Chapter VI

REPRESENTATION OF THE REBELLION AND IT’S AFTERMATH
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Malabar in 1921 turned politically vibrant (violent too) with a triangular anti-colonial initiative – the Khilafath, the Tenancy and Non-Operation. The convergence of the three movements resulted in the cataclysmic event called Malabar Rebellion. The details of the rebellion are too well known to require to any further elaboration here as this chapter only focus on its narrative construction and its impact on the wider society of Malabar.

Almost all scholarly works on the Rebellion examine both the economic and religious aspects of the Rebellion and the only difference between different perceptions is one of weightage.\(^1\) The clash of economic interest between predominantly Muslim peasantry and their oppressors, the high caste landlords, was a regular feature of Malabar social life right from the beginning of 19th century.\(^2\) Hence, when, in 1921, the clash of economic interest between Muslim peasantry and Hindu feudal lords burst into open conflict, the grievances of the peasantry acquired a religious dimension. Ironically, a class war against economic oppression took the form of a religio-communal conflict. Besides this, the Rebellion acquired a communal colour because of the leadership of Thangals and Musaliyar. Thus, the combination of religious appeals with economic grievances created a politically volatile

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situation, highly susceptible to communalist propaganda. Hence, though the Rebellion itself was not intrinsically communal, the way it was covered by the print-media, particularly the English and vernacular press, did create communal cleavage within Malabar society.

The Rebellion caused an acrid narrative war of words within the print media, not only in Malabar but throughout the nation. The print media constructed their own version of narratives to explain the Rebellion in terms favourable to their own interests and depicted their own constituency as victimized. During the period between 1921-23, both vernacular and English press that had no access to what was happening in Malabar, regularly published reports on the Rebellion wholly depending upon the colonial official reports. Generally, the Malayalam papers contained reports of Moplah outbreaks, 'the sources of information being for the most part the press communiqué issued by government and other reports published by English newspapers.\(^3\) This being the case, most of the reports of vernacular papers, barring a few nationalist as well as pro-Khilafath muslim papers, presented a one sided picture of the Rebellion.\(^4\) Among the newspapers, only *Malabar Islam, Swaraj* and *Muslim* tried to present an objective picture of the revolt. *Keralapatrika* (Calicut) published consternating reports about the rebellion with the support of British'.\(^5\) *Malayala Manorama, Nazrani Deepika, Yogakshemam* used the most objectionable language in their reports about the Rebellion. Pro-British and Pro-Hindu papers wrote melodramatic stories of the craftiness and cunningness of Mappilas. Some of the write-ups taunted the Hindus for their slavish mentality. Hence, these vernacular papers had played their role in disrupting the inter-communitarian balance in Malabar with their flagrant writings on the Rebellion. Even the British

\(^3\) *FNR*, 3\(^{rd}\) Sept. 1921, No.36.1921 Home (general), p.243. TNA.
\(^4\) *Mathrubumi* was started in 1923 and *Al-Ameen* in 1924.
authorities were conscious of the fact that the vernacular press had a role in worsening the communal situation in Malabar. It was in this backdrop that Ellis, the Malabar Collector, convened a meeting of the editors of newspapers of Calicut in June 1922 to discuss the ways by which communal amity could be restored in Malabar.\textsuperscript{6}

The following analysis of the press reports of the Rebellion would help to know how differently it was reported by the vernacular press and would provide a clue to the increased communitarian consciousness in Malabar in the post-Rebellion phase.

\textit{Yogakshemam}, the official organ of \textit{Yogakshemasabha} published a series of articles related to the Rebellion. In its editorial captioned \textit{Malabarile Chelakalapam}, \textit{Yogaksehamam} came to the conclusion that 'the rioters consisted of three distinct set of people, one set that wanted to fight the government, another set that was out to loot while a third set were religious fanatics who wished to convert as many as possible. The bulk of the rioters belonged to the second set'.\textsuperscript{7} The paper was surprised that Hindu population of the disturbed areas could not offer any united resistance to Mappila rioters and called upon them to organise themselves for defense.\textsuperscript{8} It is interesting to note that this editorial traced the rebellion back to the time of Tipu Sulthan in 18th century and hence the title \textit{Chelakalapam}.\textsuperscript{9} Another editorial of the same paper comments, 'Everybody is busy in searching the cause of the revolt.

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Malayala Manorama}, 8th June, 1922. NMML, Delhi. This meeting was attended by editors of \textit{Keralapatrika, Mitavadi, Reformer, Kerala Sanchari, Malabar Journal} and \textit{Margadarsi} while those of \textit{Manorama} and \textit{Spectator} boycotted it.

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Yogakshemam}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Sept. 1921, NMML, Delhi. See also FNR dated 10\textsuperscript{th} Sept. 1921, No.37, 1921, Home (General), p.289. TNA.

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Yogakshemam}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} September 1921, NMML, Delhi.

\textsuperscript{9} The revolt of the upper caste Hindus against Tipu's injunction to cover the upper part of female body was known in popular parlance as \textit{Chelakalapam}.
There is no need to tell that Moplas need no cause for revolt’. It is interesting to note the convergence of this causation with that of Hitchcock, who commented that 'the saddest part of the whole affair was its want of reason'. We come across several instances of such convergence between vernacular press reports and colonial official narratives. M.P. Thuppan Nambudiri, in his article, 'Malabar Lahala' in Yogakshemam, alludes, 'from Tipu's invasion onwards, their [Mappila's] desire was to convert the whole Malayalis into Islam. It was the British which prevented them from materializing that and we owe a great deal to British for the same . . . . No more self rule is needed in Malabar. We have had enough of the taste of Mappila swaraj and their Khilafath'.

Nazrani Deepika from Mannanam, a pro-British Christian paper, also published biased reports on the Rebellion. Deepika reported that Mappilas under the veneer of non-co-operation, took the opportunity to loot and convert Hindus to their religion. To prove the vandalism of Mappila rebels, the paper reported that Mappilas entered the Trikandiyur temple and placed a copy of Quran inside the Srikovil (sanctum sanctorum). Congratulating Mr. Thomas for suppressing the rebellion, Deepika in its editorial commented, 'Thus even the Malabar Mappilas have received an experience of Swaraj and the flavour of Hindu-Muslim unity and a sense of the might of British government. May the British flag now continue to fly in all glory'. In the wake of its loyalist leanings, such comments were quite expected from Nazrani Deepika.

10 Yogakshemam, 9th Sept. 1921, NMML, New Delhi.
12 Yogakshemam, 2nd October 1921 as reproduced in Malayala Manorama, 6th October 1921, NMML, Delhi.
13 Nazrani Deepika, 2 September 1921, NMML, Delhi.
14 Nazrani Deepika, 9th September 1921, NMML, Delhi. Also see FNR, 10th Sept. 1921, Home (General), p.352, TNA.
Violently abusive language was used by 'Malabari', the South Malabar correspondent of *Malayala Manorama*, in covering the rebellion. He wrote, 'It will be interesting to the readers to know that our Vasudeva Varmamaharaja [Kunhamad Haji, the leader of the rebellion] who is Collector, Colonel and Governor [of Khilafath Raj] is in fact a cart-puller . . . . It is heard that wife of Seethi Koya Thangal [another rebel leader] has eloped with someone and out of grief he is hiding in the forest'.\(^\text{15}\) On another occasion, in a satirical way, he comments, 'The Mopla Rebellion has brought name and fame to our district. Is it not a great honour to us that discussions about our district take place in our parliament'.\(^\text{16}\) A still more abusive language was used by the Malabar correspondent of this paper, when it wrote: 'Among this family of demons, the prominent ones – Sumali [Chemprasseri Thangal] and Malyavan [Seethi Koya Thangal] have been caught by the police. Only Mali [Kunhahammad Haji] who has done much Kurumalis [mischief] remains to be caught hold of . . . . These Thangals were mere Thongans [Impotents] and Moplas attribute Thungatha [fame] to them due to their fanatical spirit . . . . Among these wretched demons, Chempraseri ranks first for mutilating the Hindus alive'.\(^\text{17}\) The demonisation of the leaders of the Rebellion in this fashion is formulaic and follows a pattern as per Brahminical tradition. The leaders were represented as being like the demons of ancient myth who engaged in endless battles against the forces of good. What matters in these perspectives is their 'otherness'. Even Ali Musaliyar, a sober and pious leader, was depicted in this vein by *Kerala Patrika*. The paper wrote, 'This Musaliyar spoke that if one kills a Hindu, he can marry a *houri* [celestial beauty] in heaven'.\(^\text{18}\) This representation of Ali Musaliyar, the Khilafath

\(^{15}\) *Malayala Manorama*, 19\(^{th}\) November 1921, NMML, Delhi.

\(^{16}\) *Malayala Manorama*, 8\(^{th}\) December 1921, NMML, Delhi.

\(^{17}\) *Malayala Manorama*, 29\(^{th}\) December, 1921, NMML, Delhi.

\(^{18}\) *Kerala Patrika*, 5\(^{th}\) September 1921. Also see K.K.M. Kareem, Note no. 5, p.63.
leader was in contradiction to the actual character of the musaliyar as testified by all the leading authorities on the subject.

Concluding his long article titled 'Jonakappada' in Malayala Manorama, Moorkoth Kumaran made an observation regarding the measures for prevention of such outbreaks in future. He observed, 'In this background two remedies are possible – crush the fanaticism of Mappilas or make Hindus equally fanatic.' While compulsory primary education through common school could wipe out Mappila fanaticism, the latter could be achieved only through the unity of Hindus. He adds, 'And in the meantime the Hindus must have fanaticism. There should be unity among them. They have to be vigilant and purge out the Mopla phobia . . . Do you think that so long as Hindus live in unity and harmony, the Moplas will dare to rebel or try to convert Hindus? Caste distinction alone is the cause of this disunity'.

Following the pattern of colonial narratives, Malayala Manorama, in another article traced the cause of the rebellion to the inherent character of Mappilas. The article says, 'These Mappilas, who are of Arab descent, are notorious for their bigotry and blood thirstiness'. On another occasion Malayala Manorama opined that 'fanaticism and hot-temperance were prevalent among Mappilas of other parts of Kerala but only when they got the support of South Malabar Mappilas, they showed the courage to make furcas'.

Generally, the English papers were pro-Government and as such they presented their most venomous accounts about the rebellion. For instance, the West Coast Reformer, an English paper from Calicut, published a lead article regarding the rebellion. On 9th October 1921, the paper wrote:

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19 Malayala Manorama, 17th September 1921, NMML, Delhi.
20 Malayala Manorama, 17th September 1921, NMML, Delhi.
21 Malayala Manorama, 20 September 1921, NMML, Delhi.
22 Malayala Manorama, 18 September 1921, NMML, Delhi.
"More than six weeks have passed by since the declaration by Mopla fanatics of Malabar of Jihad in the name of Khilafath. Ali-Musaliyar, the first Sulthan appointed in Tirurangadi mosque has surrendered . . . and stands in the dock with his lean hungry look facing his trial for the greatest offence . . . .
The robber chieftain Variankunnath Kunhahamed Hajee, is still at large perpetrating the cruelest deeds of savagery on the Hindu population. The criminal impudence and effrontery with which this uncrowned king of Nilambur imposes his will upon the trembling Hindus, reminds one of the marauding chieftains of the Robber hordes of Spanish Sierras . . . Beheading, the common game of oriental despots, is freely visited by this freebooter on Hindus of uncompromising faith without least compuction . . . . The interior of Ernad and Walluvanad taluks are still shivering with dread for this inhuman wretch and his compeer Chembrasser Thangal".  

Unlike the vernacular press, this paper profusely used metaphors from European history to depict the demonic character of the leaders of the Rebellion. This kind of reports only helped to heighten the 'muslim phobia' in the minds of Hindus and to sharpen the difference between the two communities.

While the pro-government or anti-nationalist newspaper represented the Rebellion in this negative tone, the nationalist vernacular papers did not lag behind in this venture. Mathrubhumi, the official organ of the nationalist movement in Malabar, in its own way, though not intentionally communal, contributed to create division within its readership. A perusal of the editorials and lead articles that appeared in Mathrubhumi would be of interest in this context. Though Mathrubhumi was started only in 1923, two years after the Rebellion, umpteen articles and editorials dealing with Rebellion appeared in it during 1923 and 1924. In the year of its inception itself, K. Madhavan Nair,  

23 West Coast Reformer, 9 October 1921; Also see FNR ending 15th October 1921, No.42, 1921 Home (General), p.400. TNA.
the editor and the Congress leader, wrote a series of articles examining the cause and course of the Rebellion. In one such article which elaborately deals with the fanaticism of Mappilas, he says: 'The Mopla right from his childhood hears the songs that extols the martyrs died for the cause of religion and it generates wild desires in him. Or else, he hears about the case of apostasy and believes that he, who does not prevent such disgrace to religion, is outside its fold. In this matter, though Islam forbids forcible conversion, he follows the footsteps of Tipu Sulthan, not that of Prophet Mohamed and kills the Hindus indiscriminately'. In another article of the same series Madhavan Nair wrote, 'If Nairs, Thiyyas and Cherumas were united, they could have resisted the Mappila rebels. But due to age-old oppression of Nairs by Nambudiris, of Thiyyas by Nairs and of Cherumas by Thiyyas, the lower orders of Hinduism felt happy over the difficulties caused by the Rebellion to the higher castes'. Again, the editorial of Mathrubhumi of May 26, 1923 said, 'If the Hindus had the same reverence to their temples as the Muslims had to their mosques, this much of temples would not have been destroyed in the Rebellion zone. It would have been a matter of pride to Hindu community, if a single Hindu was hurt in the attempt to defend the sanctity of his temple'. The editorial hoped that if the Hindu conference convened by Dr. Moonje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, at Calicut, paved the way for the awakening of Hindus, it would be a blessing as far as Hindus were concerned. At the same time Mathrubhumi in its editorial, countering the allegation of The Muslim, a Muslim journal, reiterated its secular stand and stated that 'if a letter is not published in the paper, it is being considered as debasement of a community. We used to get articles written by Nairs,

24 K. Madhavan Nair, "Hindu-Muslim Relations" in Mathrubhumi, 24th May, 1923.
25 Mathrubhumi, 1st May, 1923.
26 Mathrubhumi, 26th May, 1923.
27 Ibid.
Nambudiris, Nambisans and Mappilas. It is not by considering the caste or creed of the writer, that articles are published in Mathrubhumi’.  

The articles and editorials of Mathrubhumi triggered off a controversy among the leaders of the Congress party and a group under Mohamed Abdurahiman and Moidu Moulavi wrote a series of articles in Al-Ameen, another nationalist paper from Calicut, attacking the anti-Muslim tone of such articles. As Vidwan T.K. Raman Menon, who had served as sub-editor in Al-Ameen, observed, 'The relation between Mathrubhumi and Al-Ameen was not smooth. Overtly or covertly, Al-Ameen indulged in countering the editorials and misinterpreting the ideals of Mathrubhumi. I could not see any reciprocity or unity existing between these two nationalist dailies during that period'. It was due to this controversy that Madhavan Nair abruptly stopped publishing the remaining parts of the articles. Later, these articles were collected and published in a book form titled Malabar Kalapam in 1971 by his wife Kalyani Amma. About this book, Moidu Moulavi remarked that 'it only helped to strengthen the anti-Muslim sentiments among Hindus and it was a fierce arrow aimed at the Mappila community ... Any Hindu who read this work with an objective mind would turn to be a staunch enemy of Mappilas'. Madhavan Nair in his book, traced the root of the rebellion back to Tipu, who not only caused many a hardship to Hindus of Malabar but became the guru (preceptor) of later Mappila revolts. The tone and tenure of

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28 Mathrubhumi, 25th March, 1924.
31 E. Moidu Moulavi, op. cit., pp.46-47.
the articles as well as the book was anti-Muslim as he was depending upon
the perspectives of colonial narratives of 19th century Mappila uprisings.33

As we have analysed elsewhere in this study, Abdurahiman Sahib and
his Al-Ameen always used metaphors and idioms of Islam in their discourses.
Hence, the cold war between Mathrubhumi and Al-Ameen in 1930’s had its
communitarian dimension also. It was in the background of this cold war that
Mathrubhumi was forced to make its stand clear. In its editorial of 18th
January 1935, titled Mathrubhumikku Mathamilla (‘Mathrubhumi has no
religion’) the paper stated, ‘To Mathrubhumi both Hinduism and Islam are
alike . . . we don’t consider it a sin either embracing or deserting a particular
religion. Al-Ameen has to understand that Mr. Kelappan is not an Arya
Samajist.’34 To put it in nutshell, both Mathrubhumi and Al-Ameen, the two
nationalist papers from Calicut, contributed their own share in strengthening
the Hindu and Muslim community identities in Malabar. A prominent section
of Hindus considered Al-Ameen, not as a Congress organ but as a Muslim
paper.35 On the other hand, barring a few, Muslims in general considered
Mathrubhumi as a Hindu paper. What one could see here is
communitarianism in the guise of nationalism.

The Muslim papers on the other hand, most being pro-Khilafatist,
presented their own biased accounts about the rebellion, which in its turn
helped to foster Muslim community identity and at times communal frenzy
itself. Kerala Chandrika, a pro-Khilafat muslim journal wrote:

"The government have been trying to disprove the tenets of their
religion and injuring their leaders and the inglorious collector of Malabar with
a military force entered the holy mosques and stirred the ire of the

33 E. Moidu Moulavi, op. cit., p.48.
34 Mathrubhumi, 18th January 1935.
35 S.K. Pottekkat et al., op. cit., p.146.
community. If, while the revered Malappuram Thangal, one of the heads of their religion was praying in the mosque that the holy temple of God should be surrendered by military, which Mohammedan could keep still?\textsuperscript{36} The \textit{Muslim} (dated 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1922) and \textit{Kerala Chandrika} (dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1922) published an article 'Condition of Muslim Women in Malabar' which narrated exaggerated stories about the atrocities committed by Hindus on Mappila women.\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Muslim Sahakari}, another muslim journal also believed that 'there was truth in the allegation of Hindu atrocities on helpless Mappila women in the area'.\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Kerala Chandrika} in an article to stir up the wealthy muslims to a sense of their duty towards afflicted muslims in Malabar said, 'At night some police officers and their attendants come riding on the white horse [Fully drunk-Tr] and begin to outrage the chastity of helpless muslim women! Who is there to attend to the wretchedness of these poor people?'\textsuperscript{39} A note in the same paper in 1921 opined that the reports about Mopla's looting Hindu houses, was altogether unfounded, that absolute falsehood against the Muslims were published in English-owned papers.\textsuperscript{40}

Such stories, right or wrong, created sympathy among their co-religionists in other parts of the country. Thus, muslim papers constructed their own community as being aggrieved and endangered, the other community as being predatory. As reports of aggression and victimization were remembered and embellished, violence became an instrument for marking and consolidating group identities.

\textbf{National Coverage of the Rebellion}

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Kerala Chandrika}, 29\textsuperscript{th} August 1921. Also see Fortnightly Report, No.36, 1921, Home (General), p.244. TNA.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Kerala Chandrika}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1922. Also see \textit{Muslim} dated 28\textsuperscript{th} September 1922 in MNNPR, 1922, TNA.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Muslim Sahakari}, Calicut, 5\textsuperscript{th} October 1922, MNNPR, 1922, TNA.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Kerala Chandrika}, 24\textsuperscript{th} July 1922, MNNPR, 1922, TNA.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{F.N.R.} No. 36, 1921, Home Administration, p.245, TNA.
The Rebellion also got national coverage with the intervention of Arya Samaj press. As Charu Gupta observed, 'The Mopla Rebellion gave urgency to Hindu organization and an opportunity to argue for consolidation. In the United Province, a large number of tracts emerged giving vivid description of forcible conversion, rape and abduction of Hindu women by Moplas'.\(^{41}\) The news reporters from North India reached Malabar and began to send biased reports to their respective papers, exaggerating the cruelty of the Mopla rebels towards the Hindus.\(^{42}\) Referring to the plight of Hindus in Malabar during the Rebellion, Dr. Moonje in his article in *Indian Social Reformer* (Bombay) wrote, 'With us [Hindus] it is a serious problem of scientific investigation into our sociology to find out the causes of such helplessness and unpreparedness of Hindus to defend their homes and women folk . . . Division and hatred have made us cowardly and slavish'.\(^{43}\) This kind of astute comments was calculated to create more excitements in the minds of Hindus. Through this kind of coverage in Hindi press, the reverberations of the Rebellion reached the nook and corner of India, far beyond the epicenter and excited the minds of Hindus. Thus, the Mappila Rebellion pushed relations between two communities into an all time low, illustrating how stray developments in the localities could rip the patchwork quilt of Hindu-Muslim understanding at all India level.\(^{44}\)

A series of tracts were published by Arya Samajists which abound in obscene and abusive statements calculated to create more excitements in the minds of Hindus. One of this, *Phajite Ka Gol Guppa* (The cause of quarrel)


\(^{43}\) *The Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay, 26\(^{th}\) March 1922, NMML, Delhi.

by Master Gupta Jhalu of Lucknow taunted Hindus ‘who watched as silent spectators while their Hindu brethren in Malabar were persecuted by Mappilas’.\textsuperscript{45} Jhalu said, ‘At a time when India is moving towards freedom, she was shocked by the cruelty of Mappilas and the weeping of Malabar Hindus’.\textsuperscript{46} He added that ‘The only remedy to prevent the Muslims from such rapacious acts and make them patriotic is the unity of Hindus. Until and unless the unity of the chief caste of India [Hindus] is not strong enough, the Muslims will continue their rebellions’.\textsuperscript{47} Similarly, a series of tracts were written by Bishan Sharma titled \textit{Malabar Ka Drishya} [The scene from Malabar], which includes (a) \textit{Drin Sankalp Vir} (b) \textit{Satyavati Vimala Ki Pukar} (c) \textit{Bhole Swami ka Dusht Nankar}.\textsuperscript{48} All these were published from Meerut in 1923. Another popular tract in Hindi was Satyavrat Sharma’s \textit{Malabar Aur Arya Samaj} which described about a Hindu woman of Malabar, who had been forcibly converted to Islam, ‘tore apart her Mopla clothes and adorned the Hindu clothes when Arya Samaj reached there’.\textsuperscript{49} Through this kind of chauvinistic print discourse on an event that took place in a remote pocket of the nation, an entire community of Muslims was tarred as ‘fanatic’. It also bundled Muslims in to an undifferentiated and essentialized category defined by the criterion of religion alone. More over, representation of violence itself became a symbol, which helped to freeze the popular constructions of identity.

Conversely, such writings provoked furious rebuttals from the Urdu press, which absorbed the external construction of their identity and lent substance to the idea of Muslim as a community with common interests. It is

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ibid.}, p.2.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.}, p.13.
\textsuperscript{48} Charu Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, p.226.
\textsuperscript{49} Satya Vrat Sharma (Publisher), \textit{Malabar Aur Arya Samaj} (Hindi) Agra, 1923.
a fact that self hood is also shaped by ways in which others view 'Us'. Urdu journals joined the fray in publishing consternating reports about atrocities of Hindus in Malabar. As Malayala Manorama observed, 'it is to be regretted that Muslim papers in Bombay and Punjab are publishing reports about the vandalism of Hinduism in Malabar. They report that, in the absence of male Mappilas in South Malabar, the Hindus are consternating the Mopla orphans and raping their mothers'.

It was in the wake of these reports that Jamyithe Da'wathe Tabiliqe Islami of Pune reached Malabar and started their rehabilitation work among Mappilas.

**Rebellion as reflected in Nationalist and literary discourse**

It is interesting to note that the colonial stereotypes on Mappilas found a place in indigenous narratives on the Rebellion, including the nationalist discourses. The colonial government's role in constructing community identity is familiar. As observed by Mushirul Hasan, 'much less known is how nationalist images and stereotypes were just as important as the colonial framework that was evolved to define and categorize Muslims'. Images constructed by the colonialists surfaced with notable frequency in nationalist writings on the Rebellion.

Even the most secular nationalist leaders could not avoid a community based outlook. 'It might sound paradoxical, even objectionable to some, but it was true all the same that Mahatma Gandhi, who was the most ardent champion of Hindu-Muslim Unity, often took a communitarian view'. For, regarding the Malabar Rebellion Gandhiji wrote, ‘A verbal disapproval by Mussalmans of Mopla madness is no test of Mussalman friendship. The

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50 Malayala Manorama, 7th October 1922, NMML Delhi.
Mussalman must naturally feel the shame and humiliation of Mopla conduct about the forcible conversion and looting and they must work away so silently and effectively that such things might become impossible even on the part of the most fanatical among them'.

As K.N. Panikkar delineated, by suggesting this course of conduct, Gandhiji did draw a communal line. It was for Muslims to feel ashamed and humiliated for what Mappilas had done and it was for them to ensure that Mappila fanaticism would not erupt again. In other words, Muslims as a community was responsible for the violence committed by Mappilas because they professed the same religion.

On another occasion Gandhiji wrote, 'They [Mappilas] are of fiery temperament and are said to be easily excitable. They are enraged and resort to violence in a matter of seconds. They have been responsible for many murders..... It is not yet clear what led this present outburst'. In this kind of narratives Gandhiji, like colonial officials H.V. Connolly and T.L. Strange, frames 1921 Rebellion as another event in a series and 'Muslimness' seems to be sufficient explanation for their action.

Still on another context Gandhiji stated that 'Moplas were never particularly friendly to the Malabar Hindus. They had looted them before. Their notions of Islam were of a very crude type'. Similarly, Gandhiji wrote to the editor of Vishala Keralam (Madras), "How to reach the Moplas as also the class of Hindus whom you would want to reach through your newspaper, is more than I can say, but I know that Hindus should cease to be cowardly. The Moplas should cease to be cruel. In other words each party should become truly religious".

Using these utterances of Gandhiji,
Bhagavan Josh, has recounted how nationalist leaders like Gandhi took recourse to essentialised and mythical images of emasculated Hindus to induce nationalist fervour.\(^{59}\) In all such pronouncements, Gandhiji was merely reproducing the same old colonial stereotypes about Mappilas. Thus somewhat surprisingly, the nationalist accounts of 1921 rebellion shares much common ground with the colonialists. If a man of Gandhiji’s calibre could not avoid such a reading, then there is no ground for wonder for a more sectarian attitude in the case of local congress leaders like K. Madhavan Nair, K. Kelappan, Mohamad Abdurahiman and E. Moidu Moulavi etc.\(^{60}\) Though the nationalist writings focused the role of British in the strife between the communities, it had to negotiate the difficult terrain of the other among 'us'.\(^{61}\) The fanatic Mappila' also has after lives in nationalist discourse, diverse as they are, in which the insurgent Mappila seems to be produced as a not-yet, not full fledged citizen-subject.\(^{62}\) This kind of nationalist othering also contributed their share to furthering communitarian identities. Such communitarian perspective plagued the Indian National Congress through out the period of freedom struggle in Malabar. Bemoaning the rising tendency among congress leaders for this kind of communal view point, Mathrubumi in its editorial titled, 'communalism in the garb of Nationalism' wrote, "However, certain Muslim congress men held an exclusive meeting under the banner of Kerala Muslim National party to discuss the matter [secret circular

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\(^{59}\) See Ajan Ghosh "Assertive Religious Identities", *EPW*, March 27, 2004 pp. 1385-1388. Another example of Gandhi’s communitarian approach could be drawn from the fact that he rebuked George Joseph, a Syrian Christian when he attempted to take over the command of Vaikom Satyagraha in 1936 and specified that the Satyagraha was a Hindu 'affair'. (see Dilip. M. Menon, "Becoming 'Hindu' and 'Muslim': Identity and Conflict in Malabar, 1900-1936", Working Paper No. 255, CDS, Trivandrum, 1994, p.15).

\(^{60}\) For more details, see chapter 'Towards a Political Identity'.


\(^{62}\) M.T. Ansari, *op.cit* p.64.
issue]. To hold a communal meeting to discuss a common issue may be due to the fact that Mr. Abdurahiman is a Muslim. What will be the future of congress, if a communal group is formed within it... The Hindus, Muslims and the Christians within the congress have to be ready to address common issues without communal biases.63

If we now turn to some works of Malayalam literature, which of course had a nationalist tinge, the same communitarian bias could be detected. The Rebellion was a favorite theme of many literary works of post-rebellion period. A typical example is 'Duravastha', written in 1923 by Kumaran Asan, the national poet of Kerala. The poem begins thus:

Amidst the farm, forest and habitations

of Kerala District

Eranad is the area

reddened with the blood of Hindus

Shed by the cruel Muhammedans.64

This is followed by a description of the cruelties of 'Muhamadan demons' inflicted upon the innocent Hindus. After this heart throbbing description, the poet asks:

'What acts of Thuggery they commit not!

The ruthless roughs

Oh! Forbid sights that singe the eye

What men are these?

63 Mathrubhumi, 8th April 1939.
Not bound to their mother's love
Nor to their sisters'
So Godless in their thought'.

To describe the demonic character of Mappilas, terms like 'Cruel Muhamedans' 'Cruel demons' 'Cobras' etc. were profusely used in this text. As the poet condemned the caste Hindus along with Mappilas, one cannot brand the poet as 'communal'. This representation of Mappilas by a poet from South Kerala was due to the internalization of the information provided by the Southern newspapers like Malayalam Manorama, which published consternating reports about the Rebellion. This has been testified to by EMS Namboodiripad in his critique of the poem Duravastha.66 This also shows how the covering of the rebellion in print media was damaging to the image of Mappilas. However, the poem triggered off a controversy and Muslim journals from all corners condemned the work. In all parts of Kerala, Muslims convened protest meetings and passed resolutions condemning the work. In all parts of Kerala, Muslims convened protest meetings and passed resolutions condemning the work as anti-Muslim. At Trivandrum, a meeting of Muslim literati was held under the chairmanship of Vakkom Abdul Kader Moulavi to discuss the issue. Later, Asan himself came with a note of repentance and assured the Muslims literati that the controversial portions would be removed in the next impression.67

Another poem, which was written in Thullal style, dealing with the Rebellion was Ernad Kalapam written by an anonymous author in 1922.68 The poem, which begins with hailing King George, contains exaggerated

65 Ibidi., p.32.


68 Anonymous, Ernad Kalapam (Mal.) Bharata Vilasam Press. Trichur, 1922, p.856
accounts of the atrocities of Mappilas. About the forcible conversion the poem says.

Chanting Kalima and shedding Kurduma
Learning the verses of Quran
Observing Namaz and conducting rituals
Doing the obligatory circumcision
Nairs and Thiyyas got converted forcibly
About 4000 is their number
Unwillingly succumbed to this conversion
What made them do this?
Is sheer fear of death?  

This is followed by the description of the vandalism of Mappilas upon the innocent Hindus like 'piercing the womb of pregnant ladies with daggers sparing not even the fetus'. This diatribe is also used against Gandhiji who is depicted as 'lunatic' and Naradan as he was the person whom the poet considered as the instigator of the Mappilas. Further the poem makes scathing criticism against the upper caste Hindus for practicing untouchability and thereby averting the Hindu unity in Malabar. The poem also speaks in laudatory terms about the service of Rishiram, the leader of Arya Samaj.

Even in a text that deals with the history of Sanskrit literature in Kerala, this negative representation could be discerned. For eg, Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma, in his celebrated book on Sanskrit literature, says, 'There is no limit to the destruction of temples caused by the invasion of Tippu Sulthan as well as the riots of Mappilas in Malabar. It was a pastime of

69 Ibid. p.19.
70 Ibid. p. 21.
71 Ibid. p. 44.
Tipu and his followers [Mappilas] to set fire to temples, destroy the idols and even slaughter of cows within the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of temples. Even now the temples of Malabar have not overcome from the decay caused by the invasion of this neo-Ravana [Tipu]. The symbolic value of temple desecration was far greater than the material loss experienced and this rhetoric of temple desecration was one way through which a Hindu identity was consolidated.

Another poem, though not directly dealing with the Rebellion, but containing this negative representation of Muslims, was *Katteliyude Kathu* (The letter of Mountain Rat) written in 1924 by Vallathol Narayana Menon, another notable national poet of Kerala. The poem deals with a letter sent by Shivaji (who was called Mountain rat by his enemies) to Jaya Simhan, a Hindu ruler who allied with Aurangzeb in the battle against Shivaji. The poet says

I  As this barren shaven head  
   Unfit for the throne of India  
   We may fight after  
   Throwing out our common enemy.

II  Or, if you prefer to serve  
   This *Mlecha* from outside [Aurangzeb]  
   And fight with your native brethren

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It is not intended here to question the secular or nationalist credentials of Vallathol, the poet, but in the post-rebellion period when social life in Kerala was ruined by mutual suspicion and mistrust, this poem written in 1924, served only to alienate the Muslim community. The depiction of Muslim behaviour in the poem is formulaic and follows a pattern expected of mlechas as per Brahminical tradition.

The above-mentioned poetic descriptions may have been exaggerated but were not altogether untrue. But such representations constantly reminded the 'Hindus' that Muslim mlechas had oppressed 'us' abducted 'our' women, destroyed 'our' temples, polluted 'our' sacred spaces etc and helped to foster communitarian identity not only among 'us' (Hindus) but also among the 'other' (Muslims). It helped to whip up communal passions in Malabar and helped to the slow but steady crystallization of Hindu and Muslim identity in Malabar.

Conclusion

Thus, the above survey of the print discourse show that it was not the Rebellion as such but the coverage of it in print media which had done incalculable harm to relations between Hindus and Muslims and which had led to the solidification of communitarian identities, both Hindu and Muslim, not only in Malabar but even at the national level. What these newspaper reports succeeded in doing was to help freeze popular perceptions of Hindu and Muslim identities by portraying the animosities between the two as an historical inevitability. Both types of local press (Hindu and Muslim) constructed facts, about who was the aggressor, the number of casualties, the number of temples destroyed, the number of people converted, number of

\[74\] Ibid.
women molested etc. These 'facts' provided by print media were made believable through repetition in party propaganda, rumours, official reports etc. Through this wide coverage, news of the Rebellion reached and affected the relatively harmonious segment of population in Malabar in a negative manner. Thus, print sharpened the existing cleavages and threw up new kinds of social tensions in Malabar. Secondly, Exclusiveness and identity cannot develop in a vacuum but derive inspiration from the perception of others. Even a negative identification could be a powerful unifying force for a divided community. Both types of chauvinistic reports about rebellion had its impact on the rise of an exclusive Muslim and Hindu identity in Malabar. Fear of 'others' tended to kindle a communitarian spirit among both Hindus and Muslims. In other words Representation of violence itself became a symbol which helped to freeze popular constructions of identity. As reports of aggression and victimization were remembered and embellished, Rebellion became an instrument for marking and consolidating group identity. As Stuart Hall opined, 'identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices by specific enunciative strategies'.

Hindu Mahasabha, Arya Samaj and the making of a Hindu Community

In the immediate wake of the suppression of Malabar Rebellion, the compaign to unify Hindus gained a new urgency and turned more aggressive in Malabar. A direct result of the Malabar Rebellion was entry of Hindu organizations of North India like Hindu Maha Sabha and Arya Samaj in to the social space of Malabar and their attempt to forge a Hindu community identity here. We have already examined how the Hindi newspapers and

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tracts covered the rebellion, elsewhere in this chapter. Stories of violence and forcible conversion and temple desecration badly frightened the Hindu population, not only of Malabar but the whole of India. It was in this backdrop that all India players like Hindu Maha sabha and Arya Samaj etc extended their activities to Malabar and an increasingly Hindu style of politics began to develop in Malabar. Before 1920, there had been very little sense of being Hindu in Malabar particularly among the lower castes. It was not a community, which really existed here, even in the early decades of 20th century. The Hindu community, as Romila Thapar, rightly remarked, is an imagined community.  

In 1918, K.M. Panikkar had remarked, ‘of the religious practices of the region that any resemblance to a body of religion even as amorphous as Hinduism was remote’. 

The Malabar Rebellion came as a shot in the arm for Arya Samaj and their shudi campaign, lying dormant for almost a decade, was now resumed in the North, this time on a war footing. In August 1922, Arya Samaj met at Allahabad and Baratiya Hindu Sudhi Sabha was formed under Swami Shradhanand. Grossly exaggerating the news about forcible conversion during the Rebellion, Arya Samaj rushed teams of Shudi activists to Malabar to bring converts back to Hinduism. As editorial of Yogakeshamam described, 'it was the terrifying news about the Rebellion that attracted them [Arya Samaj] to Kerala. They attempt to draw the attention of the people of both this land [Malabar] and outside through print media to the pathetic plight of Hindus here'.

76 Romila Thapar, Interpreting Early India, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 60-80.
78 Yoginder Sikand "Arya Sudhi and Muslim Tabliq: Muslim Reaction to Arya Samaj's Proslytisation 1923-30" in Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivation and Meaning (eds), Rowena Robinson and S. Clarke, OUP, Delhi, 2004, pp. 98-118.
79 Yogakshemam, 14th October, 1922.
V. Gopla Menon, an active congress leader during the Rebellion, in his speech at Lucknow Congress meeting said that the account about conversion was an exaggerated one and opined that Hindus themselves in the grab of Muslims, converted others that thousands embraced Islam voluntarily and only a very small section had bee converted forcibly. Despite all such facts, 'Shudi' emerged as a symbol around which the Arya Samajist started rousing Hindu public opinion and mobilizing the Hindu masses.

Pandit Rishi Ram of Arya Samaj from Punjab reached Calicut in December 1921 and contributed an amount of Rs. 1000 to the Relief Fund constituted by the Arya Samaj. Rehabilitation of the refugees of the Rebellion was the immediate task undertaken by the Samaj. It opened relief camps at Kallai, Mayyanad, Nilampur, Thuvvur, Tirurangadi, Neeralamukku and Calicut, where the refugees were provided food, cloth and shelter. Along with the relief work, the Samaj undertook their main work, Shudhi (purification) programme to bring back those Hindus converted to Islam in Malabar.

Three persons were appointed in Malabar to collect details of those who were forcibly converted during the Rebellion. During the period between 20th March and 10th April 1922, Kushal Chand (editor of Arya Gazette) and Venkatachalam Ayyar reconverted hundreds of people in Malabar to Hinduism. Regarding the early phase of his work in Malabar, Rishi Ram wrote, 'From our experience and familiarity with the Hindus in Malabar for the last few months, we have realized that certain grave defects have ruined the Hindu community here. For Hinduism to prosper in Malabar, certain things have to be undertaken. Discussing these issues, we have published articles in the Samajam journal as well as pamphlets in vernacular

80 Indian Social Reformer, Bombay, 30th December, 1922.
81 Malayala Manorama, 10th December, 1921, NMML Delhi.
82 Malayala Manorama, 30th May, 1992, NMML, Delhi.
and English'. By September 1922, the Samaj reconverted 1886 out of 2500 Hindus (as per the estimate of the Samaj) converted by Mappilas during the Rebellion. It collected an amount of Rs. 44968 from well-wishers and the whole amount was spent in Malabar.

During the course of the re-conversion work two facts struck the minds of the leaders of the Samaj. One was the resistance of caste Hindus against the re-conversion programme and the other was the reluctance of lower caste converts to Islam to come back to their earlier creed due to pollution practiced by caste Hindus. The attempt to reconvert 400 Hindus, forcibly converted during rebellion, was objected by the caste elites and demanded Rs. 30 each from such converts. It was these factors, which led Arya Samaj to fight against the evils like untouchability and inapproachability and other caste rules prevalent in Malabar for centuries.

As the ferocity of the Rebellion subsided, the Samaj turned to the task of reorganization of the Hindu community. As Arya Keralam, the official organ of the Arya Samaj in Malabar put in, 'the aim of the Samaj was to unite and wake up the Hindu community which had become scattered and moribund and to save it from internal rift'. With this intention, the Samaj convened a meeting at Paral Hall in Calicut on 1st October 1922 under the chairmanship of Nilambur Raja. In this meeting, Rishi Ram spoke on 'Hindus in Kerala' and reminded the Hindus that it was the caste rules and disunity among them, which was the root cause of the Rebellion. Therefore,

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83 Ibid.
87 Arya Keralam, editorial, as reproduced in Mathrubhumi 15th May 1923.
88 Malayala Manorma, 3rd October, 1922.
the meeting chalked out a programme to strengthen the unity of Hindus. But such a programme was not easy, as the caste Hindus were not ready to forgo the age old customs. Still Arya Samaj went on with their agenda of uniting the Hindus of Malabar and every means were adopted for the realization of the same. The Samaj secretary conducted an Essay competition on 'The Defects of Hindu community of Kerala and the resultant troubles in temporal, spiritual and communal sphere'.\textsuperscript{89} A screening committee consisted of three members – C. Krishnan (Mitavadi) Sankara Sastri (Malabar Journal) and T. Narayanan Nambiar - were constituted for this purpose. Even in the constitution of the screening committee – an Ezhava, a Tamil Brahmin and a Nair – the urge for uniting the Hindu community was visible.\textsuperscript{90} Thus, the aim of Samaj was to integrate the scattered and static Hindu community and to save it from internal contradiction.\textsuperscript{91}

The first attempt to eradicate pollution in Malabar was the re-conversion of chela nairs of North Malabar. They were a group of elite caste who were said to have embraced Islam during the time of Tipu Sulthan but retained the customs of Hinduism. Though they came back to the old faith after the annexation of Malabar by British in 1792, the high caste Hindus were reluctant to mingle with them. Arya Samaj, in co-operation with Uthara Kerala Nair Samajam, re-converted chela nairs to Hinduism. Under the auspices of Arya Samaj, a Pandhibojanam (interdining) was organized at Chovva near Kannur on 23\textsuperscript{rd} January 1923.\textsuperscript{92} Similar efforts were done in other parts of Kannur and after such efforts, chela nairs were assimilated to the fold of Hinduism. Arya Samaj also interfered in Tali Temple issue where

\textsuperscript{89} Malayala Manorama, 12\textsuperscript{th} October, 1992.
\textsuperscript{90} In the essay competition, interestingly a Christian named P.G. Thomas got the first prize, Mathrubhumi 7\textsuperscript{th} June 1923.
\textsuperscript{91} Editorial, Arya Keralam (official organ of Arya Samaj) as cited in Mathrubhumi, 15\textsuperscript{th} May, 1923.
\textsuperscript{92} Kerala History Association, op.cit p. 568-69.
low caste scavengers were banned from cleaning work in the temple premises. The Samaj workers persuaded the temple authorities and the issue was settled.\textsuperscript{93} In the midst, Arya Samaj was continuing its relief and rehabilitation work among Hindus in different parts of Kerala whenever and wherever such works were required. During the period of distress like the flood in Malabar in 1924, the revolt at Kalpathi in 1925, the epidemic in Travancore etc. they did yeomen service to the suffering Hindus.

The Samaj was not only concerned with re-conversion, but also formal initiation of polluting castes to the fold of Hinduism and thereby bringing purity to them in social and religious life. The latter of course was objectionable to high castes and it led to many untoward incidents in Malabar. The Samaj undertook a long campaign at Palghat against the restrictions on low castes to walk through the streets of Kalpathi \textit{Agrahara}. When certain Ezhavas tried to break this rule, the Brahmins resisted and some of the Ezhava families of Palghat embraced Christianity. This was an eye opener to the Samaj workers and they decided to interfere in the issue. The Samaj opened its branch at Palghat in 1925 and started their propaganda work against this social evil. When the Samaj workers tried to enter the \textit{agrahara} by force in November 1925, the Brahmins resisted and in the clash many were seriously injured.\textsuperscript{94} The Brahmins said that they had no objection to Christians and Mohamedan converts from polluting classes entering \textit{agrahara} because those were reorganized religions distinct from Hinduism.\textsuperscript{95} To the Brahmin's mind these were mere devices for conferring the right of entry in to \textit{agraharas} on classes, which were conscious of not having that right while they remained in

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Ibid.} p. 570.

\textsuperscript{94} P. Kesav Dev, \textit{Ethirppu II} (Mal.) Kottayam 1960. pp.43-44. Also see FNR dated 17\textsuperscript{th} November 1925. No: 5429-1- Home/Public TNA.

\textsuperscript{95} Extracts from G.O.S. relating to communal Movement (1875-1947) pp.642-44 \textit{FMF} 106 TNA
Hinduism as polluting castes or *Ezhavas*.\(^96\) The Samaj now realized that bringing about the unity of Hindus in Malabar, was not an easy task. However, in the midst, the Samaj leaders could win over the Brahmins and the *agrahara* was opened to all castes.

The situation in Kalpathy was worsened when the Muslims missionaries also appeared on the scene. The Madras Missionary Society under Abdul Aziz Sahib came to Palghat to convert the *Ezhavas* to Islam. This missionary group, sent by the Muslim merchants of Madras started organizing *Wa’az* (religious sermon) in different parts of Palghat city.\(^97\) Conversion and counter conversion became the order of the day in Palghat during this period.

As the District Magistrate observed, 'The situation in Palghat is complicated by a certain amount of hostility towards the Arya Samajists on the part of Mohamadans and Christian communities and there is reason to believe that Mohamadans are about to undertake an energetic counter conversion campaign. Revivalist movements in Malabar whether Arya Samajist or Mohamedans are naturally not very welcome to government.'\(^98\) Thus the already feeble thread of social harmony in Malabar was ruined through such activities.

Once normalcy was completely brought back in South Malabar, the Arya Samaj began to concentrate on converting the *Mappilas* themselves to the fold of Hinduism. Branches of Arya Samaj were now set up in the predominantly Mappila areas in South Malabar like Ponnani (1941), which had caused considerable resentment among the *Mappila*.\(^99\)

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\(^96\) *Ibid.*

\(^97\) *Mathrubumi*, 3rd December 1925.

\(^98\) *FNR* dtd 17th November 1925, No. 5429-1-Home (Public) TNA. Also see *Quami Report* (Madras), 14th November 1925 MNNPR. 1925-October-December, 1925, p. 1476 and *Mathrubumi* 3rd December 1925.

\(^99\) *FNR*, for the second half of November 1941. D.O. No. p. 4-22. TNA p.118.
centre of the Muslim missionary organization, Maunuthul Islam Sabha, this was a calculated move on the part of samaj and they tried to convert some Puslans (fishermen) into Hinduism. As E.M.S Namboodiripad observed, 'Arya Samaj and other Hindu communal organizations who came to Malabar, initially concentrated on their attention to relief work among the Hindu refugees and later on re-conversion of Hindus converted by rebels but in the last phase started converting the Muslims themselves'. Such efforts only led to the worsening of the communal situation in Malabar. The comment of Moozhikunath Brahmadathan Namboodiripad, the Congress leader of Malabar, seems to be relevant in this context. He says, 'the Hindu stance during the rebellion had already created resentment among the Mappilas. When, after the Rebellion, Sudhi was started, this resentment was doubled and this resulted in the transformation of the domain of Ali Musaliyar into a citadel of Muslim League'.

Though Arya Samaj could not gain deep roots in Malabar, it served atleast one purpose. It helped to imagine a 'Hindu community' in Malabar cutting across the boundaries of different caste groups. This imaginings might have helped in its own way to the emergence of social struggles for Temple Entry in Malabar like Guruvayur Satyagraha. The sense of Hindu, which Arya Samaj inculcated among the lower castes, got official consent with the Temple Entry proclamation of 1936 by which they were recognised as Hindus.

**Hindu Maha Sabha**

Another All India player who made their intervention in Malabar in the wake of the Rebellion was All India Hindu Maha Sabha. In the backdrop of

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consternating reports in Hindi newspapers, the Hindu Maha Sabha deputed Dr. B.S. Moonje in 1922 to prepare a report on the condition of converted Hindus and desecrated temples in Malabar. In August 1923 an elaborate report was submitted and this report got wide publicity among the Hindu organisations of India.\(^\text{102}\) This report turned to be the Magna Carta for the Hindu organizations who strived for bringing an organic unity among the caste ridden society of Hindus.

At the outset of the Report itself, Moonje pointed out that 'as good eventually results even from evil, the Hindus have to be grateful even for this Mappila Rebellion, as perhaps no less a calamity would have thus opened their eyes and awakened them a spontaneous desire to relax their age old orthodoxy.\(^\text{103}\) Regarding temple destruction, he remarked that 'hardly a few temples existed which had not been desecrated. He believed that 'Hindus in Malabar cannot hold their own against the Moplas unless they are reinforced and helped by Hindus from outside. If the Hindus do not pay immediate attention to this situation, before long the whole of this part of Malabar would completely be Mohammedanised like Kashmir, before our eyes".\(^\text{104}\) This is followed by analysis of the sociological causes for the mildness and docility of Malabar Hindus and the domineering and ferocious spirit of Mappilas. "The disintegrating and disheartening social customs and caste rules of Hindus regarding food, marriage etc breed docility of temper and softness of muscles against the all unifying and virile customs of Mohamadans breeding fanaticism and forcefulness of temper and wiriness of muscles', says Moonje.\(^\text{105}\) In the following pages of the report, he tried to answer the moot question – what was that induced mildness and docility of temper in Hindus

\(^{102}\) B.S. Moonje, "Forcible conversion in Malabar' B.S. Monje File No:12, NMML Delhi p.3.

\(^{103}\) Ibid. p.3.

\(^{104}\) Ibid p. 9.

\(^{105}\) Ibid p.11.
and fanaticism and readiness to kill and to be killed as soon as one renounced Hinduism and became a convert to Islam? He assigned four causes for such a scenario:

i) Departure from Vedic ideal of culture

ii) National diet of Hindus – vegetarianism

iii) Early marriages combined with vegetarian diet sapped all manhood and energy from Hindu races

iv) Absence of a common meeting place like masjid for Mohamadans, cutting across caste barriers.  

This kind of a discourse imagined in to existence a 'Hindu community' in Malabar by designating a population that ranged so widely in belief, practice, identity and recognition. Such Reports enabled the 'Hindus' to ignore internal difference and come to together as a 'cultural whole' and part of a pan-Indian Hindu community.

In March 1922, Dr. Moonje and other Nagpur leaders of Hindu Maha Sabha made a formal appeal in all leading dailies for funds to conduct purificatory ceremonies in Malabar. In an appeal, Karakare. K.G, the Hindu Maha Sabha leader observed, 'Division and hatred have made us cowardly and slavish.... There is no unity of faith among Hindus... The Moplas in their fanaticism have converted hundreds of Hindus to their fold by force. But this is not a novel thing. The orthodox in their turn have played their opponent's game by driving such unfortunate victims from their fold to seek shelter at their oppressor's feet by their unsympathetic attitude.'  

As per the report, an

\[\text{It is to be noted that many census analysts also have attributed the greater virility of Muslims to their dietary habits and in that sense, this is a derivative discourse.}\]

\[\text{Ibid, pp.14-15.}\]

\[\text{Indian Social Reformer (Bombay), 16th April, 1922.}\]
All India Hindu Maha Sabha was held at Calicut and a Malabar Hindu Religious Relief Fund was instituted, not only for purificatory purpose but also for the general socio-religious re-organisation of Malabar Hindus. Such narratives had its impact and funds flowed to Malabar from various quarters of the country. The rebellion thus provided an opportunity to the Hindus of other parts of India to declare their solidarity with the Hindus of Malabar.

**The Muslim Response**

The Muslim response to *Shudhi* campaign took the form of *Tabliq* (propagation) which was said to be fundamental religious duty binding all Muslims. The *Tabliq* had played a central role as a symbolic tool in the process of amalgamating the Malabar Muslims to the pan Indian Muslim community. It was the *Jamithe Dawate Tablique Islami* of Pune which extended its support to the suffering *Mappilas* during the Rebellion. It was the petition of Mohamad Abdurahiman, the congress leader from Malabar which was published in *The Chronicle* (Bombay) depicting the sorrows and sufferings of Muslim women and destitute in the rebel zones of Malabar, that led to the entry of *JDT Islami* in to Malabar. Moulana Qasuri, a wealthy businessman of Punjab happened to see this petition in *Chronicle* and sent his two sons – Muhiyudhin Ahmad and Abdul Qader Qasuri to Malabar to organize the relief work in Malabar.108 Thus a 13 member delegation of Poona JDT reached Calicut on 3rd April 1922 to organize relief work.109 They started relief camps at six places in Malabar providing food, shelter and clothes to Mappila destitutes and rebuilt around 300 houses in Southern Malabar.

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109 *Malayala Manorama*, April, 6, 1922.
Just like the Hindu Organizations, JDT also published its formal appeals to Muslims in all leading Muslim journals to contribute for relief work in Malabar, of course with exaggerated accounts of the sufferings of Malabar Mappilas. The appeal says, 'the wretchedness there [Malabar] is increasing day by day at a terrible rate. There were only two figures to be seen in Malabar evincing enthusiasm and joy; one of Kalan (God of death) and the other, hard-hearted authorities. But the Mappilas are immersed in a sea of sorrow and present a true picture of helplessness and misery. One look at them will melt even a stone'. The examples of sufferings cited in the appeal were, 'the corpse of a woman had to remain for many day uninterned in a village called Mampuram as there was not a single man (Mappila) in the village and Muslim women having to sell themselves and their character and Muslims their religion for a morsel of food'.

Such narratives constructed their own community as being aggrieved and endangered and the Hindus as being predatory. Muslims from all parts of India responded to such appeals and with the assistance of the community, JDT set up an orphanage at Calicut in 1922 which became a major Muslim institution in Malabar with the philanthropical support of the community. While the first president of JDT was Muhiyudin Ahmad Qasuri (1922-23), he was followed by Nazir Hussain Sahib (Madras) and Abdulrahiman Sait (Ooty) in the subsequent years, which shows the pan-Indian character of the institution. In the notice issued by JDT dated 18th July 1922 the agenda of the institution was made clear – 'JDT has studied the misery and tribulations of Mappilas after the rebellion. In both religious and secular education, Mappilas are lagging behind and hence detached from their brothers in other parts of India. All communities are engaged in the efforts for the eradication of ignorance. In this struggle for

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110 'Appeal to Muslims' (Mal.) by secretary of JDT Islam, in Kerala Chandrika, 2nd October 1922 and Muslim (Aleppey) 28th September 1922 – MNNPR, 1922, p. 1271. TNA.

111 Ibid.
domination, those keep aloof from such efforts, will be trampled by other communities. So each and every well-wisher of the community should strive for the educational uplift of Mappilas and thereby to enable them to keep pace with other communities. Solely depending upon the philanthropy of the well to do sections of the community, this orphanage before long turned to be a premier orphanage of Muslims of Malabar. It got contribution even from Bagdad Jamiiyathul Islamia Sangam through the District Collector. Though it was a missionary organisation, JDT confined itself to rehabilitation work among the Mappilas.

Maunathul Islam Sabha, which was started in 1900 at Malappuram, was an organisation involved in missionary work in Malabar. The sabha was formed in a meeting held at Mapappuram under the chairmanship of Cheriy Malyekkal Pookoya Thangal on 9th September 1900. It was attended by more than 800 Mappila dignitaries. It chalked out a programme to protect and further the divergent interests of the Muslims of Malabar and to help and initiate the new converts to Islam. The Sabha set up a residential seminary at Ponnani which provided religious instructions to the new converts. As per the annual report (1933) of the secretary of Maunath, an average of 600 converts was initiated to Islam through the Sabha. Within a period of 34 years (1900-1934), 18000 new converts were initiated in to Islam through the Sabha. In its 33rd Annual conference held in April 1934, at Ponnani, Attakoya Thangal appealed all the Muslims of Kerala to donate four Annas to the Sabha from each marriage ceremony of Muslims. It also decided to send a deputation to all Muslim countries for financial help.

112 Notice issued by JDT Islam Sabha dated 18th, 1922 as reproduced in Parappil Koya, op.cit p. 191.
113 Mathrubhumi, 14th August, 1930.
114 Mathrubhumi 21st July, 1933.
115 Mathrubhumi 29th April, 1934.
116 Ibid.,
Another Muslim missionary organization formed in Malabar was *Nadvathu Thableeq Sabha*; a wing of *Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema*, in its 10th anniversary meeting held at Kasargod in 1934 had decided to form a missionary wing.\(^{117}\) The *Sabha* was registered in March 1936 with K. Abdu as secretary and M.V. Muhamed Moulavi as president. 'Its aim was to propagate the true principles of Islam and to eradicate the misconceptions about the religion among the members of other communities by which thousands of people could be brought to Islam'.\(^{118}\) It also decided to send missionaries especially to Travancore and to set up a training centre to train the preachers. As mentioned earlier, the Madras based Islamic Missionary Society undertook missionary works in Palghat during 1925-26 in Palghat.

Thus through *Shudi* and *Thabliq*, the race to convert and reconvert damaged the remaining threads of good will between Hindus and Muslims in Malabar. Efforts by Arya Samajist to start the *shudi* movement in Malabar encouraged Muslims to do the same hardening the divide. Through their *Sudhi* and *Tablig*, both factions created a consciousness of 'us' among Hindus and Muslims. They undertook a theoretical project to redefine their social existence through the strategy of exclusion and inclusion. As Craig Calhoun opined, 'No culture exist which does not distinguish between 'us' and 'other'.\(^ {119}\)

The Arya Samaj initiated the difficult task of integrating the divergent caste groups with their own inherited ideas, traditions and practices within the frame work of a single mega tradition called Hinduism. For the first time, people began to attach greater importance to their religious identity as opposed to caste, local or national identity. The main thrust of Arya Samaj was to establish a proper definition of a 'Hindu'. The result of all these was subtle development of an enhanced consciousness of an exclusive communal

\(^{117}\) *Ibid.*, 

\(^{118}\) *Mathrubhumi*, 9th April, 1936. 

solidarity based on religion. On the other hand, the Hindu revivalism and chauvinism had its impact on the rise of an exclusive Muslim identity. The narratives of these Hindu as well as Muslim organizations, which constituted a ‘prose of otherness’, clearly demarcated the boundaries of Hinduism and Islam. Both type of communal discourses led to the formation of identity consciousness.