owned” many of these slaves and “leased” to private land-holders. “Disobedient slaves could be beaten and murdered with impunity, and all slaves could be legally sold” (24).

In Kerala, pollution was considered to be transmitted not only by touch, but also from a distance. The varying degrees of distance defined their position in the caste and social hierarchy.

…a Nair may approach but not touch a Nambudiri Brahmin; a Chogan Irava must remain thirty-six paces off, and a Poolayen slave ninety-steps distant. A Chogan must remain twelve steps away from a Nair, and a Poolayen sixty-six steps off, and a Pariar some distance farther still. (9)

There were caste-barriers as well as sub-caste-barriers which stood in the way of social mobility. It has ironically been observed: “Old Kerala was a place of boundaries and constraints – boundaries on where particular people might go; constraints on what they might do” (19).

The traditional view propagated by the Brahmin aristocracy is that Marumakkathayam or matrilineal system is of hoary antiquity in Kerala. Nairs, some families of Kshathriyas, Ezhavas and Muslims followed this system which was marked by inheritance and succession from a common ancestor in a female line. While the replacement of matrilineal system by
patrilineal monogamous household was a sort of retrogression for the Kerala women, because even in the matrilineal system, quite often, the Karanavar turned out to be a patriarch! In short, Kerala women were incarcerated within "some system" always which made them rebellious and submissive at the same time.

Kerala enjoyed the privilege of being the most literate province in the country and it was the Christian missionaries who did the spade work in the field of education in Kerala. They were the pioneers of female education in Kerala. They brought in the educational system with its introduction of schools and examinations, disseminating western values, re-orienting and often replacing the eastern ones. This modern educational system obliterated the indigenous one, and acquired a relative autonomy, the status of the only educational system possible. There is considerable evidence that Kerala possessed an indigenous educational system during the eighteenth century. No cultural study on Kerala would be complete without highlighting the eclipse of its indigenous education, with the inception of new educational system with its great emphasis on reason, "enlightenment" and "English literacy". In the last half of the nineteenth century, Kerala society witnessed a movement from "inherited" to "acquired", from “hierarchy dependent on castes” to “individual competence" and from "traditional authority" to "pedagogic authority", which ultimately led to modern "bureaucracy". The missionaries played a crucial role in disintegrating the caste-defined, pre-
colonial social order in Kerala, though their original, concealed aim was proselytization.

Malayalam language as the mode of communication in Kerala was already well developed and written Malayalam was also being used in pre-colonial Kerala. A number of written works in architecture, astrology, medicine, agriculture, social manners, besides a number of literary works were being composed and written in Malayalam language at least from the fifteenth century.

During a major part of the middle ages, production and dissemination of the literate knowledge in Kerala was in the Brahminic-Sanskrit tradition. Literate Malayalam functioned as an unavoidable adjunct to Sanskrit. Thus after the initial reading and writing in Malayalam attention shifted to Sanskrit. “At the end of this course, the learner was expected to acquire a thorough grounding in Sanskrit, along with a working knowledge in Malayalam. Brahmanas, Naduvali families (Samanta Kshatriyas) and Savarna temple castes were given this kind of education” (Ganesh 156).

Written Malayalam was taught to other non-Brahminic groups. But literate knowledge was not very important and the emphasis was on the transmission of oral and technical knowledge. Military groups such as Nairs, other occupational caste groups such as “Kammalar” (artisans), Ezhavar and agricultural castes had their education in their respective occupations, either at their home with their parents or with their masters.
The basic texts for many occupation-based knowledge systems in Malayalam became essential for groups such as “Tachan”, “Kaniyar” and “Vaidyar” and hence literacy became essential, in order to be proficient in their professions. Officials connected with Naduvazhi houses (swarupams), heads of Nair and Nambuthiris households had to be literate as they had to execute documents and maintain accounts. “They got their education in Ezhuthupallis under Nattezhuthassans or Asans who taught them reading, writing and Arithmetic” (158).

The curriculum for pre-colonial education centres represented the popular savarna culture of medieval Kerala. Education normally started at varying ages from five to seven, normally with Vidyarambham on Vijayadasami day. The parent took the child to the nearby Ezhuthupally, where the teacher received the customary offering (Dakshina). Children were taught to write on sand (Manalezhuthu) and later, on strips of palm leaf. After the initial introduction of the 51 letters of the Malayalam alphabet, emphasis would shift to Sanskrit. Elementary education included other forms of knowledge such as astrology, horoscopy and elementary geometrical knowledge. They were part of the education of most of the non-Brahmana savarna groups, including possibly some Brahmanas.

Kutipallikootams, where children from lower castes and Christians were taught were modeled on Ezhuthupallis (one-teacher schools), except that the emphasis was more on reading Malayalam and Tamil. The teachers
included non-Savarnas like Ezhavas and Kalari Panickers. By the nineteenth century, backward class children began to learn Sanskrit mostly through individual efforts, from the broadminded Savarna teachers (160).

Higher studies were almost entirely vocational. The studies were usually decided by their parental occupation or jati and was in the form of apprenticeship/internship working or performing with the master or guru in the master’s house or workplace.

The Gurukulam taught up to 300 students at a time. The instruction was free, and the duration of the course depended on the ability of the student and the complexity of the subject matter. Kodungalloor Gurukulam is an isolated example of a larger "university" structure.

As part of their proselytizing effort, the Christian missionaries who came along with the Portuguese, sought to change the belief structure and lifestyle of the indigenous Christians. But, even when children of the Malankara Nasranis (indigenous Christians) were taught under Nasrani Asans, the curriculum was the same. They soon realized that this form of education would not conform to the purposes of proselytisation. An understanding of Sanskrit along with Malayalam was necessary for effective communication with the educated Nasranis and other sections of the population. Making Malayalam and Sanskrit intelligible to the succeeding missionaries and other Europeans provided the setting for the next important intervention by the Westerners.
Many early missionaries produced grammars and dictionaries for both Sanskrit and Malayalam. Grammar was essential for written Malayalam into which they had to translate the Bible and other religious texts. Meanwhile, a section of the missionaries realized that reliance on Sanskrit would not lead them very far. They extended their proselytization work to the downtrodden coastal population and studied the language of the masses—*Neecha Bhasha*.

The missionaries of the Church Mission Society (CMS), the London Mission Society (LMS) and the Basel Evangelical Mission (BEM) arrived in Kerala in the beginning of the 19th century and they made use of two agencies of proselytization that came to have far-reaching consequences—the school and the print.

Major John Munro, who succeeded the political Resident, Major Colin Macaulay in 1810, and took over the Diwanship himself in 1811, provided a singular opportunity for colonialism, in the garb of state and religion, to intervene directly in education. Munro carried out a number of reforms intended to lessen still further the power of local officers and leaders, to centralize the administration, to encourage the Syrian Christians as a means of evangelizing Travancore Hindus and to bring the state more into the line of British India. Munro could convince the Rani of Travancore about the responsibility of the state to undertake the educational policies and made her issue the famous *Neettu* (order). Again, it was Munro who encouraged the
various mission societies to establish schools in Travancore, an event heralded in all histories as the beginning of "modern" education in Kerala.

The untouchable slave castes were denied education in pre-colonial Kerala. The missionaries took interest in educating the downtrodden, the untouchable--but to educate them in "their" way. Their prime aim was to convey through the medium of education a great amount of Christian truth to the native mind. Secular education was seen as the best means for educating in Christian ways. Through the new institution in the Western mode, the School, they countered the existing indigenous curriculum which imparted knowledge in the local cultural context. For this, the technology of printing and the hitherto unused methodology of translation were greatly utilized.

With this, morality began to be viewed by Christian Standards, as non-Christians were deemed immoral, immersed in pagan rituals and customs. The question of morality was raised more strongly with respect to women. As mentioned earlier, there was the practice of lower caste women, including Nair women uncovering their breasts before men of higher rank, and the practice of Nair women cohabiting with several men of higher status, particularly Brahmanas. Missionaries noted that the lower caste and slave women were subjected to repression of the worst kind, including sexual violence. They projected education as the means for the moral regeneration of the people, which also would remove repression. A separate text book for moral education was clearly inspired by the Christian moral educators.
More important, however, was the new system of English district schools, which originated from the British Government’s decision in 1859 to abolish the export duty on Thirunelvelly tobacco entering Travancore. “English schools were established in 8 chief towns, and by 1864 there were 1000 students in the mofussil” (Jeffrey 77). The introduction of English further enhanced this dissemination of knowledge totally alien to them. In the early LMS schools, the instruction was in English. Joseph Ramban, Bishop of the Syrians, set up the old seminary in Kottayam with the objective of spreading English language and translating Bible into Malayalam. He thought that English education would result in mental development, and moral consciousness could be inculcated through enabling people to read Bible in Malayalam. The Seminary established by Charles Meade in Nagarkoil in 1818 was the centre where organized English education began for the first time.

English education acted as a catalyst for the success of the "modern" education system, even with the accompanying spread of Malayalam schools in Kerala. This was apparent in the tendency among children going to Ezhuthupallis and Kutipallikootams to take admission in English schools after elementary stage. The normal age of joining "English" school was from twelve to fifteen. Some people resigned their jobs to enter English schools. In general, those who played a leading role in literary, social and political spheres underwent English education after their indigenous education.
English, obviously replaced Sanskrit as the elite language of knowledge and culture, a displacement symptomatic of the cultural transformation under colonialism.

The decline of indigenous education corresponded with disintegration of the pre-colonial social order. But its disappearance was also the result of the new cultural milieu created by colonialism in which Western education became the chief passport to honour and preferment. While indigenous education was condemned as having a curriculum based on didactic and religious teachings, with no stress on prospects of improvement, the new form of education claimed of reason and scientific and technical knowledge. Finally, the new educational culture altered the perception of the Malayalis of their own selves, and their past.

Thus, by the latter half of 19th century, the seeds of the Western education system, with the school, printed text books, stress on English education, science, humanities, moral education and mathematics were laid by the missionaries. The development of Western social values, morality and discipline were also being inculcated indirectly. It helped in uplifting the depressed classes and the women of pre-colonial Kerala. Use of the new technology of printing had the capability of breaking through caste and gender barriers in the dissemination of knowledge. Thus, literacy, print and English education functioned as a liberating force rather than a constricting one in the changing cultural context of Kerala.
The processes of social reform, nationalism and class struggles in Kerala can be traced to the structural changes in the economy resulting from colonization. The impact of colonialism on the existing hierarchical social order based on the caste system got manifested in many forms, the changes in land relations in particular. The solidarity of the tharawad got affected by the “overwhelming influence of Karanavar over Anantharavas, looseness of the marital bond, new economic changes in the society, new means for independent income for the junior members of the family and new ideological and cultural perspective acquired by the educated middle class” (Mohan 466).

The utility of the Nair tharawads was considerably undermined during the colonial rule due to the emergence of cash economy and socio-economic changes. Subsequently, the customary law of inheritance was questioned and the Nairs living in cities and towns started opposing the existing system of marriage arrangement. “The first movement in this regard was the Malabar Marriage Association founded in 1879” (466) and the Association sought to legalize the Nair marriages and unify the codes of law governing succession to property. The Bill presented to the Government was passed in a diluted form whereby the Sambandhams were registered with the Government, and a legal marriage-maintenance share in self-acquired property of the husband or father could be claimed. But, a shortcoming of this legislation was its inability to alter the Nair-Namboothiri sambandham. In Tiruvitamkur also, the Nair elites consistently demanded the Government to resolve the moral
issue of the supposedly un-regulated Nair sexual unions and to provide legal provision for marriages. Consequently, “Tiruvitamkur Legislative Council passed the Travancore Nayar Regulation I of 1088 (M.E.)” (467) in 1912, which went one step further by declaring polyandry as illegal and granting the right of maintenance and the half of self-acquired property of the husband or father to his wife/children. The Nairs of Kochi struggled for the same cause resulting in 1920, the “passage of the Cochin Regulation XII of 1095 M.E.” (467). The Law went a step ahead than that of Malabar and Thiruvitamkur by prohibiting polygamy.

Another important landmark in the changing social structure of Kerala was the Madras Marumakkathayam Act of 1933 that permitted partition of taravad by individuals and the wife and children of a husband or a father became the legal heirs of his property. Soon after its enactment, the disintegration of Nair taravads into small units began at a brisk pace. Kerala started witnessing the dawn of patriarchy, with the Nairs losing control over land. These changes in the social firmament of Kerala are poignantly brought out in O. Chandumenon’s significant social novel written in Malayalam, Indulekha (published in 1889). G. Arunima has made some crucial observations on the transformation of matriliny in Kerala: “Matrilineal kinship in Kerala has the unique status of being the only kinship system in the world to be abolished” (1). It is paradoxical that while this system got strengthened in the mid-nineteenth century, it was legally abolished in 1933
by the colonial government. The Act was passed by the Legislative Council whereby lots of matrilineal taravads were divided and a pattern of kinship and inheritance, a mode of production centred on them and “above all, a way of life” (2) was brought to an end. This had far-reaching consequences for nearly fifty percent of the Malayali population, of different castes and communities, which were matrilineal. For example, in the case of Nairs, the landed elite of north Kerala and a matrilineal community, the property rights of the individual members as well as their residence patterns got drastically affected by the Act. Almost all the Nair tharawads were in a state of disintegration between 1930s and 1970s by the time of the enactment of the law. But more than this, the individual property rights gave birth to ideas of individual rights and women’s rights in particular.

While the Nairs were trying to legalize their marriage and inheritance, the Ezhavas, under the leadership of Sree Narayana Guru, introduced new marriage rites. The Ezhava Regulation of 1925 was passed in Thiruvitamkur with almost the same objective as of Nair Regulation.

Christianity undertook many reform activities including the prohibition of untouchability, child marriage, polyandry and polygamy. But, the Syrian Christians in general opposed all radical changes that might affect their customary law and were particularly reluctant to concede equal treatment to women. For example, the daughter should not have any share of the property of her father and the widows should not have a definite share but only the
right of maintenance. However, the Christian Succession Act of 1916 provided a common law for all sections of Christians in Tiruvitamkur and contained provisions for widows to get a definite share of property of her husband.

As far as the Muslims are concerned, the “existence of matrilineal system among the Mappila Muslims has created such resentment in the community and outside among other Muslims” (Koya 271) and the members of the community desired changes in customary law. While Muslims all over the world are patrilineal, the Mappilas of Kerala follow the matrilineal system. The Moplah Marumakkathayam Act was passed in 1933 after constant pressure from the Muslims that brought about the transition from patriliny to matriliny, though the property acquired as a result of the partition of their taravad was to be governed by the Shariat Law. Thus, the matrilineal system that had prevailed among the major communities, both the Hindus and non-Hindus, came to an end.

In a nutshell, the nature of the social reform movement in Kerala was much more complex compared to other parts of India. “Unlike in Bengal where it was confined to the upper castes, in Kerala it extended to a wider base” (Velayudhan 510). Structural changes in the economy were leading to changes in the family structures that enhanced the growing consciousness of women’s rights.