Men of ‘literary culture’ start journals and magazines and become leaders of society in course of time. The ‘true greatness of a nation’ consists in the number of its literary men, and the journals and newspapers, which the reading public supports and encourages. If you wish to criticize the action of ‘men-in-authority’ you should do so either by a speech or by contributions in the columns of a ‘Newspaper’.\textsuperscript{1} It is this unrelenting urge that motivated the stalwarts like Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon, Adv.Poovadan Raman, Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, Murkoth Kumaran, Adv.C.Krishnan and so on to launch newspaper institutions that sowed the seeds of revolution and change in Malabar in the last decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and the early decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

An important factor that contributed in no small measure to the general political awakening of the people and the shaping of public opinion in Kerala was, as in other regions, the rise of newspapers. The Malayala Manorama, Malayali, Western Star, Nazrani Deepika and Kerala Tharaka in Travancore, Satyanadam in Cochin and Kerala Pathrika in Malabar stimulated the political education of the people and developed in them a critical attitude towards the arbitrary features of Government and the prevalent evils of society. Chenkalath Kunhirama

\textsuperscript{1} Tithi Bhattacharya, \textit{The Sentinels of Culture, Class, Education and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal (1848-85)}, New Delhi, 2005, p.34.
Menon at Calicut and Kandathil Varghese Mappila at Kottayam in Travancore were the two pioneers in the field of Malayalam journalism, who raised its standard to a very high level. Fearless, independent, and of an unsullied character Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon wielded a powerful pen. A dispassionate judge of men and things, an ardent patriot and eminent scholar, he never hesitated to criticize and clash with the government. The *Malayala Manorama* at Kottayam devoted its attention in those days mainly to social and literary affairs. In fact a large majority of the newspapers had no ‘politics’; some among them championed the cause of the depressed classes.²

**Missionary Newspapers and Colonial Modernity**

Even though the press that was started off as a mechanism to duplicate the Bible and religious texts gradually turned into a communication medium, the history of which from *Rajyasamacharam* to modern Malayalam journalism has a story of several ups and downs, ebbs and tides. The German Basel Missionaries of Thalassery in Malabar started *Rajyasamacharam* as a magazine. It seemed to be purely a missionary journal with mission news from various centres in India. Another Malayalam magazine of Basel Mission was *Paschimodayam*. It also appeared as a secular periodical with the project of transmitting western/new knowledge. *Rajyasamacharam* had a premature death. From 1847 June to 1850 December it could publish 42 issues. Though the effort and labour, the missionaries had put forth for the publication was much, they did not collect any subscription fee. From the first issue onwards they had disclosed their intention behind

the journal. The objective was given in the form of a special statement in the first issue. “It is not known whether you may understand the actual meaning. It is not our idea to convey the news happening everyday in various countries. Also do not think that it is an effort to inform the various innovations in Malayalarajyam. Our country is God’s country (Deiva Rajyam), in other words Heaven (Swargarajyam). That country is not limited to Kerala or India. Jesus Christ, the King is reigning amidst his enemies. We feel that it is nice to convey these pieces of news to praise the King and to make his subjects happy. May God bless us”.3

The part played by the missionary newspapers is evident from the testimony of a Telugu Brahmin boy named Jagannathan, as carried in the article in the first issue of Rajyasamacharam. “In praise of Jesus Christ the King, and for the happiness of the subjects:-Heyi Bodhkar writes from Vishakapatanam in Telugu desam (Andhra Pradesh). A Brahmin boy named Jagannathan came to my school in 1042 (1867 A.D) to study English. He was diligent and learnt a lot. In 1044 he started learning along with other small kids. Although he was learning the truth quite for a long time, he continued to remain stubborn in the belief of his ancestors and espoused idolatry. When he could gain some knowledge dependent on vedantha he pretended that he was an advaita jnani (one who knows the concept of non-duality). But that belief did not sustain. It became clear for him that his soul was not part of the supreme soul. Also he grieved much due to the demise of his brother a few months back. He did not get relief from the Hindu Gods too. One day he read that Christians are aliens seeking their native land, the

3 Rajyasamacharam, June 1847.
heaven. Then he wept pondering over his doubts and said that he had been playing with God for such a long time. He understood that Christ sacrificed his life for us.4

Every such testimony could pierce into the heart of the reader. Murkoth Kunhappa says, “The Christian community of Malabar was a new one, a mix of several individuals baptized from various other communities. These individuals on conversion had to forsake the family and caste in which they were born. Naturally this led to their social and mental alienation. They lost the reins of their life when they deserted the rituals and beliefs that they so far followed. Therefore, the very aim of Rajyasamacharam was to extend them moral inspiration according to the new faith…In Rajyasamacharam the narration of the above kind of events was intended to compensate the moral stories which they learnt so far.”5

By dedicated work, Basel Mission could convert more people and as a result the membership in the Christian society was multiplied. When the Hindu believers espoused the new religion they were excommunicated from their own community denying for them a return. Thus they were in a way stranded between their ancestral Hindu background and the new Christian faith. This truth became an eye-opener for the missionaries and to solve the problem they started industries in many places to give employment to the new believers thereby providing them a new means of livelihood, habitation and name. For that the missionaries explored the literary means also. The second

4 Ibid.
5 Murkoth Kunhappa, Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini, (Mal), Kottayam, 1982, p.100.
journal in Malayalam *Paschimodayam* was the result of such an exploration. *Paschimodayam* was the second child from the family of *Rajyasamacharam*. It was Dr. Hermann Gundert, the ‘foster father’ of Malayalam language who nourished its growth. It started publishing in October 1847 and died a premature death in August 1851.\(^6\)

In appearance it was just like *Rajyasamacharam*, but in contents it differed much.\(^7\) *Rajyasamacharam* strengthened the foundations of the newly evolved Christian society in Malabar by expanding the horizons of their knowledge. *Paschimodayam* was started as a measure for the dissemination of scientific knowledge to its new members. For that they prepared various lessons of science and new inventions and published them in *Paschimodayam*. In a way *Paschimodayam* is the first science magazine in Malayalam. It may seem wonderful that such a journal was started one and a half centuries ago in Malayalam when Keralites could not even imagine a world outside. The various topics in *Paschimodayam* included astronomy, geography and etymology of Malayalam. By tracing the origin of Kerala along mythological and scientific lines, the missionaries published in *Paschimodayam* the books like *Keralappazhama* and *Keralolpathi*. It was indeed *Paschimodayam* that made accessible its history and tradition. One of the most important topics on which *Paschimodayam* laid its thrust was geography. Various countries in the continents of Asia and Europe were well explained in the issues of this journal. Also descriptions about the climate, rivers, mountains, deserts and oceans of Asiatic continent were given in detail. Thus a general awareness about the outside world was created before the


\(^7\) Ibid.
Malayali and through this they could shed the superstitions, irrational customs, rituals and traditions. In a way *Paschimodayam* was a mirror for the Malayalees to behold the west.  

Though these reading materials primarily devoted themselves to the dissemination of the gospels and the ethical postulates, they communicated a new socio-cultural sensibility. The overall content of the printed texts of the missionary didactics were not simply religious alone, but considerably socio-cultural. They carried the Christian ethos of reform and power of modernization and transformation. Thus not merely religious conversion, but virtually every other subject was presented in the missionary newspapers in the context of colonialism.

The reading practice facilitated through mechanical duplication was acting as a self-articulated force of one’s own transformation. Conveying the new knowledge about the world and the people, the mechanically produced texts were discharging the function of both the medium and the message of the colonial/Western culture. Since it was a message of transforming influence leading to the reconstruction of the people into colonial subjects, the medium turned out to be an instrument of subjectification. The fundamental level of the organization of thought about the people and the world was the colonial discourse which shaped contemporary cultural practices. Spreading the Western values and passion, missionaries cultivated a generation within the social structure

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who could view their culture and tradition through the eyes of the Westerners. This involved what has been called a reordering of the nature of Indian knowledge by which the existing body of knowledge was rendered in the form acceptable to the colonialist, which resulted in studies in philology, grammar, history, philosophy and science.\textsuperscript{11}

The news on the religious conversion of a Brahmin youth as carried in the first issue of \textit{Rajyasamacharam} is a discourse on the formation of colonial subjectivity. Two opposing worlds get depicted here. The first is one of \textit{vedantha}, \textit{adwaitha}, idol worship and ancestors replete with evil thoughts, wrong deeds, sorrow and untruth. The second is heaven, the world of truth and the life giver, Jesus Christ. The Brahmin boy moves from the first to the second. But in the news item, this conversion is not merely that. The first is an old religion where as the second is new. Christians are foreigners and they wander in search of heaven. Therefore, those who are against them are in search of hell. In short native land is hell and foreign land, heaven. The fact that the boy went to the school to learn English is also significant because that was how he came to know the truth. The \textit{Rajyasamacharam} brackets English, school and foreigner along with Jesus Christ, Christianity and the Christians.\textsuperscript{12}

It is pertinent to note the declaration in the first issue of \textit{Paschimodayam}, described as the first science magazine in Malayalam:


“It is surprising that light comes not only from east but from west as well. By God’s grace this Kerala has come under the British sway, and a bridge is being made, through which many things reach here from the West which were unknown to this land so far. There are many things in England besides the techniques and science you see here. There is much difference between both. In Hindu scholarship it is quite customary to meditate on Jeevatma and Paramatma and make slokas (divine verses) and thereby amuse the scholars. But based on keen observation to explain the physical phenomena for the benefit of the children in the prose style is the English way. If you like to read this kind of things we will bring to the Malayalees every month in printed form suitable items taken from British science in a way they can understand. Annual subscription fee is half a rupee”.13

*Paschimodayam* attempts to make colonialism look natural and to gain popular consent for it. It is mentioned that Kerala came under the English influence due to Divine grace. A bridge was built to bring knowledge, thanks to the British administration. In *Rajyasamacharam*, if it is through the Hindu-Christian contrast that the formation of colonial subjectivity was affected, in *Paschimodayam* it is the east-west contrast that controls the discourse. Knowledge is divided as English and Hindu (Indian). Indian knowledge comes out of meditation whereas English knowledge emerges from a keen observation of the world around. The first is in the form of slokas and is meant to entertain whereas the second is in prose and intended to help. In short two contrasting points are put up-Indian knowledge: meditation, slokas,

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13 *Paschimodayam*, October 1847.
amusement; and English knowledge: observation, prose, and help.\textsuperscript{14}

Under the guise of criticizing the limitations of Indian knowledge formation, \textit{Paschimodayam} tries to array reasons favourable to colonialism. Edward Said’s observation is relevant in this context: “… most of what the West knew about the non-western world it knew is in the framework of colonialism: the European scholar therefore approached his subject from a general position of dominance”.\textsuperscript{15} The declaration in \textit{Paschimodayam} testifies to the attitude of colonial superiority with which the missionaries approached Kerala.

The scientific progress of the West is upheld as the greatness of the white race. For instance, some lines in an article on astrology in the first issue of \textit{Paschimodayam} are worth quoting. “Those who have pursued knowledge have understood that astrology is ridiculous. Therefore right-thinking astrologers should recede from it and seek knowledge from observation and by the study of mathematics as far as possible. Realizing that human eyes require external support, the white man invented the telescope and scans the sky day in and day out using it.”\textsuperscript{16} Astrology was the means adopted by the feudal set up to consolidate its authority. In comparison with modern astronomy it has no relevance. The article in \textit{Paschimodayam} projects astronomy as the greatness of colonialism. It says that the white man invented the telescope to help the human eyes. Thus the picture of decline and degeneration of the dominated peoples, and the conviction that Europeans possessed superior knowledge and value systems enabled the

\textsuperscript{14} Shibu Muhammad, \textit{op.cit.}, p.110.


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Paschimodayam}, October 1847.
colonialists to embark on a programme of civilizing mission.\textsuperscript{17} Science and technology was more a cultural instrument in emphasizing the superiority of western knowledge.\textsuperscript{18}

Thus the press in the hands of the missionaries was an instrument effectively working up the people’s minds to be convinced of the benefits of reform and progress as defined within the regime of colonial epistemic order. In food habits, rationality, dress, games, furniture, nature of dwelling and other major as well as minor aspects of the general social life, the natives began to mimic the Westerners.\textsuperscript{19} Their notions of progress and reform generated demand for western goods and services are a topic of detailed inquiry. Nevertheless, how the press culture, managed and controlled by the missionaries, helped colonial resource expropriation and market expansion is relevant here. It is in that context the practice of advertisements through the colonial press, what is direct in terms of colonial market expansion is instanced in the case of western medicine. What is indirect is the preparation of society of western values and passion.\textsuperscript{20} The aftermath of all, was the setting up of the ‘colonial modernity’.

Journalism was the social seed that colonialism sowed among us. Kerala began to experience its results by the end of the 19th century. It was around this time that Keralites began to acquire the power of knowledge production. Whatever takes birth in history, be it technical knowledge, cultural form or political ideological theories, can develop

\textsuperscript{17} K.N Ganesh, “Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam”, \textit{op.cit.}, p.153.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid}, p.180.

\textsuperscript{19} C.I Issac, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.39-40.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, P.42.
only according to certain social rules. Newspaper was one of the western plants that took root in Indian soil. But the plant grew contrary to the wishes of colonialism. The Keralites who had become ‘slave of circumstances’, first under feudalism and later colonialism, became their masters by the end of the 19th century. Newspapers became tools in the hands of these new masters to protest against the king and the minister, to initiate the social renaissance movement and later to lead the struggle for independence as well as rights for the common man. The missionaries, their papers and printing press were merely the ‘unconscious tool’ in the history of the media in Kerala just as the Britishers were in the history of the growth of Indian society.  

The economic, political and ideological interventions of the colonial agent radically altered the caste based social ensemble of Kerala from early 19th century. The financial, political and cultural activities triggered by the colonial forces reduced the power of Brahmin class and gave though only in a limited way, the backward classes new spaces in society. At the end of the 19th century the feudal authority was replaced by the wealthy class who came from various castes and was strong enough to influence the society. As a result an economic order favouring commerce and industry was evolved by this time parallel to the agrarian one. In Indulekha the character Kesavan Namboothiri admits that he invested his money in one spinning

21 Shibu Muhammad, op.cit., P.113.
company.\textsuperscript{24} Therefore it is very clear that the natives were able enough to invest money in newspaper establishments also. Infact newspapers require two types of investments: intellectual and financial. By 1860 the affluent classes in Kerala had acquired the wherewithal for both investments. \textit{Paschimatharaka} (1864) and \textit{Sandishtavadi} (1867) both published from Cochin, were newspapers with Malayali share-holding. The fact that there were 17 newspapers in Malayalam in 1893 indicates the growing entrepreneurial capability of the natives.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Kerala Pathrika and Kunhirama Menon-Harbingers of Transition and Change}

It was by 1880’s that Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon made his debut in journalism by experimenting with \textit{Kerala Pathrika} from Calicut. \textit{“Kerala Pathrika} along with \textit{Kerala Mithram} (published from Cochin) could create an impression that free and fair journalism is a task with social commitment towards public welfare”.\textsuperscript{26} During this period in addition to the primary task of making the news available to the readers, the Malayalam press had to enable them to analyse the right and wrong in public life. Also it was the main obligation of the newspapers to highlight any work detrimental to the public cause irrespective of the position of the person it commits.\textsuperscript{27} In that sense \textit{Kerala Pathrika} is a model for \textit{Malayala Manorama} in Travancore and \textit{Kerala Sanchari} in

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\textsuperscript{24} O.Chandu Menon, \textit{Indulekha}, (Mal), Kozhikode, 1995, p.93.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Malayala Manorama}, 11\textsuperscript{th} February 1893.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Malayala Manorama} editorial by Kandathil Varghese Mappilai, 14\textsuperscript{th} February 1891.
\end{flushleft}
Malabar, in expressing opinions without fear and making criticisms against the bureaucracy.

The last decades of the 19th century was an age of new learning and change. In a way Kerala Pathrika marks the transition of the society to modern period. It witnessed the twilight of feudalism and the dawn of the Renaissance Age. The main objective of the journals like Rajyasamacharam and Paschimodayam was religious propagation. But with the publication of Keralamitram from Cochin in 1881, Kerala Pathrika from Calicut in 1884 and Malayala Manorama from Kottayam in 1890 the above scenario got totally changed. It was to highlight the corruptions in the Law and Justice Department in the princely state of Cochin and to bring them to the notice of the public that a Gujrathi merchant named Devji Bhimji started Kerala Mithram. But it was indeed Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon, the founder editor of Kerala Pathrika, the first visionary who upheld the idea of public opinion. With his magic wand, ‘the pen’ he guided the Malayalees to a new threshold to enter into the limitless realm of vernacular journalism. He dedicated the pages of Kerala Pathrika not only to publish news aimed at fighting corruption but also to encourage the writers of that period. A fearless person and a nationalist, Kunhirama Menon was a daring personality of Malabar during that period. Kunhirama Menon was the harbinger of momentous changes in the realm of thought and opinion. In the formative epoch of this new era he successfully combined practical journalism and public opinion.

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28 E.V Ramakrishnan, op.cit.
He was born as the son of Mullasserry Karunakara Menon, the supervisor of Kottackal Kizhakke Kovilakam and Chenkalath Narayani Amma in August 1857. Chenkalath is a famous family known throughout Malabar. After passing F.A examination he joined as a teacher in Calicut Basel Mission High School. It was from Madras Presidency College that he completed B.A. It is learnt that he was one of the first among those who passed B.A from Malabar. In those days (latter half of the 19th century) there was no difficulty for a B.A holder to enter into the government service, to get promotion and thereby to acquire money, pomp and power. But Kunhirama Menon who was interested in human values and public service started his career as a teacher.  

It was when Kunhirama Menon was working as a teacher in Calicut Basel German Mission High School and Zamorin’s School that he got an idea about the cultural backwardness of the parents of his students and felt the need for the cultural and epistemological upliftment of the local people. He was very sure that this situation can be resolved only through newspapers and journals. It was with that belief and confidence that he started the *Kerala Pathrika*.  

Apart from many other aims intended for a newspaper *Kerala Pathrika* had two other primary objectives, one the strengthening of Congress Movement and the other a crusade against corruption. The very source behind the birth of *Kerala Pathrika* is Kunhirama Menon’s fervour for the national movement. There is no other paper in Malayalam other than *Mathrubhoomi* that is born and brought up for the

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32 Murkoth Kunhappa, *op.cit.*
promotion of Congress Movement. The only difference is that whereas *Mathrubhoomi* is begot and nurtured during the climax of national movement, *Kerala Pathrika* was born when Congress was in its infancy. Also *Kerala Pathrika* had to start from scratch as far as newspaper readership and subscription was concerned since it was the first of its kind, whereas *Mathrubhoomi* had only to stand on the shoulders of its predecessors like *Kerala Pathrika*. In a sense *Mathrubhoomi* can be regarded as a grown up version of *Kerala Pathrika* during the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

About the inception of *Kerala Pathrika* V.Karunakaran Nambiar says, “It was Kunhirama Menon who introduced modern journalism and in it a vibrant and dynamic style. He can be called the ‘father of the modern Malayalam journalism’. While he was working as a teacher in *Kerala Vidyasala*, (the present Zamorin’s Guruvayruappan College) he participated in a conference on nationalism held at Calcutta in 1884. He was exhilarated by it and after return founded *Kerala Pathrika* infact one year before the inception of the Indian National Congress. *Kerala Pathrika* made incessant struggle against the bureaucratic overlordism; instilled a national awareness among the public and fought against evils”.\textsuperscript{33} The statement of Karunakaran Nambiar is corroborated by the observations of Murkoth Kunhappa, “From Calcutta he came back instilled with vigour and pride for national service. Also he had got a definite shape and programme for his long cherished wish to start a newspaper. In those days *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* was a widely

circulated paper in Calcutta which advocated the Indian cause forcefully and fought for the rights of the Indians”.  

The founders of *Amrithabazaar Pathrika*, Basant Kumar Ghosh and his brothers did not confine their journalism to social sector alone but extended to political and administrative sectors also by publishing articles and reports related to the same. The fearlessness they showed in highlighting the cause of public interest, resisting the wrong steps of the bureaucratic overlords and exposing the corruption of the authorities was marvellous. *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* also played a major role in inspiring the national consciousness among the Bengalis. All these deeds invited great displeasure of the Government. It did everything possible to make *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* inactive and deaf. Though the Vernacular Press Act of Lord Lytton in 1878 was aimed at generally on vernacular newspapers its main intention was to suppress *Amrithabazaar Pathrika*. But the owners of *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* rescued it from the clutches of that black law by converting it into an English newspaper overnight.  

It is not coincidental that many of those who participated in the Indian National Conference (which was the harbinger of Indian National Congress) held at Calcutta were editors too. It included the main leaders of the early Congress like Dadabai Navaroji, Govinda Ranade, Surendranath Sen, Surendranath Banerji, G.Subrahmanya Iyer and so on who were also editors.  

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It is true that right from the beginning itself, our newspapers have a blood relation with the national movement. In course of time it was more strengthened and intensified. It is quite imperative that since many of the newspapers were either owned by the national leaders or under the control of them they worked hard to nurture national consciousness among the public and thereby to intensify the freedom struggle. Therefore it is not amazing that many of the newspapers of the last phase of the 19th century were the playground of the great national leaders like Bala Gangadhara Thilak, Lala Lajpath Roy, Gopalakrishna Gokhale, Vipin Chandrapal, Pandit Malaviya and so on. The national movement became more vibrant with the advent of Gandhiji. The first decades of the 20th century were in fact a decisive period of the national newspapers. It was during that time the main newspapers that played a crucial role in the freedom movement were born. The main organ of the Indian National Congress, The Leader, the main organ of the Home Rule League, New India, the mouthpiece of non-Brahmin Sangh, Justice etc. are included in the above list. It was during this time that Gandhiji started Young India.37

This period also witnessed the birth of many vernacular newspapers with a national vision. In Bengali Nayak, Vasumathi, Navashakthi, Anandabazaar Pathrika, in Marathi Induprakash, Lokamanya, in Hindi Bharatha Mithra, Vishwa Mithra, in Tamil Swadesha Mithran, in Telugu Andhra Pathrika etc. were such papers. They appeared in various parts of the nation and contributed energy for the national movement. The list of papers in Malayalam include

37 Ibid.
It is said that Kunhirama Menon was very much fascinated and inspired by the conference on nationalism and the newspaper *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* at Calcutta. There is no doubt that in Kerala if there was any situation that discouraged Kunhirama Menon from starting a newspaper, the history and policy of *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* was enough to instill in him new inspirations to overcome the same. *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* had a considerable circulation among the English educated people of Malabar also. Imitating the name of *Amrithabazaar Pathrika*, Menon also thought of naming his paper as *Kerala Pathrika*. His friends too liked this name.

*Kerala Pathrika* which was started on 19th October 1884 is the first Malayalam newspaper from Calicut. It was started as a fortnightly. Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon, Member in the Calicut Municipal Council and Assistant Master in the Zamorin’s College was the Editor. A wealthy landlord and a Local Fund Board Member Kannambra Ramanunni Nair, K.N Chathukutty, Kareimetta Sankunni Menon (both respectable men and employees in the District Court, Calicut) and Vidya Vilasam Press Manager Koshi were the proprietors. The author of *Kundalatha* Adv.P.Appu Nedungadi, the

42 *Correspondence* 639, 18th June 1886, RAC.
later Deputy Collector Rao Bahadur P.Velayudhan and so on were a few among the editorial board. "P.V Krishna Warier says that though by birth the third, Kerala Pathrika could acquire the patriarchal position within no time. The writers like Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, Rao Bahadur O.Chandu Menon, and Kochi Diwan Peshkar C.Achutha Menon and so on were its early reporters. Kerala Pathrika also got the co-operation of the later Deputy Collector T.C Varghese, Mooliyil Raman, Vattampoyil Chathukutty Vaidyan, Kannampra Krishnanunni Nair and so on. Mahakavi Ulloor S.Parameswara Iyer is of the opinion that Kerala Pathrika had an advantageous situation as if it got the blessings of the ‘trinity’ (the lords Brahma, Vishnu and Siva) by the blending in it the short and pleasant style of Kunhirama Menon, the serious type of sentences of Appu Nedungadi and the humour brimming articles of Kesari. Dr.T.M Nair wrote a Malayalam series in Kerala Pathrika about the style of pedagogy and the food programmes in the medical college at Edinburough".\textsuperscript{44} Kerala Pathrika was printed from the Vidya Vilasam Press of Kalahastha Muthaliyar. It was in Kerala Pathrika that Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar made the display of his mettle.\textsuperscript{45}

Appu Nedungadi by assisting finance, contributing articles and participating in the shaping of policy was like the ‘Godfather’ of Kerala Pathrika right from the beginning. Many of the articles in Kerala Pathrika that enlightened the public in respect of political, social and cultural matters were contributed by him. Mooliyil Raman who was the translator in District Court, by extending advice, contributing articles

\textsuperscript{44} P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, pp.777-779.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}, p.781.
and making discussions with the editor helped *Kerala Pathrika* a lot. Kannambra Kunhunni Nair also contributed many articles.\(^{46}\) The articles written in *Kerala Pathrika* by Dr. T.M Nair about *Indulekha* and by Chandu Menon about *Mayoor Sandesham* were of-course commendable. Moorkoth Kumaran who wrote under the pseudonym ‘Gajakesari’, P.Velu B.A, C.P Achutha Menon and so on enriched *Patrika* by contributing many invaluable articles. By carrying articles on politics, community, literature etc. *Kerala Pathrika* tried to wake up the people and thereby made them enlightened in public affairs.\(^{47}\)

Kunhirama Menon claims, “My newspaper *Kerala Pathrika* is the first of its kind in Malayalam language and Malayalam district. Even though there were one or two vernacular papers in Travancore and Cochin their circulation was considerably little among the Malayalees”.\(^{48}\) Kunhirama Menon’s claim of this kind may be due to his lack of knowledge about the origin of *Rajyasamacharam* and *Paschimodayam* almost four decades back and considering the fact that the publication of *Keralopakari* was from Mangalore…. Perhaps since these were the facts that made Menon claim that *Pathrika* is the first real journalistic vernacular newspaper in Malayalam it can certainly be justified.\(^{49}\) Perunna K.N Nair also agrees with the above stand. He says that *Kerala Pathrika*, a weekly started in 1884 by Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon is the first newspaper from Malabar. “The earlier


\(^{47}\) G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.4.


publications like *Rajyasamacharam*, *Paschimodayam* and *Keralopakari* were just magazines*.50

**Journalism and ‘Ripples of Nationalism’**

*Kerala Pathrika* which is in fact a progeny of the nationalists’ conference held at Calcutta was true to its work also. “Indian National Congress was founded at Bombay after one year since the founding of *Kerala Pathrika*. It was Menon who translated the name ‘Indian National Congress’ to Malayalam as *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha*. From that day onwards *Pathrika* became the Congress organ in Kerala”.51 Policy followed by *Kerala Pathrika* is almost evident from the above mentioned statement of Ulloor S.Parameswara Iyer. Also it can be read from this statement that it was *Kerala Pathrika* that made Congress a popular movement among the people of Kerala”.52 Henceforward *Kerala Pathrika* used to use in its pages the name *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha* for Indian National Congress and *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* for Kerala Pradesh Congress. The Malayalam version of Indian National Congress as *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha* was acceptable to other papers also and they too started writing it henceforward.

In those days *Kerala Pathrika* was indeed the paper of the Congress Movement. The only ‘political work’ in those days was holding meetings to select delegates to attend the annual sessions of the Congress. In one such meeting held in 1903, twenty-one delegates were

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52 Puthuppalli Raghavan, *op.cit.*., p.86.
elected to attend the eighteenth annual session of the Congress.\textsuperscript{53} Kunhirama Menon participated regularly in the first few conventions of the Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{54} When a Congress Committee was formed at Calicut he was selected as its Secretary and he continued in the post for the first eight years.\textsuperscript{55} Kunhirama Menon’s fervour for Congress is very evident from the series of news items carried in \textit{Kerala Pathrika} to activate the Congress campaigns.

By strengthening the Congress Movement he wanted to achieve self rule and representation in Legislative Councils. For him Congress was the best instrument to fight for the Indian cause and to find solutions for the public problems. The selection of the delegates from Malabar to All India Congress Conventions was made through prior announcement as news item in \textit{Kerala Pathrika}. In such meetings he wanted to pass resolutions in respect of their demands so as to submit them before the Government as memorials and to get redressed.\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Kerala Pathrika} was of the opinion that when there is any public

\textsuperscript{54} G.Priyadarshanan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.3.
\textsuperscript{55} K.P Kesava Menon, \textit{op.cit.}, p.24.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} March 1889, MNNPR,TNA. In the article published in \textit{Kerala Pathrika} dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} March 1889 Kunhirama Menon invited the attention of the public to the necessity for holding meetings in Calicut to nominate delegates to represent Malabar at the forthcoming \textit{Mahajana Sabha} meeting in Madras. It is even thought that the delegates should lay before the \textit{Mahajana sabha} the grievances of the people consequent upon the disarmament of the inhabitants of certain taluks in Malabar, that this subject should be considered in the meeting and that a memorial should be adopted to submit before the Government in this connection together with the resolution passed there. In the paper dated 8\textsuperscript{th} November 1890 a correspondent writes that the leading men of Calicut should convene a meeting to consider what they should do in the matter of the forthcoming National Congress.
grievance people should hold meetings, consider the grievance, and then lay it before the central committees of the Sabha existing in the Presidency towns. In the case of Madras Presidency, the Mahajana Sabha at Madras should be made acquainted with all public grievances while public contributions should be made generally towards a public fund to be established for carrying out the proposals of the Sabha.57

But when the genuine grievances are not at all redressed despite various representations, Kerala Pathrika is forced to call for agitation. And for this end the paper itself took the initiative for mobilizing funds. In an editorial in August 1890 Kerala Pathrika said that the landlords and tenants in Malabar should at once pay up the subscriptions they have promised towards the Kerala Mahajana Sabha Fund. They should bear in mind that the Sabha has to get up for an agitation against the survey and settlement as early as possible. People should try to give a permanent existence to the Sabha as such an institution is necessary to represent popular grievances. In another report on the same day it listed the various problems and said that it is the Mahajanasabha which is now left to resolve them. “The British Government rules the country regardless of the welfare of the people. The survey and settlement are sure to ruin the people of Malabar. It is unjustifiable to disarm the whole population as a punishment for the outrage committed by a few Mappilas, and to throw into the sea all the weapons so collected. Respectable natives are prohibited from carrying arms, though East Indians are allowed to do so. Government have given arms to the princes and the native chiefs who are to certain extent capable of rising against the Government but not to poor ryots who have a necessity for

57 Kerala Pathrika, March 1886, MNNPR, TNA.
arms to protect their crops from the ravages of wild animals. The school fees have been so increased that poor people find it difficult to educate their children. The Kerala Mahajana Sabha should take up all these matters.”

The branch Mahajana Sabha meeting held at Cannanore also passed a resolution highlighting that the survey carried on Malabar is unnecessary.

In short Kerala Pathrika apart from exercising its mandatory duty of carrying news, leaps up amidst people’s problems, first informing and interacting with the authorities and subsequently bracing them up to fight for their rights.

Kunhirama Menon wanted the simultaneous growth of the Congress Movement inside the country and abroad. He welcomed the works of London Indian Political Agency invigorated for furthering the works of Congress in England. Through an editorial Kunhirama Menon called upon the people of Malabar to contribute lavishly towards the funds for keeping up the Agency live.

For Kunhirama Menon, Kerala Pathrika and Congress were inseparable. Also the works of both were intertwined. Kerala Pathrika was then working as an active vehicle and agent of the Congress, publishing even the silly news like the details of subscription fee from Congress workers.

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58 *Kerala Pathrika*, 23rd, August 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

59 *Kerala Pathrika*, 13th September 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

60 *Kerala Pathrika*, 7th June 1890, MNNPR, TNA. The leader says that it is of absolute necessity for furthering the work of the Congress in England. It also tells them that the money so collected is neither to be expended on decoration on the occasion of a Governor’s visit nor on constructing tanks or buildings in commemoration of a jubilee, but it is to be expended in meeting the charges incidental to the working of an agency pressing the introduction of the representative element into the Indian Legislative Councils.

61 *Kerala Pathrika*, 2nd August 1890, MNNPR, TNA. On August 2nd 1890 there is the news item of the Palghat Congress Committee which published the names of 36 subscribers with the amount (aggregating only Rs.60) of their subscription.
Kerala Pathrika condemned the unjust Government order not letting the teachers of local board from attending political meetings so as to prevent them from the activities of the Congress. The order treated these teachers as Government employees in respect of their presence in political meetings only. At the same time it denied them all other privileges due to Government servants. Kerala Pathrika wrote that this ruling would be reasonable if Government were to consider them as public servants in other respects also. It is unjust of Government to issue orders which are purposely meant to show that Government dislikes such meetings.  

Thus although Kunhirama Menon dedicated his prime of youth and the annals of his paper for the growth of Congress he deliberately kept a distance from it gradually when he found it difficult to adjust with its ideals in the later years. He became a staunch opponent of Gandhi’s non-co-operation movement during 1920’s. Because by then, the style of the liberal leaders like Kunhirama Menon who led Congress in the first phase and also Constitutional Liberal Democrats became out of date. The Satyagrahis although espoused non-violence were ready to breach the law.

Exorcising Corruption

towards the Congress fund. Most of the subscribers are vakils. One Namboothiri Brahmin also showed his interest in the Congress Movement by subscribing 4 annas. (A coin in British India).

Kerala Pathrika, 20th September 1890, MNNPR, TNA.


P.Govinda Pillai, Kerala Navothanam, Oru Marxist Veekshanam, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, p.66.
Other than Congress Movement the topic that attracted Kunhirama Menon the most was ‘corruption’. Dr. Chelanatt Achutha Menon reminds that Kunhirama Menon was not only very enthusiastic in attacking the corrupt officials but also encouraged others to participate in this fight. He narrates his experience about one of his meetings with the Editor Kunhirama Menon in connection with the publication of an article. Achutha Menon had written in *Kerala Pathrika* during the previous week an article *Udhyogathimiram* (Official Cataract) which dealt with the impudent and impolite behaviour of an officer. When he again reached the newspaper office with the new article he was directed to the Editor Kunhirama Menon and was introduced to him as the author of *Udhyogathimiram*. Immediately he asked Achutha Menon who was the officer in his mind when he was writing the article *Udhyogathimiram*. Without waiting for a reply Kunhirama Menon then immediately said, “In Calicut there are two, three more persons like that. You write about them too”.

In order to exorcise the demon of corruption *Kerala Pathrika* did hard work by writing editorials and articles. In this endeavour of Kunhirama Menon his right hand was Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar who was known by the name ‘Kesari’. He was instrumental in creating a healthy administrative environment in the District by jumping amidst the officials and by rebuking, advising, mocking and congratulating them. In fact by the witty and sarcastic articles of Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar and the fearless editorials of Kunhirama Menon,

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65 Chelanatt Achutha Menon, *Smarananjali*, (Mal), Kozhikode, p.38.
the officials were imbued with scare. In those days in the new set up of the British, when power was extended to bureaucracy, many of the officers became corrupt and despotic. To bridle them Kerala Pathrika tried its best. The performance of Kerala Pathrika is elaborated by Murkoth Kumaran in one sentence. “Kesari’ pounced upon the bureaucrats, slain some of them, chased some, blessed others and made a few virtuous. He trampled over the scene and set everything right eventually”. Kunhirama Menon utilized his sharp pen against the corruption and the dictatorial rule of government officers.

The stinging attacks made by ‘Kesari’ invited the venom of some bureaucratic overlords. It in turn was sometimes directed towards even Kunhirama Menon also and resulted in many fearful incidents. One fine morning in 1891 Police Sub inspector Itti Rarappan Nair went to Chenkalath house at Chalappuram in search of Kunhirama Menon. In the porch then there was only a small girl, Kunhirama Menon’s niece. She told the inspector that Menon had gone out. But in fact he was in the toilet. Hearing what she said he went to the mutt (abode of Tamil Brahmins) of Anantha Narayana Pattar, the Government Pleader of Calicut. On sight itself the inspector pulled the trigger of the gun and killed the Pleader. It is thought that this bullet was actually reserved for Kunhirama Menon. The reason for his venom was that Kerala Pathrika had criticized that officer for his unscrupulous way of collecting evidences in a criminal case. But the reason for his venom towards the

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68 Murkoth Kunhappa, Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini, op.cit., p.148.
69 Perunna K.N Nair, op.cit., pp.32-33.
Government lawyer so as to shoot him was not known. Later the inspector was convicted to death.\(^7^0\)

**Exploring other Avenues**

*Kerala Pathrika* highlighted world news and local news and along with it gave space for criticism and evaluation. The editor Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon used to make free and fair comments about political and social events and their further developments.\(^7^1\) Along with politics and public topics he gave prominence for literature, epistemological subjects, world news etc. also.\(^7^2\)

He wrote several reports in *Kerala Pathrika* advocating the cause of proportional representation on the basis of merit and the genuine exercise of franchise. He advised the females in the Calicut Municipality to exercise their right to franchise at Municipal elections.\(^7^3\) *Kerala Pathrika* could visualize the absurdity of electing the members to local bodies only on the basis of the amount of land property irrespective of competence and calibre. Also it lampooned the idea of increasing the strength of such mediocre *janmis* in the Legislative Council in the name of increasing people’s representation. It observed that if these bodies should be of any use to the people, it should enable discerning, courageous and self-respecting people to enter them.\(^7^4\)

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\(^7^0\) P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.780.

\(^7^1\) G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.3.

\(^7^2\) Perunna K.N Nair, *op.cit.*

\(^7^3\) *Kerala Pathrika*, 1\(^a\) March 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

\(^7^4\) *Kerala Pathrika*, 16\(^a\) September 1916, MNNPR, TNA.
Kerala Pathrika was the first representative of the media that highlighted the grievances of the tenants which gathered momentum in the later years and snowballed as a movement. In an article in 1886 Kerala Pathrika accused the committee at Madras engaged in considering the Malabar Land Tenure System for not making decision in any of the important points on the subject. It said that the people are eagerly expecting the issue of the Commission. The same article highlighted the insufficiency of the compensation ordinarily awarded to tenants for their improvements on the lands they held.\textsuperscript{75}

Kerala Pathrika extended moral support to Malayali Memorial of Travancore. It is this interest that protrudes in the editorial ‘Bhoopanmaarum Rajyabharanavum’ (Kings and their reign). In it Kunhirama Menon accused the practice of giving major posts to those from outside. In the absence of eligible local candidates this can be justified. But rejecting their claims and appointing the outsiders is meaningless. When the outsiders are appointed in the major posts it is the local people and the country at large that bear the loss because these outsiders have only one consideration, to take back the savings to their own land. But when locals are appointed since their savings will not go outside it will be shared among the people here itself and so ultimately beneficial to the country……Under the British government since the major posts are given to the Europeans they take back their savings to England. In the earlier period since the rulers belonged to this land they did not take back the savings to an alien land…It is the same thing that happens in Cochin and Travancore because of this kind of foreign rule…..When outsiders are posted they have only an intention to finish

\textsuperscript{75} Kerala Pathrika, April 1886, MNNPR, TNA.
the tenure somehow and so they do not have any genuine earnest desire for the welfare of the local public. So the postings of a country should be given to eligible locals only.  

*Kerala Pathrika* took efforts to publish the foreign news even in the 1890’s. “Dr. T.M Nair while he was a medical student in Scotland regularly wrote articles in *Kerala Pathrika* under the pen name ‘Madhavan’. The readers had the same eagerness to read the articles of ‘Madhavan’ as that they had for the articles of ‘Kesari’. After reading several comments about ‘Indulekha’ of Chandu Menon he wrote an article in *Kerala Pathrika*, the conclusion of which was like this, “I, living far away could not see Indulekha so far. But at last Indulekha will certainly come to ‘Madhavan’”. Reading this Chandu Menon laughed loudly shaking his belly and immediately he sent a copy of *Indulekha* to Dr. T.M Nair.  

During the early days of *Kerala Pathrika* many of those who could read Malayalam could not write it. Also many of the scholars did not know how to write prose. Even the letters were written in poetry. Therefore it became the duty of *Kerala Pathrika* to instill an interest among Keralites for Malayalam language. Also the people were not at all aware of their rights and duties. They were scared of the British officers thinking that they will be penalized if something appears against these officers in the paper they subscribe. To overcome such a situation Kunhirama Menon identified and recruited to his institution, a few daring persons who were able to read and write. He encouraged

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76 *Kerala Pathrika*, June 1894, MNNPR, TNA.
78 Interview with Mannalath Sreedharan on 10th May 2004.
them to become good and courageous journalists by allowing them to write free and fair reports in *Kerala Pathrika*.

E.M.S Namboothirippad is of the view that stalwarts like Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon (*Kerala Pathrika*), C.P Achutha Menon (*Vidyavinodini*), Kandathil Varghese Mappila (*Malayala Manorama*) and K.Ramakrishna Pillai (*Swadeshabhimani*) made literary service through journalism. Using the papers they encouraged the writers and laid the foundations for a new movement called journalism.

**Evolution of public opinion**

Due to the continuous work of *Kerala Pathrika*, a simple style brimming with vigour and vitality evolved in Malayalam and got propagated gradually. Kunhirama Menon was very proud of the excellent service rendered by *Kerala Pathrika* for the first twenty five years since its inception. “The transformation that occurred in Kerala in respect of public opinion and the general awareness of the people during the last twenty seven years can be very well deciphered if we make a perusal of the situations then and present. Today I can proudly say that in Malayalam there is some public opinion although not much predominant. Also now there is no scarcity of reporters or articles. Now even among those who are not acquainted with English language there are competent persons who can write excellent articles on various subjects and who can present arguments in a fair manner in debates and dialogues. Many of the articles published usually in my paper are an

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81 G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.10
evidence for the same. Also the public has now aversion in making abuses and insults. They are now happy to see and evaluate the world news with more seriousness. The number of corrupt bureaucrats is decreasing day by day and the people have now started feeling detestation towards the corrupt officials and respect towards honest and gentlemen officers. Also the people have neither hesitation nor fear to write to the papers about corrupt officials and unjust landlords and thereby making them to stop such evil practices. Respect for truth and freedom is also scaling new heights everyday. These kinds of changes although evolved in the course of the transition of time it cannot be said that newspapers have not played a considerable role in that. There is no doubt that the main reason for the increased awareness of national news among public is the newspapers”.

Being very much pleased in Kunhirama Menon’s efforts towards social reformation and in his earnestness to make the officials responsive and responsible, Travancore Maharaja Vishakham Thirunal subscribed 200 copies of the paper aimed to circulate among the Government officials of Travancore. Kunhirama Menon’s sincere journalistic exercises made him known even outside Malabar. It was because of this reason that he was invited to the world conference of editors as a delegate, held in London in 1895. He was one among the three invitees from India. The editors of The Hindu and Amrithabaazar Pathrika were the others. There is nothing wrong in considering

83 Perunna K.N Nair, op.cit., p.33.
Kunhirama Menon’s journey to London as the first abroad journey of a Malayali journalist. He got the opportunity to acquaint with Swami Vivekananda when he was in London. He spent there one year.\textsuperscript{85} The fact that Kunhirama Menon was invited by the Government to help the Civil Service Commission with his views on the subject is also a proof, of the importance they attached to the paper.\textsuperscript{86} It is pertinent to remember that this rare invitation from the British authorities was received only when \textit{Kerala Pathrika} was only three years old. It was in such a short period that this paper ascended such heights. In the coronation ceremony of George V at Delhi, Kunhirama Menon was a special invitee from the editors.\textsuperscript{87}

While he was in London to participate in the world conference of newspapers, his younger brother Komu Menon was in charge of \textit{Pathrika}. During that time sharp criticisms were darted in \textit{Kerala Pathrika} against Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran’s works \textit{Amarashathakam} and \textit{Mayurasandesham}. Enraged by this Keralavarma made the Travancore Government to stop the subscription of the 200 copies of the paper. It was after his return from London that Kunhirama Menon learned about the retaliation but he was not at all unhappy. Enduring what happened, he made a daring reply that he does not want the help of those who do not honour the freedom of expression.\textsuperscript{88}

\textit{Kerala Pathrika} was a role model for \textit{Malayala Manorama} in the expression of public opinion and in the making of criticism against the

\textsuperscript{85} G.Priyadarshan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.4.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, February 1887, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{87} P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, p.777.
\textsuperscript{88} Perunna K.N Nair, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 34-35.
bureaucracy and feudalism without any fear. *Pathrika* was once forced to pay a fine of Rs. 51 for publishing an article against the Government. K.P Kesava Menon is of the opinion that this may be the first case in Malabar in which an editor is inflicted with punishment for the freedom of press. By this time itself the newspapers undertook the task of analyzing the good and evil in public life besides carrying news items.89

Any amount of praise showered upon the begetters of *Kerala Pathrika* would not be too much when we think of the adverse situation in which a vernacular paper in Malabar was started.90 P.K Gopalakrishnan says in the book *Chandu Menon* that *Pathrika* was a newspaper which could go in par with the most progressive ideas that evolved in India during that time.91 As a result of hard work *Kerala Pathrika* earned name and popularity throughout Kerala and Kunhirama Menon got the honorary title, ‘the father of Malayalam journalism’.92 Kunhirama Menon could present a daring journalistic paradigm before the people of Kerala. The policy and opinion of *Kerala Pathrika* and its editor Kunhirama Menon and the related events are milestones in the history of Malayalam journalism. Newspapers in the west which were started for the dissemination of information in fact dared to make opinions and criticisms only after a prolonged time. But *Kerala Pathrika* right from birth itself fought for the freedom of expression.

91 G.Priyadarshanan, op.cit., p.4.
92 Perunna K.N Nair, op.cit., pp.32-33.
In the New Century

*Kerala Pathrika* changed a lot in the new century. Though it was like a ‘scavenger’ of society cleaning it from the garbages of corruption, and a fighter of Congress Movement working towards the national cause, it seems that *Kerala Pathrika* did not show much concern for the depressed classes in the first phase of its life. It may be due to many reasons. At the same time it started to attack the caste and caste-related problems in the later years although not in an aggressive way.

It is a truth that caste discrimination is the major obstacle that hinders the progress of India even today. Kunhirama Menon is the great visionary who explicitly told nearly a century back that without cutting the roots of caste discrimination the country cannot make a march towards progress.93 It is this anti-caste stance and enthusiasm for secular education that made Kunhirama Menon to publish article against the attempt to establish sectarian universities in India. In it he said that establishment of sectarian universities in India, would not be an imperative necessity if provision could be made in the existing institutions for imparting religious instructions. The proposed institution cannot expect to have any greater liberty in matters of education than existing ones enjoy. He concluded that on the above grounds the paper is constrained to give its support to the resolution passed at the meeting held in the Calicut Town Hall to oppose the movement for the establishment of sectarian universities.94

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93 *Kerala Pathrika*, December 1917, MNNPR, TNA. Kunhirama Menon wrote in December 1917 on the topic, ‘caste related evil practices’: “The main reason for the retrogression of India and its people is the caste discrimination. Only by eradicating that demon, our nation can achieve progress”.

94 *Kerala Pathrika*, 2nd December 1911, MNNPR, TNA.
Kunhirama Menon always emphasized and tried to establish morality in journalism. He responded strongly when the journalistic sphere of Travancore became communal and sectarian. He wrote in *Kerala Pathrika* that when the British implemented Press Acts in Malabar everybody protested and condemned the Government. But when we think of the state of some of the vernacular newspapers of Travancore and Cochin we can understand the vacuum felt there due to the lack of Press Acts. It is a truth that there are a few newspapers in Cochin and Travancore which are run in the most cultured way and as a result highly respected by the people. But there are a few papers engaged in igniting the communal hatred and tension among the public by abusing the gentlemen and tarnishing the honourable communities even saying the names. One paper abuses the Nair community; another paper abuses the Namboothiris by using words which will not be digested by decent people and gentlemen; another paper abuses Thiyyas, Thiyya leaders and their Guru in the most absurd fashion. Actually in doing these the perpetrators may have some happiness, but they don’t think about the aversion and detestation invoked in the minds of gentlemen by such reports. If the words and sentences used by the newspapers in Travancore are used by some scoundrel or alcoholic in the public streets here, the police would have certainly arrested and charged them. It seems very amazing that the Travancore Government permits such newspapers to print this kind of abominable articles and to send it to other states with the impression of Government seal….If this system continues it will result in the inflaming of communal tension and thereby riots may break out. It is unimaginable to people in Malabar to think about how in Travancore under the reign of Diwan Bahadur
M. Krishnan Nair, these newspapers carry such malicious reports and articles.\textsuperscript{95}

**Journalist Uncle - A Role Model**

Chelanatt Achutha Menon comments, “For about thirty years in Calicut city it was Kunhirama Menon alone was the ‘Journalist Uncle’…. Today it seems very amazing when we think of the fairly large circulation that *Kerala Pathrika* enjoyed at one time. Everybody loved, respected and feared its editor. He did not rebuke anybody unnecessarily. Those who harm the public whoever it is automatically became the subject of his rebuke. In Malabar there was no family which was not known to him. When you meet him if you tell your family name immediately he will ask you whether you are not the nephew or the brother of so and so. He was familiar to everybody due to his public service as Municipal Councillor and Bench Magistrate. In short as Sanjayan says he was metaphorically a ‘Grand Uncle’ of Malayalam joint family. In him harmoniously fused the commanding power, affection and the seriousness due to an uncle”.\textsuperscript{96}

Kunhirama Menon spelt out guidelines for gentlemanly and meaningful journalism in Malayalam. In connection with the 60\textsuperscript{th} birthday of Kunhirama Menon, K.C Mammen Mappila wrote in *Malayala Manorama* an editorial with the heading ‘*Kerala Pathrika*’. “Journalism is a very decent and dignified profession abroad. The editorship of *London Times* is much respected and valued than the Prime Ministership of England. The American President Roosevelt after

\textsuperscript{95} *Kerala Pathrika*, 18\textsuperscript{th} September 1916.

\textsuperscript{96} Chelanatt Achutha Menon, *op.cit.*, p.47.
quitting the post became the assistant of the Chief Editor of a newspaper named *Outlook*. But in Malayalam journalism during the days of its infancy the reins were controlled by those who were mediocre and not much educated. Journalism was then not lucrative enough to attract the competent hands that are able to get some other professions. In such a situation by becoming the Editor of *Kerala Pathrika* Menon has certainly enhanced the image of Malayalam Journalism. Had Kunhirama Menon who passed B.A thirty years ago entered the government service, he would have now climbed the ladder of power and reached unimaginable heights. It may be agreed by everybody that Kunhirama Menon is a role model in the running of *Kerala Pathrika*.”

The Herculean task of Kunhirama Menon in establishing a newspaper from nothingness cannot be compared to anything. It was a decade after Kunhirama Menon’s advent to journalism that Kandathil Mammen Mappila, a B.A degree holder like Kunhirama Menon, was initiated into the *Malayala Manorama* newspaper as a successor to Kandathil Varghes Mappila. This has been portrayed as a great sacrifice in those days. Yet he came to take the reins of *Malayala Manorama* due to persuasions. No doubt, if the task of Mammen Mappila is regarded great Kunhirama Menon’s task is much greater. Because Kunhirama Menon, a B.A degree holder during the 1880’s, had a more excellent future. In British Malabar the scope for government job was comparatively better and unlimited. Yet he was voluntarily dedicating his life to make the people more cultured. Also Kunhirama

97 *Malayala Manorama* 21st July 1917.

Menon, a great visionary was laying the foundation for the first newspaper when Mammen Mappila was just following the footsteps of the founder of Malayala Manorama, Kandathil Varghese Mappila, with paradigms more than one before him.

Kunhirama Menon’s relations with national movement became sour later on. He did not like the tide of non co-operation movement at all. With the help of his son Padmanabha Menon he somehow managed to run the paper. He retired totally from the editorship in 1932. Without much delay he was bed ridden due to paralysis. His drinking habit also affected his health. He was dead on 16th September 1935.99

Poovadan Raman-To Fill the Vacant Space

Kerala Sanchari was started four years after the birth of Kerala Pathrika. In respect of style, outlook and approach prima-facie Kerala Sanchari was not much dis-similar to Kerala Pathrika. In this context there is a striking question then why Kerala Sanchari was founded by Adv.Poovadan Raman. We cannot imagine that it was just to closely follow the heels of Kerala Pathrika raising little amount of competition and at the same time extending support and help so as to strengthen its mission. Only on a serious analysis of reports it published and the audience it anticipated we can find if Poovadan Raman had any agenda other than mere dissemination of news. If it was to command respect in the society was his aim, then his English newspaper Malabar Spectator itself was enough for him. But on close analysis it can be presumed that he had some other far reaching aims in starting Kerala Sanchari.

99 K.P Kesava Menon, op.cit., p.34.
Poovadan Raman had started in 1879, five years before *Kerala Pathrika*, an English weekly named *Malabar Spectator*. It is true that it was not a Malayalam paper. Yet it has a prominent place in history since it was a trend setter in journalism in Malabar. Later it was renamed as *Westcoast Spectator*. The founder of this paper Adv. Poovadan Raman, the most cultured and daring advocate was the genius who laid the foundation for modern style of journalism in Malabar although it was in English.¹⁰⁰

Raman was a rich, educated cultured and talented Thiyya. He had acquired the experience in running a paper by publishing *Malabar Spectator*. Also he had obtained wider network of connections with the Europeans as well as native officials in that capacity. He was a daring fellow, an ardent fighter and he was willing to go to any extent in championing a cause. This is evident from his posting of Dr.Kees, a fellow exiled from the neighbouring state of Travancore, as the editor of *Malabar Spectator*. It is true that he respected the talent, and when it was lacking in Malabar he was ready to borrow the same from Travancore and impart it to his local people. His vision was in such a way very far-sighted.

Murkoth Kunhappa traces the history and origin of *Malabar Spectator*. “Poovadan Raman started in 1874 the ‘Spectator Press’ in Calicut. From there he started the English weekly *Malabar Spectator* in 1879. It was just before that Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran, Dr.Kees and so on became subject to the hatred of the Maharaja of Travancore. Kerala Varma was put under house arrest at Harippad in

¹⁰⁰ Puthuppalli Raghavan, *op.cit.*, p.87.
1875. Dr.Kees was banished from the country. Dr.Kees had the popularity as one able to write very sharp articles in English. It was that quality of him the very reason for his banishment. Hearing the news of banishment Poovadan Raman invited Dr.Kees to Calicut and made him the editor of *Malabar Spectator*. The last days of the rule of Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja in Travancore were marked by several intrigues and counter intrigues in the government service. Then Dr.Kees was also in the government service. He was a friend of both Kerala Varma and Crown Prince Vishakham Thirunal. He used to write in various papers of India articles criticizing the mal-administration of the Princely States. It is known to many that Vishakham Thirunal too wrote in the pen name of ‘Brutus’ many articles against the King. Ayilyam Thirunal was under the impression that Dr.Kees was behind all these stratagems. It was in such a circumstance that Dr.Kees was banished and Kerala Varma was put under house arrest. It was almost at the same time Malabar witnessed the birth of *Malabar Spectator*. Kees who was banished from Travancore for subverting peace was immediately posted as Editor of *Malabar Spectator* at a very high salary. Rolo Platel was appointed as his assistant.  

Dr.Kees was the first journalist banished from Travancore. The reason was his bold and independent criticisms showered against the despotic rule of Ayilyam Thirunal. The most noticeable quality of Poodvadan Raman was his indomitable courage. He was brave enough to invite to British Malabar, the very same person who was banished from Travancore which was also under the British Crown. And that too, was for his calibre to criticise the injustice in eloquent words. Thus the

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charge levelled against him there, happened to be his merit here. Indeed Poovadan Raman was a visionary who did many things ahead of time aimed at the forward march of the nation on the path of progress.

*Malabar Spectator* raised its voice against all kinds of injustices in the land. Numerous enlightening articles in modern science, culture, politics, literature, sociology etc. were published in it. Also it darted sharp criticisms as part of campaigns. In fact it was a trend setter for the vernacular newspapers, *Kerala Pathrika* and *Kerala Sanchari*. During the 1890’s these three papers created ripples throughout Malabar and thus became a mile stone in the journalistic history of India.

Anyhow the five years period from 1879 to 1884 marks the unquestioned and undisputed sway of *Malabar Spectator* here. During the 1880’s Raman sometimes had not even in his imagination to start a vernacular newspaper. Had he anything like that, he could have done it without any difficulty as he had gained from *Malabar Spectator* the intellectual capital and experience in the running of a paper. Also he was a very rich man having enough financial capital. It was he who provided a major chunk of land for Cannanore Railway Station on public interest. He is the first Malayali who sent his son abroad for higher studies.\(^{102}\) His daringness to start an enterprise is evident from his way of launching of *Malabar Spectator* and inviting Dr.Kees, a persona-non-grata in Travancore. Therefore it is to be presumed that there was nothing that could have hindered Raman from starting a vernacular newspaper if he had any interest and imagination.

\(^{102}\) Interview with Murkoth Ramunni, Thalassery on 15\(^{th}\) November 2007.
At the same time since its birth in 1884 *Kerala Pathrika* and Kunhirama Menon were actively engaged in the strengthening of Congress, in waging a battle against corruption and in creating public opinion. Among the leaders of the Renaissance period those who had extended fervour to the Indian National Congress resisted caste discrimination in favour of the upper class in varying degrees.\(^{103}\) In such a situation when looking through the spectacles of caste it can be seen that *Kerala Pathrika* was laying its thrust on the news items related to upper castes including Nairs only. An in-depth analysis of the available news items in *Kerala Pathrika* from 1884 to 1888 (period between the birth of *Kerala Pathrika* to the birth of *Kerala Sanchari*) is self explanatory. It can be seen that *Kerala Pathrika* never attempted seriously as a mission the reformation of the depressed classes at a time when it endeavoured for that of the Nairs.

Since *Kerala Pathrika* was a newspaper first of its kind and started from scratch it is sure that it might not have any idea of who should be its audience. Since Kunhirama Menon was a member of the Nair community and since majority of the literate folk belonged to that community it is quite natural that treatment of news items was mostly vis-a-vis to their interests. In those days even the cultured Nairs had some aversion for the depressed classes including the Thiyyas. Some of them expressed it openly. For example when Churayi Kanaran a Thiyya, was posted as Head Munshi in Calicut Hajur Kacheri (collectorate) in 1847, Hindu officers protested it by mass resignation.\(^{104}\)


\(^{104}\) Article by C.Krishnan in *Mithavadi Special Supplement*, Calicut, 1925, p.45.
But some of them did not express it openly; they kept the disgust in privy. Anyhow a cultured man like Kunhirama Menon was wise enough to see that it never precipitated in the pages of Kerala Pathrika. During the two years of its work Kerala Pathrika was able to get a circulation of only 904 copies.\textsuperscript{105} Kunhirama Menon might have been doubtful as to how the Nair readers would receive his paper if he attempted more coverage for the depressed classes and if so about the fate of his paper. Because in those days the upper class people did not extend any endurance towards Thiyyas and other lower castes however educated they are. Therefore it was with much scare and fear the Thiyyas accepted even government postings.\textsuperscript{106}

In such a situation deliberately or undeliberately Kunhirama Menon might have been forced to ignore the news of the depressed castes for the time being. During the early period, in Kerala Pathrika local news items were published in the form of letters. It published simultaneously letters of diverse nature. But most of them were primarily related to Nair community only. A letter published in an issue of August 1886, Kerala Pathrika says that the long standing custom forbidding the Nair females of North and South Malabar to cross the Korapuzha and the Kallai River respectively is one that should be adhered to.\textsuperscript{107} It seems funny that Kerala Pathrika at a time when Nairs were arguing for marriage reforms was upholding the conservative view of restricting Nair women by not letting them to cross the traditional barriers. This is again ridiculous because there are various other matters

\textsuperscript{105} Correspondence 639 dated 18\textsuperscript{th} June 1886, RAC.
\textsuperscript{106} Article by C.Krishnan in Mithavadi Special Supplement, op.cit., p.47.
\textsuperscript{107} Kerala Pathrika, August 1886, MNNPR, TNA.
which attract serious attention other than trifles like women crossing the rivers.

*Kerala Pathrika* of December 1885 says that the *karanavans* were pressurized by various means including civil suits, to provide for education. It also published a letter praising a junior member of a Nair family for instituting a civil suit against a *karanavan* for the expenses of English education. Madras Native Newspaper Report says that *Kerala Pathrika* of October 1886 carried several letters and articles advocating changes in the *marumakkathayam* (matrilineal system) law of inheritance and impartibility of property. Another report suggested that almost everyone who was involved with the question of marriage reform viewed the Nair law of inheritance, family organization and marriage custom as linked with Namboothiri dominance either in their origin or in their perpetuation. Any reformation in the Malayali marriage customs is impossible unless it is made compulsory that all Namboothiri Brahmins should marry girls of their own caste. All the above news items are related to Nair community. None with Thiyyas or other depressed classes.

Also if we compare three separate reports of *Kerala Pathrika* regarding inhuman treatment, the discrimination it had towards the depressed classes will become more evident. In an article in the issue of May 1886 says that the District Judge of North Malabar who apparently shows that he dislikes people visiting him on Saturdays, sometimes gets his visitors disgracefully treated by servants, the visitors being pushed out of his house. The article concludes with an opinion that it is very

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108 *Kerala Pathrika*, December 1885, MNNPR, TNA.
109 *Kerala Pathrika*, October 1886, MNNPR, TNA.
110 *Kerala Pathrika*, 23rd May 1891, MNNPR, TNA.
necessary that such persons should not be allowed to remain long in the
same district.\textsuperscript{111}

In the April 1890 issue \textit{Kerala Pathrika} highlights that the service of two or three companies of native sepoys engaged in the Burma Field Service have been dispersed with, without even giving them a gratuity. European soldiers would never submit to such a treatment but would fight against it. But these are natives and have no one to whom they can represent their grievances.\textsuperscript{112}

But the enthusiasm with which \textit{Kerala Patrika} argued for human dignity in the above case of visitors who gets ill treatment in the hands of the magistrate or the native soldiers who have been denied gratuity does not seem in the report it published about the slave trade of Cherumas. The editorial in the \textit{Kerala Pathrika} of September 1898 states that Englishmen are so generous and ready to put down slave trade wherever it exists. The article concludes with the mere suggestion that the \textit{amsam} (village) Revenue Inspectors will be able to give additional information regarding this nefarious practice. Also it invites the attention of Collector and the Government in this matter.\textsuperscript{113} Here by allowing slave trade there occurs the gross violation of not only Indian Penal Code but human justice also. Freedom in the ‘pages of the paper’

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\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, May 1886, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, 26\textsuperscript{th} April 1890, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, 24\textsuperscript{th} September 1898, MNNPR, TNA. In the news item it states that there exists slavery in a certain form among cultivators of the soil in Malabar especially the Mappilas. The Cherumas, an extremely poor race that knows not what liberty is, are brought sometimes at the rate of 8 rupees each by the cultivators who employ them on their farms and treat them as part and parcel of their holdings. The slave Cherumas have great regard and affection for their masters and will not reveal anything calculated to push their masters into jeopardy. The article however gives a hint that the slave Cherumas call their masters by the title of \textit{Thampuran} (a King or God), while they call other Mappilas by the simple name Mappila.
\end{flushright}
does not mean anything to a slave. Just writing in newspaper about slavery is ridiculous. Because it is meaningless to explain about the right of freedom unless the slaves actually know what freedom really means. Therefore to enlighten them about freedom and to mount pressure by campaign to emancipate them from bondage were the duties expected of a newspaper. At the same time Malayala Manorama vehemently argued for the education and freedom of worship of the Pulayas. In Malayala Manorama, even the first editorial in 1890 was about the education of the Pulayas. In those days not a single paper dared to speak for Pulayas. That editorial invoked the message to treat the Pulayas as human beings and to try to elevate them through education.

In Malabar according to Sections 370, 371 etc. of the Penal Code which came into force on 1st January 1862 slavery was totally banned. Yet the high caste people employed Cherumas as slaves and treated them as beasts. In the novel Saraswathivijayam there is the description of how a Brahmin named Kuberan Namboothiri sees a Pulaya. “This Brahmin treats human beings like Pulayas as part of his movable property. It is doubtful whether he has come to know the British Act by which slavery is banned”. In this context it cannot be said that there is much difference between the views of Kuberan Namboothri and Kerala Pathrika. Other than showing the existence of slavery it exhibits little concern for those hapless human beings who is treated as less than human beings.

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115 Malayala Manorama, 22nd March 1890.
Thus directly and indirectly *Kerala Pathrika* was ignoring a chunk of the society by not giving the concern it deserved. In such a context Poovadan Raman might have felt the vacuum created by *Kerala Pathrika* by keeping aloof the depressed classes from its purview. In all other respect the functioning of *Pathrika* might have been agreeable for him. Certainly *Kerala Pathrika* was a model for Poovadan as a vernacular. Only after the birth and growth of *Pathrika* he might have understood of its possibility and potential. When *Kerala Pathrika* was highlighting the issues of Nairs, and as a result depressed communities were unheeded, Poovadan Raman, a lover of his community might have felt pangs. In such a lamentable condition Poovadan might have also wanted to enlighten Thiyyas and other depressed communities through a vernacular. He felt the need of expanding to them the horizons of knowledge especially who were trying to cross the barriers of caste and convention. The result was *Kerala Sanchari* which started on 7th October 1888.  

“Poovadan Raman wanted to satiate the need of ordinary Malayalam readers especially those who do not come in the ambit of *Kerala Pathrika*. He liked to inform them the every day news-breaks in the country and to enlighten them the consequences of such happenings”.

Infact many of the Thiyyas had acquired wealth and education by the second half of the 19th century. But there was no agency to spell out them proper guidance regarding investment. Prudent utilization of

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118 Puthupalli Raghavan, *op.cit.*, p.92
such newly acquired wealth was difficult for them in the wake of the newly emerged rules and regulations. Poovadan Raman liked to wake them up by making them aware of the new constitutional innovations and the rights and duties of the public enshrined in them. By enlightening them with a knowhow in the judicial procedures he wanted to make them fight against the corrupt officials. Also he wanted the public to inspire with novel thoughts and thereby to lead them to modernity. It was a time when new community structures were evolving. To mould them with solid shape he liked to disseminate the ideas as fast as possible. All these are to be done in an interesting and enticing manner. These were the aims of Raman and his colleagues in the founding of Kerala Sanchari in October 1888.\textsuperscript{120}

At that time (during 1888) ‘Kesari’ had acquired the glamour as the best reporter in Kerala Pathrika and in Malabar. Kerala Sanchari was in fact started as a newspaper which was meant to fulfil the dreams of Poovadan Raman related to civic rights with ‘Kesari’ as its Chief Editor. “The paper was named Kerala Sanchari aimed to contain the letters ‘Kesari’ in it.”\textsuperscript{121} This is again corroborated by Murkoth Kunhappa. “I got the first six issues of Kerala Sanchari from the collections of Murkoth Kumaran. In the conclusion of an article in the first issue the reporter’s name was given in Malayalam as ‘Kerala Sanchari’ with ‘Ke’, ‘Sa’, and ‘Ri’ in special bold Malayalam letters so as to read those bold letters collectively as ‘Kesari’. From this itself the

\textsuperscript{120} Murkoth Kunhappa, Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini, op.cit., p.147.
\textsuperscript{121} Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, Kesari, (Mal), Trichur, 1945, p.14.
greatness of ‘Kesari’ in the journalistic firmament is very evident. But ‘Kesari’ continued in that position only for six months. Meanwhile he could tear into pieces the misdeeds and high handedness of the power-monger officers.

But the aim of Kerala Sanchari was not such tramples over bureaucrats only. The heading of the first editorial of the first issue of Kerala Sanchari was ‘Lokasamastho Sukhinobhavanthu’ (Let happiness be in the whole world). Even today many of the sentences of that article are by-heart for many readers. It is doubtful whether Kerala Sanchari could get back the popularity and fame ever in future which it enjoyed during the short period of ‘Kesari’”. With the sole aim of protecting the financial interest of the community Kerala Sanchari published an article in the seventh issue. It was intended to highlight the dignity of business and the need to invest in ones’s native country. In the article the paper asked to break the caste rules. If Brahmins can do business Sudras can also do the same. If caste rules were strictly observed the Sudras could not have acquired education. Therefore Kerala Sanchari advised to earn money without forsaking the dignity and freedom.

122 Murkoth Kunhappa, Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini, op.cit., p.148.
123 Murkoth Kumaran, Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, (Mal), Trichur, 1945, p.xviii.
124 Kerala Sanchari editorial, 21st November 1888. “The position of Europeans, Parsis, Muslims etc. who left their homes and native lands settled here, did business and made fabulous fortune is really great. To be honest our situation is very pathetic. It is foolish to believe that doing business is below our dignity or humiliating. There is nothing shameful about it. The authors of our ancient ethical code had allotted trade and agriculture to the noble caste of Vaishyas. But we see even Brahmins doing trade, ignoring these rules and observations. This has not lowered their status at all. If it is argued that the ancient rules should not be broken, the Sudras should not seek education. Do we see Sudra customs anywhere among us now? We should put away our false pride and also
Thus in a way for Kerala Sanchari the voice of journalism becomes the voice of economic progress and simultaneously the voice of the progress of Sudra community.

But Kerala Sanchari was not a staunch fighter for the interests of Thiyyas or depressed classes alone. It had the concern for all. This perspective is evident in its news items and editorials. An excellent example is the editorial ‘Kozhikkottu Ninnu Kannurekkulla Theevandi’ (Train form Kozhikode to Kannur) published in the fifth issue of Kerala Sanchari, in which there is an appeal to the local people to make contribtuions for the Kozhikode-Kannur railway line. Kerala Sanchari wrote that everyday we see foreign businessmen coming to our land from England offering several lakhs of rupees as loan. They work as business partners to build railway lines, pay off interests, make huge profits and take the money back to their countries every year. If the natives themselves engage in business they can, not only do the nation much good, but prevent money from leaving the country and causing us loss. If the affluent landlords of Kerala use their money prudently on welfare activities instead of spending lavishly on obsequies and marriages and keeping the rest idle, they themselves as well as the land will benefit much.\(^{125}\) Kerala Sanchari is reminding people that construction of railway lines is more important and lucrative than wasting money for celebrations. It is appealing to the rich to work for their own good and prosperity of the land. It can be said that our newspapers of the initial period were giving a belligerent note to the our foolish belief that we have no right to do business. We must do business without compromising our dignity and freedom so that we earn money for the sake of our happiness and for others welfare”.

\(^{125}\) Kerala Sanchari, 7th November, 1888.
desire of the natives to develop into an authoritative power in political, financial and cultural areas.\textsuperscript{126}

As discussed above, an in-depth approach to the problems of the ordinary people may be the secret of the success of \textit{Kerala Sanchari}. According to the confidential report sent to the Government of Madras in 1889, \textit{Kerala Sanchari} had a circulation of 1500 copies.\textsuperscript{127} During the first one year of its existence \textit{Kerala Sanchari} could make such a good performance is of-course commentable. When compared to that of \textit{Kerala Pathrika} the performance of \textit{Kerala Sanchari} is to be considered still great as \textit{Kerala Pathrika} during its two years could gather only 904 copies. Also \textit{Kerala Sanchari}’s achievement is at a time when it had to compete with an established newspaper which had been circulating among the people for the previous four years. Indeed this was the triumph of both Poovadan Raman and ‘Kesari’.

Poovadan Raman, was a patriot who did many things aimed at the modernization of the nation. He took a leading role in the implementation of railway system in Malabar not only using his newspapers but also making sacrifices in his own case. Towards that he sold his large area of land at a very cheaper cost for the Railways at Kannur. He regarded much more, the benefit of the nation than his personal gains. Because of that vision the Kannur railway platform was the longest in Malabar quite for a long time.\textsuperscript{128}

\textbf{The Blooming of a Genius-‘Kesari’ Nayanar}

\textsuperscript{126} Shibu Muhammad, \textit{op.cit.}, P.117.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Correspondence} 639, RAC Calicut.
\textsuperscript{128} G.Priyadarshanan, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.141-142.
Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar who wrote under the pen name ‘Kesari’ is a genius who showered his talents in profuse strains in the pages of a few newspapers and journals of his time. He tried to bridge the gap between literature and journalism. He is a sun who happened to rise in the literary firmament only because of the advent of newspapers and periodicals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Nayanar was a man who had little interest in fame and popularity. It was by virtue of necessity he wrote the articles for various journals. Those creations were the spontaneous and innate expressions of a genius. He had not in his imagination that they are unique literary pearls which may become the valued treasures of posterity. Therefore he did not care or bother to preserve them. This is very clear from the letter of ‘Kesari’ written to C.D David, who compiled 25 numbers of Nayanar’s articles and published in the form of a book entitled ‘Kesari’. “From 1879 onwards I have been writing numerous essays and articles in various newspapers and magazines. I hadn’t any thought of making a book collecting all those articles. Therefore I have neither kept any of those articles nor preserved the copies of those newspapers or journals”. In fact ‘Kesari’ has written witty articles in plenty, under the pen names ‘Kesari’ and ‘Desabhimani’, in several circumstances in several magazines and newspapers. But he has written only a few in his real name. Therefore many of the readers do not know actually how much and to what extent he has written.

T.K Krishna Menon in his Primer of Malayalam Literature said that when speaking of newspapers, as the one name that suggests itself

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129 Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, op.cit., p.2.
to his mind is that of Mr. Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar. He is the best Malayalam newspaper correspondent of the day. His chaste diction and humour invest his writings with an indefinable charm. If only he worked he could easily gain an undying name in the journalistic history of the country.\footnote{Ibid., Opening page.}

Though he did not write a novel, he made Kizhakkepatt Raman Menon to write a unique work *Parangodi Parinayam* with titles and subtitles as he suggested. ‘Kesari’ had written in 1891 in *Vidyavinodini*, an article *Oru Aakyayika, Allenkil Novel (A Narration or Novel)* in which he had sarcastically criticized the spate of imitations that followed *Indulekha*, the first novel in Malayalam. Also he had said in that article that it is very easy now days to write novels resembling those imitations. In the article he suggested chapter-wise subtitles from first to nineth chapters. Also he had advised to write the title as *Parangodiparinayam*. The result of this lampooning was Kizhakkepatt Ramankutty Menon’s *Parangodiparinayam* closely following Nayanar’s same title and subtitles as suggested in the article.\footnote{Kizhakkepatt Raman Menon, *Parangodi Parinayam*, (Mal), Preface, Kottayam, 2004, p. 21.} C. Madhavan Pillai comments, “Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar is an excellent prose writer. There is smooth flow, facility and significance for his style. Especially there is an element of humour in it. Also there is no exuberance of Sanskrit words. It is relevant to regard him as our ‘Jonathan Swift’.”\footnote{Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, *op.cit.*, Opening page.}

The famous novelist Chandu Menon had an admiration for the writings of ‘Desabhimani’ (Nayanar) even when Menon hadn’t any
acquaintance with him. It is due to this fact that Chandu Menon specially mentioned the phrase, ‘amusing reporters like ‘Desabhimanii’ while writing the preface to the second edition of Indulekha. There he emphasizes that ‘Desabhimanii’ hasn’t any knowledge of him.¹³³ Murkoth Kumaran reminds, “The famous novelist Chandu Menon read the articles of ‘Desabhimanii’ (Nayanar) with much fondness. He advised me many times to try to write like ‘Deshabhimanii’.”¹³⁴

Everybody applauds Nayanar for his performance in Kerala Pathrika. Infact it was Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar who made Kerala Pathrika most vibrant. Through Pathrika, ‘Kesari’ made a mortal fight against bureaucratic overlordism. The vernacular readers can never forget ‘Kesari’s performance in Kerala Pathrika. On hearing the name of ‘Kesari’ the corrupt officers who used to receive bribes trembled. It was ‘Kesari’ who exposed the misappropriations of corrupt officers and thus fixed them.¹³⁵ It can be said that it is ‘Kesari’ through Kerala Pathrika that laid the foundation for the investigative journalism in Malayalam.¹³⁶

Moorkoth Kumaran remembers Kesari, “It is true that Kesari made his debut in Kerala Chandrika, a paper from Travancore. But he made the display of his mettle in Kerala Pathrika. Never the performance of ‘Kesari’ in Kerala Pathrika may fall into oblivion. In those days the ‘bureaucratic beasts’ possessed with the evils like bribery on hearing the name ‘Kesari’ trembled. It was ‘Kesari’ who exposed a

¹³⁴ Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, op.cit., Preface, p. 15.
¹³⁶ G.Priyadarshanan, op.cit., p.329.
few of such officers who ruled here like despots, and brought them before law. He has written articles in *Kerala Pathrika* also using pen-names like ‘Desabhimani’ and ‘Swadeshamithran’. On receiving any issue of *Kerala Pathrika*, readers were first looking for the articles of ‘Kesari’ and ‘Dehabhimani’. Because of the interest in the articles of ‘Kesari’ many became the subscribers of *Kerala Pathrika*.\(^{137}\)

‘Kesari’ who used to write short essays in which there was the harmonious blending of humour and wit was one of the most famous reporters of *Kerala Pathrika*.\(^{138}\) From Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar known by the name ‘Kesari’ what Malayalam literature bequeathed was a few newspaper articles. This contribution which enabled Kerala to thrive newspapers is infact the basic cause for the subsequent enrichment of the total Malayalam literature.\(^{139}\)

His (Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar) articles under the nom de plume of ‘Kesari’ which appeared in rapid succession in the Calicut weeklies in the late 1880’s and the early 1890’s used to be looked forward to with lively interest and read with keen enjoyment by newspaper readers of the day on account of their vigourous style and trenchant treatment of the subjects dealt with. Most of these articles however were but of ephemeral interest as they treated of contemporary events of no great importance, but several of them, as also most of his


\(^{138}\) V.Aravindakshan, “Malayala Sahithyathinte Adhunikeekaranam……” *op.cit.*, p.32.

articles in the monthly magazines deal with subjects of general interests and deserve a permanent place in literature.\textsuperscript{140}

The daring deeds of the trinity (Dr.Kees, Mr.Rolo Platal-Editors of \textit{Malabar Spectator} and ‘Kesari’) through the instruments of \textit{Malabar Spectator} and \textit{Kerala Sanchari} to suppress the corrupt officers are unique events in the journalistic history of India.\textsuperscript{141} It was the humour of Kunhiraman Nayanar that influenced ‘Sanjayan’ much. In the story of ‘Kesari’ entitled \textit{Paramartham} there is the description of a leopard’s den. “I cannot imagine about the stink there. There is no such foul smell even in the Municipality so intense”.\textsuperscript{142} It may be the above sentence that might have inspired ‘Sanjayan’ to make frequent attacks against Kozhikode Municipality.\textsuperscript{143} It may be accidental that both ‘Kesari’ and ‘Sanjayan’ became famous through \textit{Kerala Pathrika}. The circulation figures of this paper which reached the peak at the time of ‘Kesari’ again repeated only during the time of ‘Sanjayan’.\textsuperscript{144}

Murkoth Kumaran has narrated the brief biography of Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar in the book \textit{Kesari}. “Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar was born in 1036 Thulam of Malayalam Era. He studied English in Thalipparambu School. After that he studied in Kozhikode Government College. Malabar Collector William Logan was very much interested in his studies. After completing the F.A course from ‘Kerala Vidya Sala’ he went to Madras Presidency College. After continuing

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\textsuperscript{141} Murkoth Kumaran,(ed.), \textit{Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar} (Mal), Trichur, 1945, p.xviii.
\textsuperscript{143} K.P Kesava Menon et. al., \textit{Hasyaprakasham Magazine}, Kozhikode, 1958.
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Ibid}.
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there for one year, as per the advice of William Logan he studied agricultural science in Sayidappetta and completed education..... In those days the aristocratic Nairs did not use to send their daughters to convent schools. But Nayanar breached that practice which is now followed by many. Now Kunhiraman Nayanar is more known as a ‘journalist of wit and humour’ rather than the head of a famous Nair taravad in Kerala (Vengayil), or a landlord, or a reputed agriculturist or District Board Member. It is in this way that he is going to be remembered by the generations to come”\textsuperscript{145}.

\textsuperscript{145} Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, \emph{Kesari}, (Mal), Trichur, 1945, pp.1-13.
Two Luminaries- C.Krishnan and Murkoth Kumaran

After six months of service ‘Kesari’ left Kerala Sanchari. It seems very enigmatic that he left the newspaper at its apex of glory and success. Murkoth Kumaran reminds that after forsaking the editor post of Kerala Sanchari, Nayanar did not contribute to it long. It seems funny that when Murkoth Kumaran was its Editor, considering his special request ‘Kesari’ again wrote in Kerala Sanchari numerous articles in the pen-name of ‘Kesari’, ‘Vajrabahu’, ‘Vajrasoochi’ and ‘Desabhimani’. Also he used to contribute articles to various periodicals in the succeeding years. In this context we are perhaps bound to think that if it was due to some difference of opinion with Poovadan Raman that ‘Kesari’ bid farewell to Kerala Sanchari. If so what would have been the cause of his departure is still enigmatic. If ‘Kesari’s service in Kerala Sanchari lasted only for six months he might have left the paper somewhere around April 1889. ‘Kesari’ was succeeded by Adv.C.Krishnan. He assumed the charge of the editor in Kerala Sanchari after passing B.A in 1895. It is to be still found out who the editor of Kerala Sanchari was in between ‘Kesari’ and C.Krishnan. While he was a B.A student in Madras during the period between 1892-

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146 Murkoth Kumaran, Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, op.cit., pp.14-15. Murkoth Kumaran says, “Kesari wrote a few articles in Malayala Manorama and Kozhikodan Manorama. I have seen one article in Janaranjini also. He was the Co-Editor of Vidyavinodini for sometime when C.Achutha Menon was its Editor. Also he wrote many interesting articles in Vidyavinodini under the pen-name of ‘Vikada Dhooshakan’, ‘Vidhooshakan’and so on. When I was the Editor of Saraswathi magazine Kesari extended me immense help. After that he jumped into Mithavadi. It is my experience that when Kesari started writing articles in Mithavadi, due to that fact itself its circulation increased”.

147 Changaramkumarath Sankaran, C.Krishnan, (Mal), Trichur, 1967, pp.4-7.
95, Krishnan used to write articles in *Kerala Sanchari* which was under the ownership of Karinkal Madathil Rarichan Mooppen who was his sister’s husband. It means that from Poovadan Raman the ownership of *Kerala Sanchari* was purchased by Karinkal Madathil Rarichan Mooppen somewhere after 1890. When *Kerala Sanchari* was under the complete control of the brothers-in-law (Rarichan Mooppen and C.Krishnan) Thiyya interests were vehemently pushed forward as Krishnan had interest in the community affairs right from his student life. When he was a student in Madras Presidency College, being a Thiyya, Krishnan had to endure discrimination.

Krishnan went to Madras for B.L studies in 1897 March. Before that Murkoth Kumaran was entrusted the editorial duties. Thus Murkoth Kumaran who was only 23 years old became the editor of *Kerala Sanchari* on 27th February 1897. The editorials he wrote in *Sanchari* were simple, pleasant, elegant and reasonable owing to its wit and humour. The thought provoking nature and the daring of opinion were its hallmarks. An excellent example is the editorial he wrote in connection with the convocation of the title ‘Rao Bahadur’ on the Government pleader of Calicut M.S Ramakrishna Iyer. Being too happy over getting the title he gave a party to the Government officers like District Collector, District Judge and Police Superintendent. Panangaden

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149 *Ibid.*, pp.4-5. One such report published in January 1896 observes this point. “Although the Travancore Sirkar pays sufficient attention to primary education and has established for this purpose several schools, yet it is a matter for regret that the children of Thiyyas and other kindred classes are refused admission in such schools”.
Shanku, the owner of the Empress Victoria Hotel was entrusted with the arrangements. In token of his satisfaction Iyer presented Shanku with a silver clock. Mocking Iyer, in the next issue of *Kerala Sanchari* Murkoth wrote an editorial with the heading, “Had Sankaracharyar Come”?  

Another editorial he wrote in connection with *Murajapam* also had repercussions. In those days each Namboothiri who participated in the *Murajapam* of Travancore were given 10 paras (a vessel for measuring) of paddy as charity on their return. A few newspapers of Travancore had reported that some of the above Brahmins who received the charities had sold out from it, the *avil* (flour) packets for money. Based on the reports Murkoth Kumaran wrote a leader in *Kerala Sanchari* entitled *Vayar oru Pathayam* (The belly-a granary).  

150 G. Priyadarshanan, *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56. The crux of the editorial was this: “We had a doubt whether the British guns were able enough to surmount all the forts. No. Now we are very sure that our doubts were not reasonable. There is no fort insurmountable to the British. We are now thinking about the emotions and agony that might have inflicted upon Sankaracharya, had he seen the British tearing up “the ritual fort” which Sankaracharya had entrusted the Brahmins to implement in Kerala without any flaw or frailty, with a single shot of ‘Rao Bahadur’. Sankaracharya may be lucky in not witnessing the scene in which the alien and beef eating Europeans walking with foot-wears made of animal skin on the floor purified by sprinkling cow dung water”.  

151 The royal ceremony conducted at every six years at Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the Princely state of Travancore. It was started by King Marthanda Varma as a penance for the sins he committed in connection with the expansion of his kingdom.  

152 Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit.*, pp. 149-150. The crux of the editorial: His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore who tries to retain the title of ‘Dharmarajyam’ for his country may be complacent in spending enormous amount of money collected as tax from the subjects to feed a special community. But has His Highness ever pondered the fact that how much number of poor people could be fed with the above amount of money. Anyhow the Government of Travancore spent one lakh rupees collected as tax from the people in a prodigal way. The belly of the Namboothiri Brahmin is not a granary which can contain 10 paras of paddy. And why is he blamed for selling out the *avil*
In those days the newspapers in Malabar like *Kerala Pathrika* and *Manorama* were able to make only a superficial discourse of the issue. But *Kerala Sanchari* could satisfy the readers well with the editorial criticisms as said above. Mahakavi Kumaran Asan wrote, “No other paper launched from Malabar have so far got this much circulation and fame other than *Kerala Sanchari*”.\(^{153}\) Later C.P Govindan Nair purchased the ownership and for a long time he was the editor. During the 1920’s the rights of *Kerala Sanchari* was sold to C.Krishnan who merged it in *Mithavadi*.\(^{154}\)

### Pathrika and Sanchari- Match and Mismatch

*Kerala Sanchari* though four years younger than *Kerala Pathrika*, both are progenies of the same breed. In *Kerala Pathrika* the most reputed correspondent was ‘Kesari’. That ‘Kesari’ was the Editor of *Kerala Sanchari* at the time of its birth. Therefore it is quite natural that the style, policy and thrust of these two papers as far as many of the issues concerned were similar.

The style of *Kerala Pathrika* was very solemn, elegant, simple and very close to ordinary man’s speech. The style of *Kerala Sanchari* was similar to that of its elder sister *Kerala Pathrika*. But it was more interesting than that of the elder sister. Since *Pathrika* had already

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153 Vivekodayam , Mithunam 1089.
moulded out a new style it was easier for Sanchari to make innovations. When articles were made popular in Malabar by Pathrika, short articles were propagated by Kerala Sanchari.\(^{155}\) When Kerala Pathrika extended a moderate tone to the authorities Kerala Sanchari was very loyal in approach.\(^{156}\) While Pathrika gave a summary of local and foreign news Sanchari gave summary of important news and discussed matters of local interest.\(^{157}\) When Kerala Pathrika highlighted Congress and Mahajana Sabha it is not seen to that extent in Kerala Sanchari.

Against corruption whether it is British or Indian both the papers extended very stringent policy. Both the papers did not show any fear or fervour in making sharp criticisms against the double dealing stand of the Government in respect of dispensation and delivery of justice for natives and British. Poovadan Raman being a Thiyya and since that community has a special leniency towards the British one may expect in Kerala Sanchari, a liberal attitude towards the white.\(^{158}\) But that is not evident in the first phase of the paper. At the same time Kerala Sanchari was more sharp and vehement in such cases when compared to the other. Kerala Sanchari deplored the practice of exonerating the British officers while convicting the accomplices who are Indians. Crawford-Hanumantharayar case is an excellent example as to how these two papers upheld a similar perspective in its treatment. Crawford was the Commissioner of Central Division Bombay. He got bribe through his Sirasthadar Hanumantharayar. When they were caught red-handed

155 Ibid., p.150.
156 Correspondence 639, RAC.
157 Ibid.
Hanumantharayar was sentenced to imprisonment and fine. Crawford was tried by a special commission. But Crawford was not found guilty of bribery because he is a European.

*Kerala Pathrika* also took a similar stand in this issue. Referring to the result of the Crawford bribery case *Kerala Pathrika* makes an appraisal that “further retention of Crawford in the service is a great mistake. It is wrong to suppose that all Europeans are honest and that all natives are dishonest. It may be because the Europeans are the rulers and the natives are ruled, that the faults of the latter are magnified, while those of the former are reduced to a trifle.”

In waging a war against corruption *Kerala Sanchari* was not at all behind *Kerala Pathrika*. *Kerala Sanchari* highlighted the undue strictness shown in the case of the poor and the great leniency shown in that of the rich, by the Tellicherry Municipality in the matter of allowing buildings to be erected on the sides of the roads. Also it wrote about the corruption practised by certain peons of the Calicut Municipality with regard to the assessment of buildings. It exposed the inequities committed by the *amsam menons* (village officers) in assessing the crops in North Malabar. It said that these *amsam menons* asked bribes from the tenants and if they are refused the assessment is made heavy.

In a similar perspective *Kerala Sanchari* criticized the police, calling

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159 *Kerala Sanchari*, 10th October 1888.
160 *Kerala Sanchari*, 20th February 1889.
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162 *Kerala Pathrika*, 9th March 1889, MNNPR, TNA.
163 *Kerala Sanchari*, 26th December 1888, MNNPR, TNA.
163 *Kerala Sanchari*, 18th May 1889, MNNPR, TNA.
164 *Kerala Sanchari*, 17th January 1894, MNNPR, TNA.
them worthless because they resort to illegal means to make money. It also suggested that to make the Department more efficient, men of education and capacity should be enlisted in the Department and that they should be paid decently and in proportion to the energy they show.\textsuperscript{165} To prevent corruption \textit{Kerala Sanchari} recommended that the merchants who persisted in selling rice at rates far above those prescribed by the authorities should be traced out, charged, tried and severely punished as these merchants were really responsible for the looting.\textsuperscript{166}

Both the papers showed meticulous care in issues pertaining to health and hygiene of both man and beast. They advocated for precautionary measures to avoid starvation, infectious diseases and epidemics. Towards this goal they sometimes attacked the municipalities and other administrative institutions and sometimes put forward valuable suggestion for their consideration.

During the rainy season in 1894 cholera was broken out at different places in the Calicut Municipality. But the authorities did not care for it. Immediately \textit{Kerala Pathrika} alerted the Municipal authorities and asked to take necessary measures for improving the sanitary condition of the town.\textsuperscript{167} In a similar situation in 1897 owing to the consumption of unwholesome food many people were dying daily of cholera and other diseases. There were only very few among the poor who were able to take one \textit{canji} a week. Juxtaposing the situation \textit{Kerala Pathrika} warned that if the present state of affairs continues the

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\item \textsuperscript{165} \textit{Kerala Sanchari}, 10\textsuperscript{th} January 1894, MNNPR, TNA.
\item \textsuperscript{166} \textit{Kerala Sanchari}, 26\textsuperscript{th} March 1919, MNNPR, TNA.
\item \textsuperscript{167} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, 28\textsuperscript{th} June 1894, MNNPR, TNA.
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\end{footnotesize}
condition of the district will be very serious. The article urged upon the
Government immediately to open relief works.\textsuperscript{168} Also it anticipated in
1907 May itself, the impending famine in Malabar. It cautioned the
authorities that the famine will inflict severe starvation on the poorer
classes in the rainy season when all labour will be suspended.\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Kerala
Pathrika} could suggest a century back the hygienic condition to be
preserved in Tali tank which even today remains a dream not at all
materialized. It also suggested that after draining and cleaning the tank,
certain rules are to be prescribed for preserving the purity of water.\textsuperscript{170}
High mortality of cattle in Malabar owing to various kinds of cattle
diseases was also the topic of write up. It invited the attention of the
authorities in establishing of a veterinary dispensary in the District.\textsuperscript{171}

\textit{Kerala Sanchari} also made similar endeavours. When snake-bites
increased it wrote about the exigency of appointing one skilled person
by the Calicut Municipality for the treatment of snake-bitten persons.\textsuperscript{172}
During the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century there was no modern treatment for many of
the infectious diseases. Therefore the isolation of the patients was the
only measure to avoid spreading. In Calicut during that time the number
of patients was on the increase. In such a situation \textit{Kerala Sanchari}
presented the seriousness and asked the Municipal authority to take
steps to prohibit persons suffering from leprosy, ulcers and other skin
diseases of a contagious nature from entering the fish market and

\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, 10\textsuperscript{th} July 1897, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, 28\textsuperscript{th} May 1907, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, April 1886, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, 21\textsuperscript{st} November 1908, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{172} \textit{Kerala Sanchari}, 20\textsuperscript{th} February 1889, MNNPR, TNA.
touching the fish exposed there for sale.\textsuperscript{173} It identified the insanitary condition of certain places within the Municipality and through reports invited the attention of the Chairman.\textsuperscript{174}

Regarding the Malabar Marriage Bill of the 1890’s these papers held view points that slightly differ. \textit{Kerala Pathrika} gave strong support for the Marriage Bill. But \textit{Kerala Sanchari}’s stand was neutral. This can be in a way interpreted as a Thiyya stand in respect of a Nair issue. \textit{Kerala Pathrika} observed that, as at one time no nation had any legalized marriage. It can be inferred that the legalization of marriage is the result of a nation’s progress in civilization. As \textit{marumakkathayam} was agreed when Malabar was brought under British rule, the courts were led to decide cases in accordance with that law. In the face of these decisions it is impossible without an Act such as the proposed Bill, to bring about reformation in the matter of marriage. The British Government will undoubtedly grant the people of Malabar their reasonable request to be allowed to enjoy the privilege of legalized marriage admitted by all. It also made suggestion such that divorce suits must be decided by a \textit{Panchayath} consisting of six or eight men chosen by the parties.\textsuperscript{175} But contradictory to this, \textit{Kerala Sanchari} took a more impartial and neutral role in this regard. It gave the substance of the Bill and called upon educated Malayalis to consider well and offer their opinion of the Bill before it becomes law.\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Kerala Sanchari}, 10\textsuperscript{th} July 1907, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Kerala Sanchari}, 13\textsuperscript{th} March 1889, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{175} \textit{Kerala Pathrika}, 12\textsuperscript{th} April, 1890, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Kerala Sanchari}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} April 1890, MNNPR, TNA.
Regarding total abstinence both the papers held contradictory views. *Kerala Pathrika* argued for total abstinence. Its suggestions were amounting to even cross the borders of logic. But *Kerala Sanchari’s* stand was very mild when asking to bring temperance without affecting the exchequer. *Kerala Pathrika* suggested that it will be a boon if Government instead of making exertions to increase the abkari revenue by affixing numbers to the trees allowed to be tapped, discourage drinking by affixing a number to the forehead of each person accustomed to the use of spirituous liquors. And levy a fine of Rs.10 from each of those bearing such numbers.\textsuperscript{177} This proposal may seem ridiculous and impractical but the stand and policy of the paper is self explanatory from the news item. But *Kerala Sanchari* makes suggestions for improving the present system of abkari administration and for checking intemperance as much as possible without affecting the Government revenue.\textsuperscript{178} This can also be indeed regarded as a suggestion for the sake of suggestion which practically won’t alter the situation then existed. Also it was the Thiyyas who were to lose by abstinence since it was they who tapped toddy and sold.

Just as the view-points of these two papers seem contradictory, were the stands of Kunhirama Menon the individual and Kunhirama Menon the editor of *Kerala Pathrika*. Dr.Chelanatt Achutha Menon in his reminiscence depicts Kunhirama Menon like this: “He remained healthy until the age of 80. ‘He drinks like water’. No damage for his

\textsuperscript{177} *Kerala Pathrika*, September 1886,, MNNPR, TNA.
\textsuperscript{178} *Kerala Sanchari*, 12\textsuperscript{th} June 1889, MNNPR, TNA.
body up to that age”. But in contrast to the habit of the editor, *Kerala Pathrika* stood to disseminate the message of total abstinence.

**Collective Efforts**

In Malabar there is also the history of joint struggles by various newspapers for a common cause. It is the ‘war of dharma’ that fought collectively by *Kerala Pathrika*, *Kerala Sanchari* and *Malabar Spectator*. Even the English papers from outside the District provided them help on the basis of issue. ‘Thiruvannur torture case’ was one such occasion that tested the solidarity of newspapers. It was the period when Morley was the Collector and Faust was the Police Superintendent of South Malabar District. Faust was a type, brandishing his sword against anyone who writes in newspapers about the corruption of the police. But the then Chief Editor Chenkalath Komu Menon dared to bring out the ‘Thiruvannur torture case’ through *Kerala Pathrika* without any kind of fear. Subsequent to the theft of the gold plated idol of Lord Krishna from Thiruvannur temple, the police had brutally tortured the supervisors of the temple Kadungi Nedungadi and Revunni Vellodi. And that was the charge alleged upon the police. To fight the case that originated in the court subsequent to the publication of the report, Komu Menon, carrying a sachet begged before the public and collected money. Murkoth Kumaran not only congratulated Komu Menon’s commitment to the public cause and praised his service mentality but also helped him by all means through reports published in *Kerala Sanchari*. The penetrating articles of Murkoth Kumaran and the editorials of Komu Menon brimming with rage awakened the public and the judge. English

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179 Chelanatt Achutha Menon, *op.cit.*, p.47.
newspapers like *Malabar Spectator* and *Madras Mail* also carried the reports. In the examination at the court, the guilt was convincingly proved. Eventually the main accused in the case Head Constable K. Kannan Nair was convicted for five years imprisonment by the South Malabar District Sessions Judge Opherel. In fact it was this journalistic protest that made the public wake up for the first time against the despotic rule of Malabar police.\(^{180}\)

**Manorama- A Janmi Congress paper**

As far as aims and objectives are concerned *Manorama* was not much different from *Kerala Pathrika*, in the beginning. Just as *Kerala Pathrika*, *Manorama* too supported *Kerala Mahajana Sabha*. *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* was an organization formed at Calicut to discuss and to mould opinion pertaining to political and community matters. *Manorama* was published on the second and fourth Mondays of every month from Victoria Press, Calicut.\(^{181}\)

Kizhakke Kovilakath Kuttiyettan Thampuran who later became the *Samuthirippad* (Zamorin of Calicut) was the secretary of *Kerala Mahajana Sabha*. He used to participate in political debates and was present in the *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha* meeting as a Kerala delegate. He started *Manorama* paper to propagate the aims of *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha*. Infact it was the mouthpiece of *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* from 1891 May onwards. Since most of the members of *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* were *janmis* the very feet of the paper was in tusk-


tower. At the same time *Kerala Pathrika* edited by Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon had by this time acclaimed as laymen’s newspaper. Therefore, on and off there were tussles between these two papers. When Manorama’s disparity towards the *Janmis* was convincingly explicit, *Kerala Pathrika* which was the ordinary public’s tongue started to lean in favour of the tenants.  

Since *Manorama* represented the rich class it had a tendency to publish news items in favour of the *janmis*. The report about village headman exacting money from litigants is an example. The report said that although there is the rule prohibiting *adhikaris* (Village Headman) from taking any fee for registering *vakkalaths*, they demand two *annas* for each vakkalath to be registered. Usually in a single suit three or four vakkalaths are required till the termination of the suit. Therefore the collection of two *annas* for each vakkalath caused unnecessary loss to the poor litigants. It is sure that in those days the suits related to eviction and *melcharth* (overlease or eviction of a tenant in favour of a new one) were in plenty. In such cases since the litigants are mostly *janmis* and litigation is against the tenants the exemption of fee will certainly help only the *janmi* side.  

When the much awaited Malabar Tenancy Bill was about to pass in the Madras Legislative Council *Manorama* wrote a report saying that if it be passed in the present form it will cause more hardships and troubles to the tenants than before. It means that *Manorama* suggested not only some amendments in the bill but also its postponement. The

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183 *Manorama* Calicut, 4th December 1908.
184 *Manorama*, Calicut, 3rd August 1929, MNNPR, TNA.
fact is that the tenants were much satisfied by that Bill. Still Manorama says that if it is passed in the present form it is detrimental to the tenants. Here Manorama was apparently standing for the tenants and was indirectly helping the janmis. At the same time Manorama was not at all reluctant to argue for the freedom of the press at a time when the publishing industry was only just trotting its steps. It accused the Government of India for its order authorizing local Governments to prosecute seditious papers. Manorama observed that, the order betrayed the intention of Government to curtail the freedom of the press in general. Government is at liberty to take action against those papers that abuse their privileges. But to consider their misconduct as affording sufficient ground to abridge the freedom of the press in general is to contravene British justice.\textsuperscript{185}

Kuttiyettan Thampuran named the paper as Manorama with an intention to commemorate the name of Manorama Thampuraatti who was the founder of kizhakke Kovilakam. Thampuran’s clerk and secretary of Mahajanasabha, Puliyampetta Kunhikrishna Menon looked after its affairs in the beginning. To write the editorial and the articles, apart from Thampuran there was Kannapra Ramunni Nair and a few others also. Talented and hard working Kunhikrishna Menon, after sometime reached a stage in which he did not want others helps for running the paper. During this time the family burdens of Thampuran increased several fold and so the whole responsibility of the paper fell upon Menon. He was able to run it well for almost twenty four years and

\textsuperscript{185} Manorama Calicut, 12\textsuperscript{th} June 1907.
later entrusted his nephew Krishnan Nair, the charges. He ran the paper well until he went to England for legal studies. It was in *Manorama* that the *Bilathivishesham* (The news of England) of K.P Kesava Menon was published for the first time.\textsuperscript{186} The first few writings of Kodungallur Kunhikuttan Thampuran, V.C Balakrishna Panikkar, Manavikrama Ettan Thampuran and P.V Krishna Warier and so on were first published in *Manorama*.\textsuperscript{187}

Actually Kandathil Varghese Mappila had started *Malayala Manorama* from Kottayam in 1890. Therefore *Manorama* started from Calicut in 1891 was known as *Kozhikodan Manorama*. This was an opposition publication. Many of the literary leaders of those times were frequent writers of this paper. The paper was defunct due to shortage of newsprint consequent to Second World War.\textsuperscript{188}

Theruvath Raman says, “*Kozhikodan Manorama* was the successor of *Kerala Pathrika*. It was this paper that initiated the tradition of giving local news by publishing the reports regarding the anniversaries and commemorations of libraries and clubs. The subscribers of *Kozhikodan Manorama* were mostly *janmis* representing the elite class of the society. When Krishnan Nair became its editor he introduced some innovations regarding the subscription. He made annual subscription fee as fifteen rupees for *janmi* and twelve rupees for the ordinary people. The discount offered for the ordinary folk enabled the paper to penetrate more into the common masses and thus it became somewhat popular in the society. At the same time the special rates

\textsuperscript{186} P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.784.

\textsuperscript{187} Champadan Vijayan, “Pathrapravarthanavum Sahithyavum” *op.cit.*

\textsuperscript{188} Puthuppalli Raghavan, *op.cit*, p.106.
mentioned in the case of janmis was treated by them as recognition of their status”.\textsuperscript{189}

**Successors of Malabar Spectator**

During the 1880’s three English newspapers *Malabar Spectator* (later *Westcoast Spectator*), *Westcoast Reformer*, and *Champion* were prevalent in Calicut. The Editor of *Malabar Spectator* was a European named Rolo Platal. Kallat Raghavan succeeded him. Raghavan always wore European costumes.\textsuperscript{190} *Westcoast Reformer*, the English weekly of Sankar Shastri, *Champion* by Erampally Gopalan were the other two. *Westcoast Reformer* carried local news with due importance. The office of *Champion* was located in a building infront of the present Jayanthi building at Palayam in Calicut. Editor Gopalan used to wear semi-European dress- ironed white, clean dhothi, tie and coat.

Thus the last two decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century became historic by the opening up of a new avenue in journalism. The newspapers started at this juncture stirred the desire for innovative endeavours directed at bringing to ordinary people the fruits of civil liberty. The English papers as well as vernacular papers have played their role in this experimental enterprise. They became the fora for intimation, interpretation and exchange of ideas. As a result new communication channels developed which resulted in the formation of public opinion and public sphere.

The debates, dialogues and agitations under the guidance of these newspapers resulted in the growth of a public sphere as propounded by Jurgan Habermas. Open debates about the rights of the people and the

\textsuperscript{189} Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9\textsuperscript{th} March 2004.

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
benefits to be obtained from the Government were often. The lapses and improper actions of the rulers also became the thread of discussion in the papers.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{191} P. Govinda Pillai, \textit{op.cit.}, p.62.