CHAPTER V
HORIZONS BECOME WIDER

Newspapers had existed long before the press developed as a mass medium. However, in the 19th century social and economic changes created circumstances conducive to the growth of newspapers. Increasing industrialization and urbanization, technological innovation and changes in transportation and education all had an impact. Due to the cumulative effect of the above factors and due to indomitable courage and studious toil of some great men, the sphere of journalism became wider and wider in the early decades of the 20th century leading to the birth of newspapers of large circulation.

Malabar Collector Marines in a speech said, “During the ten years from 1910 the literacy among Nairs has increased to 42% from 32%, that of Thiyyas to 17.5% from 14.5% and that of Mappilas to 10.5% from 8.5%. It means that among 100 Mappilas ten and among 100 Thiyyas 17 and among 100 Nairs 42 are literate. The increase of circulation was in-fact on a pace with literacy and readership. A.A Nair presents a sketch of the Malayali readership in the early 20th century. “In Kerala, where a high percentage of literacy prevails, most people read newspapers. Even those engaged in strenuous manual labour are readers and are politically conscious. Cart-drivers, rickshaw-pullers, for eg:, enjoy a respite, sitting in the shade of their vehicles or under trees by the

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2 *Mithavadi*, August 1914.
side of the road and reading the day’s papers and discussing their contents; or a man going through a newspaper in a petty tea-shop reads it aloud for the sake of others while one or two seated beside him, peer at the paper, breathing into his face”.³

In Malabar, due to the comparatively high degree of autonomy extended by the local self rule and due to increased literacy especially among the lower classes like Thiyyas, there was more vigour and fervour for newspaper reading. This is evident from the narration of Murkoth Kunhappa. “During the days of First World War Mithavadi published daily, a single sheet paper containing only war news, costing half an anna, from Calicut. By a single day itself it got wide circulation in various parts of Malabar. It is quite usual that people will throng around the radio in shops and other public places consequent to the death of Nehru or any great-man like him or due to some other important news breaks. It was a scene just like that, that the people gathered around those who had copy of Mithavadi with them, with the eagerness, curiosity and enthusiasm to know the war news. In those days it was a usual scene, the gatherings of people near the wells, junctions, play grounds or reading rooms. If one goes near such gathering he can see somebody sitting in the midst and reading the war news loudly”.⁴

Along with Mithavadi other newspapers like Mathrubhoomi, Al-Ameen, Kerala Kesari, Athmavidyakahalam etc. have played considerable role in manifesting new horizons of public opinion leading to the formation

of various communication channels which ultimately resulted in the creation of a public sphere.

Most of these newspapers were quite different from the predecessors in terms of thinking and action. They contributed much towards the deepening self-awareness of the literate middle class which came to be increasingly mobilized both politically and socially.\(^5\) Also the editors of these newspapers like Murkoth Kumaran, Adv.C.Krishnan, K.P Kesava Menon, Muhammed Abdurahiman, Moyyarath Sankaran, Vagbhadanandan and so on were not only editors alone but were versatile talents who articulated journalism, literature, politics and community service by their unique gifts. For them media was not only the mirror of the society but also something to guide it along the right path in the time of crises.\(^6\) The newspapers like *Kerala Pathrika, Kerala Sanchari and Manorama* which were started in the 19\(^{th}\) century continued in the new century too, with vigour and strength. But the newspapers that were started in the new century could contribute much more, symbolizing revival and change.

**Mithavadi and Murkoth Kumaran**

All the leaders of modern literature became adept through writing in newspapers and magazines. Murkoth Kumaran too was a leading reporter who proved his mettle in newspapers and magazines from 1884 to 1941, that is, until his death. Even in the death bed he dictated the


matter for articles. Infact, he is a literary giant who devoted his whole life for journalism.\(^{7}\) Like Murkoth Kumarn there is none who held the sway over so much number of newspapers that have created history. He had been the editor of 12 papers including *Kerala Sanchari*, *Mithavadi*, *Kerala Chinthamani*, *Saraswathi*, *Samudaya Deepika*, *Vidyalayam*, *Aatmaposhini*, *Gajakesari*, *Prathibha*, *Kadorakudaram*, *Deepam* and *Sathyavaadi*.

During the early decades of the 20\(^{th}\) century *Mithavadi*, *Deshabhimani*, *Kerala Kaumudi* and *Sahodaran* were the only papers that advocated for the rights of the downtroddens. *Mitavadi* which was started in 1908 from Tellicherry under Murkoth Kumaran was later shifted to Calicut in 1913 to be published as a magazine and later daily, under C.Krishnan.\(^{8}\) It was in *Mithavadi* that published the pompous articles of Murkoth Kumaran written about Kerala Varma and A.R Rajajaja Varma. The articles of C.V Kunhiraman, Manjeri Rama Iyer, Ramavarma Thampan, Mooliyil Kesavan and so on also embellished the pages of *Mithavadi*. It was *Mithavadi* that published for the first time an authoritative biography of Oyyarath Chandu Menon, the author of *Indulekha*. It gave important place for independent thought, rationalism and naturopathy. The enlightening weekly notes of Sahodaran Ayyappan also appeared regularly in *Mithavadi*. For a brief period it was run as a daily. Also it could contribute three special supplements with excellence. Articles which require further research-oriented study like ‘Malabarile chila Mahaanmaaru Aadyakaalam’ (The early life of

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\(^{8}\) P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *Kerala Charithram*, (Mal), Cochin, 1974, pp.1246-47.
some great men in Malabar) were published in it. It extended staunch support for the tenants’ agitation in Malabar. It also utilized its columns for the propagation of Buddhist ideology.\(^9\)

*Mithavadi* is the first newspaper that effectively handled the social issues. It waged a war against caste and untouchability. Thus it worked as a champion of social change and as a sentinel of the depressed classes at a stage when *Mathrubhoomi* was only in its rocking cradle. Now although *Mithavadi* is known along with the name of Adv.C.Krihsnan, it was actually the brain-child of Murkoth Kumaran.\(^10\) The christening of this paper as *Mithavadi*, was indeed very dramatic. Murkoth Kumaran picked this name from a speech of Gopalakrishna Gokhale. In the presidential address of the Bharatha Mahajanasabha held at Kasi in 1905 Gokhale categorised the Congress leaders as *Mithavadi* (moderate advocates) and *Amithavadi* (extremist advocates). Murkorth Kumaran who was attracted by the first group *Mithavadi*, wanted to start a newspaper in that name. Thus *Mithavadi* was born as a weekly in 1907, from Tellicherry Vidyavilasam Press under the proprietorship of T. Sivasankaran, who was a businessman.\(^11\) There was indeed ‘Kumaran touch’ on every aspect of *Mithavadi*. Murkoth Kumaran was writing in his own handwriting the design, to make the blocks for the ‘masthead’ of the paper.\(^12\)

Receiving the first issue of *Mithavadi* newspaper *Malayala Manoroma* wrote about the excellence of the paper as well as about the

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\(^9\) Ibid., p.794.
\(^10\) Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9\(^{th}\) March 2004.
\(^11\) P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *op.cit*, p.794.
\(^12\) Ibid.
calibre of its editor. “We received with happiness the first issue of the weekly newspaper *Mithavadi*, published from Tellichery under the editorship of Murkoth Kumaran who is acknowledged throughout Kerala as a good prose writer in Malayalam language and a good friend of *Malayala Manorama*. Mr. Kumaran is eligible enough to be appointed as a Headmaster of a High School or an Assistant Professor in a college. But bidding adieu to all such career, he has sought the profession of the journalist and now running this paper. If we make a prediction on the basis of the first issue, there is no doubt that this paper deserves a first place in Malayalam language. There are many interesting items in it, written in pure and original Malayalam style and meant for various categories of readers”.

Receiving the first two issues of *Mithavadi*, Mahakavi Kumaran Asan wrote in *Vivkodayam* magazine, “We are very happy and satisfied in seeing *Mithavadi*, distinguished in both appearance and contents. It is embellished by a variety of news items and articles which we are supposed to read. The way in which the articles arranged is also admirable. There is no doubt that *Mithavadi* deserves a first place among the newspapers of Kerala”.

By the time when *Mithavadi* was started in 1907 its editor Murkoth Kumaran had become mellowed as a journalist by writing frequently in newspapers of Malabar and Travancore and by reading various English and Malayalam newspapers. He contributed a particular form and style to *Mithavadi*. In *Mithavadi*, along with the news breaks, its reasons for the cause and consequences were also highlighted. In those days the stride of science was marvellous. As a result the various

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14 *Vivekodayam*, November, 1907.
achievements of modern science frequently became news headings. Therefore a general impression about the weekly developments in western science was published in *Mithavadi* in a tabular form. When railway, post and telegraph, steam engine, tile factories etc. were introduced in the country, the principles by which these systems and engines worked were narrated interestingly in *Mithavadi*… In that period when Malayalis were getting familiar with the modern life style, they had to get awareness in very many things. To a great extent this was made easier by making them acquaint with the latest news-items… It was a time when literate people had just started reading newspapers to know the daily news breaks. Therefore, it was necessary to include all those subjects that would create interest in the readers and evoke in them new avenues of thought. Kumaran could successfully blend each item in judicial doses and in a simple and humorous style. Also Kumaran had to make the people acquaint with the new system of administration introduced by the British in Malabar. In the beginning the people were not able to digest or respond to it. They used to call the police as *puyyemakkar* or *puthiya niyamakkar* (new law-givers) which means new agencies which enforces law and order. They addressed the magistrate as magistrate *thampuran* because people saw the government officials as the inheritors of the old *thampurans* (lords). The officials also acted accordingly, wielding the powers in a despotic manner. It was a time when the municipalities, taluk boards and district boards obtained the administrative powers. As a result the people’s representatives got a right to act above such officials and to some extent overrule. It was a very novel experience for the people. Murkoth Kumaran through the annals of *Mithavadi* not only could introduce the new institutions among
the public, but also make a public audit by evaluating and criticizing the
works of the officials related to such institutions.15

Thus, matters related to local municipal administration, discussions about the running of the schools, details about court cases, small articles familiarizing the new life style etc. were the contents of Mithavadi. There was a luxuriant shower of epistemological items also. It was a period when novel literary movements were emerging. Mithavadi responded to such movements positively. It published the poetic innovation of Kumaran Asan, the Veena Poovu (The Fallen Flower). Because of the single reason that it presented this maiden endeavour of Kumaran Asan for the first time, Mithavadi has become perpetual. Uchampally, a friend of Murkoth Kumaran and a regular reader of Mithavadi used to say that if various issues of Mithavadi were bound together into one bundle it can be used as a small encyclopedia.16 The famous writer cum journalist in Malayalam, Sanjayan said, “I am sure Kairali (Malayalam language) will always remember Murkoth Kumaran as a glittering star among the writers who has emancipated the Malayalam prose style, which was like something as used in documents starting and ending nowhere, which followed the style adopted in ‘Sanskrit champu (a mixture of prose and poetry) articles’ that sans vitality and vigour. His style was so flexible that it was always able to become pleasant, simple, sweet, intense, elegant or witty according to the context. Even topics hard like iron if comes for his treatment, within no time it assumed resilience and became one with his style….No other prose writer like Kumaran has born in Malayalam who is able to instill

15 Murkoth Kunhappa, Murkoth Kumaran, (Mal), Kottayam, 1975, pp. 157-158.
16 G.Priyadarshanan, op.cit., p.61.
the emotions in the human heart so easily with the magical power of words”.

In those days also debates on various issues were published in newspapers. In *Mithavadi*, during the days of Murkoth Kumaran such debates appeared often. Among these memorable one was the one between M.K Gurukkal (later Vagbhadanandan) and Mooloor S.Padmanabha Panikkar on the subject ‘Virtuous Man and Virtuous Lady’. By the attractive style and diversity *Mithavadi* could appease every section of its readers. Murkoth developed the above kind of style while he was working in *Mithavadi*. But he was there only for one year and a half. Then some sort of difference of opinion developed between Kumaran and Sivasankaran consequent to the publication of a satiric article in *Mithavadi* written by K.Sukumaran. Kumaran and Sukumaran were friends and classmates. Both were interested in wit and humour alike. In the article of Sukumaran there was a mention of the pickle business of Sivasankaran. The couplet was like this: “Shiva, Shiva, Shivashankarante pachakkurumulakaaliha theerthorachaar” (Shiva, Shiva, Shivasankaran’s pickle made of green pepper). But Sivasankaran could not endure this poetic composition and treated this as an insult to him. Respecting the injured feelings of Sivasankaran, Murkoth resigned the editor post. When Kumaran resigned, *Mithavadi* was made to run for some more time using the articles sent by C.Krishnan from Calicut. In 1908 its publication was ceased.

18 P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *op.cit.*
20 P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *op.cit.*
Kumaran’s resignation inflicted much pain on the lovers of the language. Kumaran Asan wrote in Vivekodayam, “Murkoth Kumaran’s resignation from the helm of Mithavadi when it is in the pinnacle of glory really grieves us much”.\(^{21}\) It was actually his admiration for Murkoth Kumaran that made him to publish his début Veena Poovu in Mithavadi. Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran who was the subject of Kumaran’s sharp criticism also grieved in his departure from Mithavadi. “When Murkoth Kumaran is moving from Mithavadi every reader who has the power to discriminate virtue and vice will certainly become sad. As an editor he cared to highlight the popular policies of the Government and to lash the officials who deviate from the path of virtue. He strove much to introduce reforms among the members of the community and make the readers happy with witty articles and stories”.\(^{22}\)

Learning about Kumaran’s resignation Malayala Manorama said, “Murkoth Kumaran was running Mithavadi, right from the beginning with unique competence and acumen. Malayalees with discretionary powers of good and bad will of course grieve over his exit from Mithavadi. We are very sure that the grand success so far achieved by Mithavadi is, ofcourse, due to the hard work and studious toil of Murkoth Kumaran. He wrote in a unique and attractive style extending judicious approach to Government policies, criticizing mercilessly those who deviated from the path of virtue, initiating the drive for reformation

\(^{21}\) Vivekodayam, February-March 1908.
\(^{22}\) Murkoth Kunhappa, Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit., p.165.
in communal matters and enticing the readers with simple, humourous and witty articles”.  

**Kumaran and a Dozen Journals**

Murkoth had been the editor of *Kerala Chinthamani* from May 1909 onwards. It was a newspaper originally started by the poet V.C Balakrishna Panikkar in 1906 from Trichur. But in 1908 its publication was stopped. Though it was again started in April 1909 as a magazine, Murkoth came to its helm from the second issue onwards. By the advent of Kumaran the dignity of *Kerala Chinthamani* which always maintained excellence, was enhanced.

After the arrival of Kumaran, *Kerala Chinthamani* was forced to engage in a tug-of-war with *Malabari*, published from Tirur. It was a war of words between the two editors. The editor of *Malabari*, V.C Balakrishna Panikkar was the founder editor of *Kerala Chinthamani*. In fact the first attack was from *Malabari*. For that Kumaran gave a repartee in *Kerala Chinthamani*. The cause of *Malabari*’s criticism was the article in *Chinthamani* which praised the Diwan of Kochi, Mr.Rajagopalachari. The reply in *Kerala Chinthamani* was that since Balakrishna Panikkar was once its editor, it is unbecoming for the present editor of *Chinthamani* to abuse him even when he is going to a low degree.  

Kumaran in Kerala *Chinthamani* gave thrust to literary articles. This magazine had a major role in the *prasa yudha* (rhyme tussle). He said that meaning should not be sacrificed for the rhyming of words. He

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23 Malayala Manorama, 7th April 1909.
24 Kerala Chinthamani, September 1910.
advised not to shower praise upon mediocre poems due to any personal interest or affection as it will affect adversely the growth of the language. Infact, the criticism against the use of meaningless words was flung against the poems of Kottarathil Sankunni. Kumaran did this when Kerala Varma praised the poem of Kottartathil Sankunni considering the affection towards him. Those verbal darts injured many of those who loved Kerala Varma. His voice against the abundant use of Sanskrit words also became arrows against many scholars of that time. The comment that author should not be criticized without reading his works was darted against Kunnath Janardana Menon.\textsuperscript{26} He was very enthusiastic in criticizing and evaluating the important works published during that time, including Kumaran Asan’s \textit{Nalini}. Thus, when he was heading the magazine, giving it a new vigour and life, he came to see that a relative of the owner of the magazine managed to publish an article which he had rejected earlier. Unable to tolerate that he resigned the post of the editor.

He was a successor of ‘Swadeshabhimani’ Ramakrishna Pillai in editing the magazine \textit{Athmaposhini}. ‘Swadeshabhimani’ was the editor of this magazine from 1913-1915 which was started in 1910 from Kunnamkulam. When ‘Swadeshabhimani’ was in the death bed, he invited Murkoth Kumaran and entrusted him the responsibilities. Kumaran observed in \textit{Athmaposhini} the qualities that a critic needs. “Though a little different the power of imagination must be more intense in a critic rather than that in a writer. One who just criticizes or praises the books for its own sake need not essentially be critic. Those who start to criticize books should read much more books. Also the critic should

\textsuperscript{26} Murkoth Kunhappa, \textit{Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit.}, pp.163-170.
have more knowledge about the world than a writer”. Murkoth Kumaran edited even a magazine *Samudaya Deepika* owned by Nair community which originated from Kannur in 1915. He was its editor from January 1917 onwards. This convincingly and conclusively proves that the journalistic policy and competence of Murkoth Kumaran was acceptable to everybody irrespective of caste and religion. In his first editorial in *Samudaya Deepika* (January 1917) he wrote, “It is necessary that each community should work hard for its progress. But it is not desirable to create an impression that one community should grow upon the debris of another community. Therefore *Samudaya Deepika* works with the motto that ‘all communities together as a single community of Kerala’”. 27

He had been the co-editor of *Prathibha* magazine which was edited by Kumaran Asan from Aluva from September 1919 onwards. Only eleven issues of the magazine came out. Its life was thus short but meaningful and Murkoth Kumaran could contribute several inspiring items.

At the same time Murkoth Kumaran continued his work in *Kerala Pathrika* from 1914 to 1920, criticising and correcting various officials in the administration through his reports. Sanjayan reminisces in his memoirs, in 1935, about the *Vadakkan Kathu* (Letters from North) of Murkoth Kumaran published in *Kerala Pathrika* 19 years ago. The series *Vadakkan kathu* that Murkoth Kumaran wrote under the pen name ‘Gajakesari’ attracted him more than the war reports of the time. ‘Gajakesari’ could tear many corrupt officials, like Jarasandhan of the Hindu mythology whose body was torn to pieces”. 28

27 G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-.68.
Out of envy and communal enmity a few of the critics made sharp criticism against the works of Kumaran Asan. Murkoth Kumaran never could endure this. If somebody wrote anything quite insulting to himself or the leaders of his community or the persons dear to him Murkoth Kumaran would come to the forefront brandishing his sword. At the same time one cannot see any word of him tainted with personal detestation or communal hatred. 29 ‘Sahithya Panchanan’ P.K Narayana Pillai, Vadakkumkur Rajaraja Varma, Mahakavi Vallathol and so on, became the target of Murkoth Kumaran’s attack due to the fact they criticized Kumaran Asan. In fact Kumaran as a critic didnot hesitate to praise or criticize anybody, as one deserves on the basis of literary merit, irrespective of caste and religion.

**Kumaran as owner and Editor**

Though Murkoth Kumaran had been the editor of many publications he was always pricked by the grief, in not having a paper owned by himself. Murkoth Kunhappa states that he had heard several times his father telling that one can exercise free and fair journalism only if he owns a paper. Learning this Kumaran’s intimate friend and a main disciple of Sree Narayana Guru, Swami Guruprasad collected Rs.5000 from Burma and sent to Kumaran. Thus he started *Gajakesari* from Tellichery in 1921.30 Guruprasad Swamikal also corroborates Kunhappa’s argument. “Murkoth Kumaran used to tell me that we cannot write as we like, as the newspaper owners are cowards and so we need a paper of our own. Considering that opinion *Gajakesari* was started under my proprietorship with the assistance of Malayalees in

30 G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.68.
Burma. In the beginning itself, Kumaran asked me not to hold back his hands when writing unpleasant reports. And as long as I was the proprietor he was at full liberty to run the paper as he liked.”

It was soon after the commencement of *Gajakesari* that the Municipal elections were held. In those days the main duty of newspapers was to enlighten the public as how to utilize fruitfully their freedom of franchise. *Gajakesari* was exercising that duty by introducing the candidates and highlighting the achievements and setbacks of those who had already been elected earlier. During that elections in-fact a ‘battle of words’ was fought between the newspapers *Gajakesari* and *Swabhimani*. The main contestants of the election were one abkari trader and Adv.K.T Chandu Nambiar (editor of *Swabhimani*). But the proxy-war was fought between Murkoth Kumaran and Adv.Chandu Nambiar. As the intensity of this fight increased the character of the weapons and counter weapons also changed. To retaliate, Chandu Nambiar started a small, four page paper named *Ramabanam* meant exclusively for arguments and debates.

Kumaran immediately understood that publication like *Ramabanam* is less than a match for *Gajakesari*. So he too started a quarter anna (one anna is six paise) paper named *Kadora Kudaram*. The couplet ‘Aruthi varuthan mathiyallenkil, poruthi varuthan njan mathiyavum’ (though not able to make still, but I am enough to give relief) was its motto. The name of the special correspondent of *Kadorakudaram* was given as one ‘Sriman Chaaral Kannan’. Infact Charal Kannan was an ugly fellow in Tellichery town, with supine lips

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through which saliva was incessantly oozing out. The overt sarcasm was that Charal Kannan, with such an ugly appearance was the befitting guy to write against Chandu Nambiar of *Swabhimani*. To dart sharp arrows against Nambiar, items in *ottanthullal* (a popular dance form of Kerala) rhymes were presented in *Kadorakudaram* by Kumaran under a permanent heading ‘Nambiarude thullal’. This kind of attacks and counter attacks aroused much interest among the readers. Though Nambiar and Murkoth held different views they were not at all enemies.32

Through *Gajakesari* Murkoth Kumaran resisted the non-co-operation movement of Gandhi. He argued that the majority of the population of India belongs to lower classes and untouchables. Here the main problem is the infirmity due to caste discrimination. That should be resolved first. On getting freedom, the right for rule will reach the hands of the upper castes from the white men. He was under the impression that it will only create more difficulties. Murkoth Kumaran was a great personality who devoted the lion-share of his life for the upliftment of his community. He can be called the ‘commander-in-chief’ of the Sri Narayana Movement in North Kerala. He was the messenger of Guru in social reformation tasks. But his ultimate aim was to mould out a unified Kerala society destroying the caste discriminations. In a message given to a Warier Samajam he said, “It is advisable that every community has its own samajam and special newspaper. But these samajams and newspapers should be run with the intention and belief that the unification of various communities is the

ultimate end”. It is with this belief and motto that he worked and wrote. He was very conscious in not writing anything that tilts communal harmony. When Murkoth Kumaran sparked many dialogues through newspapers and magazines in subjects related to literature, politics and community he took special care in seeing them not ending in communal hatred and personal venom.

Infact, Murkoth Kumaran is a writer who accomplished his skills by writing in newspapers and magazines. For more than half a century, his innate flow of talent was displayed through media. He is a rare breed of writer who sacrificed all his life for journalism. The fact that other than his three novels and four biographies, more than two dozen works were collected and compiled from newspapers and magazines is a proof for that. The unique calibre of a journalist is judged by the ability to write articles fast and also by the significance of the contents. Murkoth had these qualities more than enough. His works assume all the more importance as they are the products of a period when our journalism was in its cradle.

**Resurrection of Mithavadi**

*Mithavadi* had a resurrection from its ashes when Adv.C.Krishnan resumed it in 1913. Krishnan was earlier the Editor of *Kerala Sanchari* which was then owned by his brother-in-law C.M Rarichan Mooppen. He had relinquished that post when he went to Madras for pursuing Law. Krishnan was an adept in handling both Malayalam and English. While at Madras he used to write articles in the English newspapers

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there. During the time of his collegiate studies all his attention was in reading newspapers and writing articles. He regularly sent news dispatches from Madras to the *Kerala Sanchari* newspaper. On his return, he re-launched the *Mithavadi* publication as a weapon for the upliftment of his Thiyya community. The necessity of starting a newspaper favouring the British Government was pointed out by some of his friends like Dr. Ayyathan Gopalan.  

To make it a reality Krishnan purchased the rights of the *Mithavadi* magazine paying 200 rupees. He started to publish it from Calicut from August 1913 onwards, with the motto ‘Thiyyarude Oru Malayala Maasika’ (A Malayalam Magazine of the Thiyyas). In the first issue Krishnan wrote, “This magazine is aimed at giving some relief to the members of Thiyya community who experience much difficulty in not having a newspaper or magazine of their own in Malabar. There is no doubt that, not only in Malabar but in Travancore and Cochin also we witness much change and progress in respect of religion and education. At present this kind of changes is known only to the locals. *Mithavadi* aims to make it known elsewhere”.

To enable the re-publication of *Mithavadi* a grand success, help and assistance were extended to Adv. Krishnan from various corners. For that Murkoth Kumaran came from Tellichery to Calicut in the beginning of January 1913 itself. After that he regularly sent articles…. K. Ayyappan B.A also wrote weekly notes in *Mithavadi*. While the articles of Kumaran amused the readers, the articles of Ayyappan made them introspective by their depth. ..Also Krishnan included in

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Mithavadi, the articles from the Tamil paper Kudiyarashu run by E.V Ramaswamy Naickar, the leader of the Swabhimani Movement in Tamil Nadu and also articles from other Tamil papers. These Tamil articles were translated for him by both V.R Parameswaran Pillai, the Malayalam scholar of Nagarcoil High School and V.R Velappan who practiced indigenous medicine in Ramamedu.  

Within one year itself, Mithavadi could penetrate among the masses and achieve good reputation. Mithavadi quoted in its own issue, what had been said about it by Kerala Sanchari. “We have much happiness in stating that Mithavadi now has become one of the best magazines in Kerala. In the leadership of Mr.Krishnan it will scale new heights. Our opinion is that many of the objectives of this magazine may be fulfilled without difficulty. In this effort of Mr. Krishnan, not only Thiyyas but all are indebted”.  

C.Krishnan could run Mithavadi as a magazine, with excellence as far as possible until December 1920. From January 1921 to October 1938 it was a weekly. Thus the service of Mithavadi for almost a quarter century was much beneficial for the Thiyya community. Besides community matters, literature also had a prominent place in it. On November 29, 1938 C.Krishnan passed away. Sometime before his death itself, Mithavadi had ceased. Later Krishnan’s son-in-law K.R Achuthan resumed it as a weekly again. But it did not continue long. There is no doubt that among the newspapers of Kerala, Mithavadi and among the editors, its editor C.Krishnan have a special place. 

38 Mithavadi, February 1914.  
Even the English newspapers held Krishnan in high esteem. *Times of India* wrote about Krishnan, “…Mr.C.Krishnan B.A, B.L, the first non-official President of the Calicut Taluk Board in the Malabar District is among the few Thiyyas who have risen to high positions by dint of hardwork and through integrity. A man of deep convictions and stern morals Mr.Krishnan has done much to uplift his community and to further its moral and material interests. The monthly magazine he edits and owns, the *Mithavadi* (the Moderate Advocate) has proved a powerful instrument of reform and progress…He has well established his claim to be regarded as a leading publicist on the West Coast. He maintains a free reading room open to all classes of the public and has founded the S.N.D.P Club and the ‘Paran Hall’ which have become the centres of intellectual and social activities”.40

Dr. A Ayyappan who was the superintendent of Madras Museum wrote, “History will ever remember the name of C.Krishnan as one of those who begot newspapers in Kerala. The simple and sharp style of the editorials in *Mithavadi* will never fall into oblivion….It is doubtful if there is any other paper in Kerala like *Mithavadi* that simultaneously worked for the integration and enlightenment of a community”.41

‘Thiyyathwam’ Watchword of *Mithavadi*

From the very first issue of *Mithavadi* in 1913, Adv.Krishnan pampered ‘Thiyyathwam’ (the state of being Thiyya) with a very narrow perspective and resisted with vigour all the other movements in his

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40 The news item in *Times of India* as quoted in *Mithavadi* of June 1920.
41 N.K Damodaran, *op.cit.*, p.32.
innate simple style. Before spearheading the Thiyya/Ezhava renaissance, the *Mithavadi* presented in its second issue a bird’s eye view of the pitiable condition of the Thiyyas during the early 20th century. “Although the Thiyyas have got some independence in the urban area their situation is very pathetic in the country sides. Though in religion they are Hindus, due to untouchability they cannot do anything. Many of the Thiyyas in the country sides are not at all aware of the fact that there are many qualified and competent people in their own community in the urban areas. ..The Thiyyas of the urban area are educated, united and wealthy”. This article ends with a call to each one born in the Thiyya community to work hard for the upliftment of the community.

Krishnan worked for the solidarity and emancipation of the Thiyya community through multifarious ways. He was aware of the Thiyya might, in terms of population. But the lack of consolidation and unity agonized him much. Krishnan said, “Although the strength of the Thiyyas in Malabar is almost eight lakhs they have no representative neither in the Legislative Council nor in the Assembly…. We are neglected cruelly. Although we are almost 40% of the Hindu population in Malabar, since the election is held for all Hindus our community cannot make anyone of them win. Thiyyas will have salvation only if they stand as an independent community severing its links with upper class Hindus”.

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43 *Mithavadi*, 13th September 1913.
With this end, he not only wrote articles and made campaigns but also organized conventions giving wide publicity. It was as a part of this programme that the meeting of the Kochi Ezhava Samajam was celebrated at Trichur on a Pooram (a festival) day in April 1916. It was chaired by Adv.C.Krishnan. Murkoth Kumaran gave the keynote address. Since much propaganda works were given regarding the founding of the Samajam, media in both English and Malayalam published editorials and editor’s note. Even the Yogakshemam newspaper, an organ of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha reported it in an excellent manner, highlighting it as an example to other communities also. “On reading the speeches delivered by Mr.C.Krishnan and Mr.Murkoth Kumaran in the Ezhava convention at Trichur, we felt that these kinds of men are the genuine lovers of society. The correct policy is to encourage other communities to perform in a justifiable way. We are very happy to see that Mr.Krishnan and Mr.Kumaran have understood the above principle very well”.

The Malayala Manorama report sheds some light on the works of Krishnan and the Calicut convention. “The Thiyyas of Malabar who have an important position in respect of population and education when compared to other communities have decided to work in solidarity for social and industrial welfare and so as to lift it from its awkward state. Though the Thiyyas of Malabar are eight lakhs in number, they have no due representation in the administrative matters and so no vigour and interest in social and economic matters. In the new Legislative Assembly the lower classes like the Aadi Dravidas and the minorities

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46 Mithavadi, May 1916, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.
like the Muhammadiyas have got representation. But the Thiyyas who are above them in number has not got even a single representative. To ponder over the measures to solve such inequalities and to work for the upliftment of the community a big convention was held at Calicut in which C.Krishnan B.A, B.L chaired.....In the meeting Krishnan opined that the Thiyyas should cut off its relations with the savarna Hindus. He said that for a very long time Thiyyas were the slaves of upper classes and if the Thiyyas blindly follow them as Hindus it will help only the upper classes to enhance their status and power which in turn will not bring any benefit to Thiyyas.⁴⁷

Krishnan utilized all the slots available before him, in reaching his goal. Dr.T.M Nair, the leading member of the Justice Party in Madras before his journey to England (1918-1919), had asked Krishnan whether he needs to submit some memorandum before the British Parliament about the wretched state of the underdeveloped communities like the Thiyyas of Malabar. Krishnan immediately replied that if special constituencies were not allowed to the Thiyyas in the Legislative Assemblies, it will result in the incapability of the community to send the genuine representatives to the Legislative Assembly and so T.M Nair should endeavour for it.⁴⁸

Krishnan’s uproar about the sad state of the Thiyyas and other lower castes found expression in the English newspapers of Madras also. Madras Mail published an editorial entitled ‘Screams of the Untouchables’ in January 1928. Immediately Krishnan sent to the editor of Madras Mail a telegraphic message conveying his thanks for the

⁴⁷ Malayala Manorama, 15th August 1922.
⁴⁸ K.R Achuthan, op.cit., p.117.
editorial. In it Krishnan said that he agreed with each word of the editorial.\(^{49}\)

As a leader of his community Krishnan had taken much pride in the rise of its every member. He was very eager and happy to inform the whole community such pieces of news items through *Mithavadi*, and tried to give them splendid display. The news item regarding the appointments of Oyitti Krishnan and K.Krishnan is a fine example. “We are very happy in Mr.Oyitti Krishnan being elected as the Municipal Chairman of Calicut. It is a very respectable thing for our community in Mr.Krishnan being the Chairman of Calicut which is the head quarters of Malayalam District. High Court Advocate K.Krishnan B.A B.L, the son of Kottiyeth Ravunny, the main force behind the construction of Thalasseri Jagannatha Temple has been posted as the additional Munsiff of Calicut. Mr.Krishnan by his character and competence is earning good name”.\(^{50}\)

From the above statements it is very clear that *Mithavadi* editor was, not of opinion’ that Indians should be the perpetual slaves of the British. He had the opinion that under the British every subject got equal justice. To him self-rule did not mean good rule. He also held the opinion that the British rule should continue here, until the communities enduring inequality achieve the bravery and ability, to ask for its due share from the administration that comes in the post-independence period. Otherwise he believed that the lower communities will be dragged away to the old situation of ‘water drawyers’ and ‘wood


\(^{50}\) *Mithavadi*, August 1913, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.
cutters’. It is because of this conviction that he criticized the Indian National Congress with tooth and nail.\footnote{K.R Achuthan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.143.}

Indeed Thiyya awakening was the only vision and mission of \textit{Mithavadi} and its Editor Adv.C.Krishnan. He used to respond immediately to anything that was detrimental to Thiyya/ Ezhava cause. Once he happened to see an editorial note in the English newspaper \textit{Westcoast Spectator} (around 1916), published from Calicut blaming the Ezhavas for developing a tendency to keep away from other communities. Immediately he sent a befitting reply to the above paper.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.104.}

He was not reluctant to criticise through his paper, even his brother-in-law C.M Rarichan Mooppen, when he did not get the co-operation expected from him in this mission. What provoked Krishnan was an English article written by Rarichan Mooppen in the English newspaper \textit{Westcoast Spectatator}. In the reply Krishnan said, “Among Thiyyas those who know English might have read the English article of Rarichan Mooppen, “Thiyya social reforms” published in \textit{Westcoast Spectator} of April 1914, intended to enlighten the Thiyya nobles of South Malayalam. At present many of the Thiyya women of South Malayalam do not clad their body fully. Therefore, to set right this defect, something should be immediately done is the main suggestion in the article. Since \textit{Mithavadi} is a Thiyya magazine in Malayalam it is advisable to write this kind of articles and essays in it, than writing in English papers since the purpose can be better served in Malayalam. Also now \textit{Mithavadi} is widely subscribed and read by the people”.\footnote{\textit{Mithavadi}, May 1914.}
*Mithavadi* always attempted to publish reports about the freedom struggles that had been going on elsewhere in the world and to make its comments. He made a call to make mortal fight for the preservation of rights. In the *Mithavadi* of August 1916 he wrote that the endeavour for freedom will not materialise within four days or ten days. Continuous work is inevitable for that. The proverb ‘only when you knock it will open’ will finally become reality.  

C.Krishnan who had made a great call for revolution almost a century ago, was indeed a magnetic personality. He hailed the Russian Revolution even before its successful conclusion. *Mithavadi* wrote this editorial in August 1917 when the world as such was denouncing the revolution. In the editorial Krishnan tried to establish the fact that the situation in Russia is much better than in Kerala in terms of human dignity. He also made a forecast that the destiny’s destination here also will not be much different from that of Russia in the coming days. “It is in Russia (before the revolution) that people say they have no freedom. But when one thinks about our condition, some preventing us from walking along the roads, going to schools and praying at the temples we have to conclude that the difficulties experienced by the people of Russia is nothing at all. Now the Russian emperor, family members and ministers are all imprisoned. It would have been nice if some people here also understand that the course of time-wheel is alike and everywhere.  

No other editor has made such progressive, solemn and majestic comments as C.Krishnan in justifying the socialist revolution.

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54 *Mithavadi*, August 1916.

55 *Mithavadi*, August 1917.
It was after him that K. Ayyappan in *Sahodaran* and T.K Madhavan in *Deshabhimani* wrote editorials hailing the Russian Revolution.\textsuperscript{56}

Krishnan was indeed a visionary who could anticipate things ahead of time. He had much confidence in the strength of the people. This is clear from the editorial in *Mithavadi* published in December 1917. “What was it that happened in Russia? There the people imprisoned the emperor and trespassed the palace; they drove away the rulers and declared that people are the bosses. When witnessing these incidents everybody here may also be forced to think about the situation in our land. Here the majority of the people, who own this land, have no freedom to walk, have no right for education, and many of them are untouchables. There is much difference when comparing the situations in Russia with that of here. Nobody knows about the strength of the people”.\textsuperscript{57}

With this enlightenment, Krishnan resisted daringly and without any kindness, all communal injustices and inequalities. This is convincingly proved by his famous breach of Tali Road ban at Calicut. Zamorin’s Estate Collector J.A Thoran I.C.S had earlier forwarded to the District Collector F.B Evans a memorandum signed by more than hundred persons requesting to prevent the lower communities using the Tali temple roads. But Evans did not allow that. It was at that time that Evans went on leave for two months. Consequent to that J.A Thoran was appointed as the acting Collector. He thought that this was the most propitious occasion and he decided to ban the lower communities from walking along Tali roads. On 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1917 he installed in the Tali

\textsuperscript{56} G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.149.

\textsuperscript{57} *Mithavadi*, December 1917.
road, two notice boards preventing the lower communities. The notice said that since the untouchables like Thiyyas, walking along the steps of this temple and along the roads around the temple pond is against civility, the above communities should not use those roads henceforward, and is hereby informed that those who breach the notice would be responsible for all the expenses incurred to the temple and would be punished as per law”. 58

C.Krishnan did not waste any time in breaching this law. Along with his intimate friend Manjeri Ramayyar he travelled along the Tali road in a horse cart on the same day when the board appeared. Then he wrote a letter to Thoran, “…since your notice limits the rights of a major section of the subjects of His Majesty the Emperor, we have immediately utilized our right by walking along the Padinjare Samooham Road (Western Samooham Road), one among which has been mentioned in your notice. We would be thankful to you if you take immediate action in this case of violation of law”. 59 But Thoran did not dare to take any action but sent a reply conveying thanks to Krishnan that he received the letter. Meanwhile somebody threw away one of the notice boards into the temple pond and tarred the letters of the other board. Apart from writing a letter to the Collector, Krishnan wrote an editorial in Mithavadi criticizing his nefarious deed. 60 Kerala Pathrika expressed its happiness in Krishnan’s daring deed, by publishing an article congratulating him. 61

59 N.K Damodaran, op.cit., p.34.
60 G.Priyadarshanan, op.cit., p.144.
61 P.V.K Nedungadi, op.cit, p.31.
Anyhow by that act of Krishnan everybody got the freedom to walk along the Tali Road. This incident sheds light on the multifaceted personality of Adv.C.Krishnan. By trespassing into the prohibited area and thereby denying the order of the District Collector, an I.C.S officer, Krishnan dared to take law into his hands. At a time of imperial rule when the I.C.S officers were wielding unimaginable power, none of the subject would have been so eloquent to break the law so simply as Adv.Krishnan. On the legal angle this act would have brought several untoward consequences unless the collector was prudent and wise enough to contain the repercussions in a mere reply. On the other hand, on the humanitarian angle the act of Krishnan enabled the wretched classes to achieve the right and freedom to walk along the prohibited road in future also. Had Krishnan not done so, at that particular moment then it would have been stamped as an unbreakable rule hindering all the members of the lower classes from walking along the temple road and thereby nipping the freedom due to human beings. This incident became a mile stone in invigorating people similar kind of agitations at Vaikkam, Kalpathi and Thiruvarppu.\textsuperscript{62} It is true that Krishnan always favoured the British. But this is self explanatory that whenever he found fault with the British officers he did not hesitate to criticize them. When looking this incident from another angle it can be observed as something akin to an act of civil-disobedience which the great American philosopher Thorou propounded decades back and implemented in India by Mahatma Gandhi a decade after.

C.Krishnan extended open support to Dr.K.V Choi, a Thiyya, who walked along the temple tank near Chalappuram in 1919. The

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.}, p.32.
temple authorities filed a criminal case against him in the Submagistrate’s court, Calicut. *New India* (published from Madras) of 22nd February 1919 reported it as a sensational case of pollution and this was the first case of its kind in Malabar. On Krishnan’s advice, his close friend Manjeri Ramayyar defended Dr. Choi and won the case.\(^{63}\)

*Mithavadi* fought not only for the rights of the Thiyyas of Malabar alone but for the rights of the Ezhavas of Travancore and Cochin also. In 1917 the Kochi Ezhava Samajam submitted before the Maharaja a memorandum condemning the denial of admission, for Ezhava children in some schools especially in some girl’s schools. Highlighting this issue *Mithavadi* wrote that it would have been better if the Government of Cochin had understood that apart from the dispensation of justice, recognition of the rights also is their obligation. It is not at all right to keep them away from the main stream when we think of the population of the Thiyyas and the amount of tax collected from them. It is very doubtful that such abominable treatment towards subjects can be observed in any other civilized state.\(^{64}\)

C. Krishnan made his fight for securing the rights of Ezhavas and Thiyyas not only by employing the pages of his own paper, but he made use of the services of other papers also. In those days (around 1916), lower castes were not allowed to walk along the Sreesankarapuram bazaar of Kodungalloor. They were allowed only to walk through a narrow lane running through the rear side of the bazaar which was stinking due to the continuous deposit of garbage and urination of the

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\(^{64}\) G. Priyadarshanan, *op. cit.*, p.105.
public. Although a memorandum of grievance was submitted in 1917 to the Kochi Maharaja by Ezhava Samajam, the grievance was not redressed. Therefore highlighting this problem, the Ezhavas of Kodungallur submitted the Resident a memorial. C.Krishnan sent the copies of this memorial to the important English dailies like *The Hindu* and *New India* and to the leaders of Justice Party like Thyaga Raja Chetty and P.Kesava Pillai. Krishnan did not hesitate to wage a war with even the Maharajas in his fight for the social justice. As in many places, in Tripunithura also the Ezhavas had to suffer many bitter experiences due to untouchability. Krishnan condemned this in an editorial in *Mithavadi*. “The tyrannies experienced by our community has become intense in Tripunithura where the royal families of Cochin are also residing…We should not fear at all in claiming our right for the freedom to walk along the road”.65

He not only advised the people to fight for their rights but also to exercise their duties too. He unwearyingly worked towards the task of leading his community forward so as to enable them to stand on its own feet with complete independence. The editorial in the *Mithavadi* of August 1916 is an example for the same. “Although we advise to fight for your right for employments, the work towards this end should not be your only aim. We are of the opinion that the progress of any community lies in its people. A Divanji, a Collector or a Governor cannot bring progress or retrogression for a community. If one tries for his upliftment who can hinder him? The communities like Parsis, Nattukottachetti, Maarwadi and Baniya have ascended the ladder of progress by their hard work, not by Government employments or

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favour. Although the Jews were tortured unkindly by Christian Kings for centuries, they did not descend to the lower racks. They were like an ignited twig held downward, but the flame always upward. In our case others can deny admission in the college but they cannot prevent us from earning a good name and reputation by gentlemanly behaviour. The Maharaja of Cochin can deny the freedom to walk in some streets and admission in some schools. But he cannot prevent us from doing hard work and enduring temperance. As such, there are avenues many to achieve progress without somebody’s help. It is enough that we should not become our own enemies”.

Krishnan argued for financial austerity and asked his people to be frugal and prudent in spending. We may spend the money we earn only for genuine needs. Expenditure should be on a par with the income. Among us there are many celebrations which are quite unnecessary. For why this kettukalyanam (initiation rite) and thirandukalyanam (a ritual to celebrate the puberty of a girl) we celebrate for many days? Marriage is the perpetual alliance and in that case we celebrate only for a day. At the same time in the case of kettukalyanam we celebrate for four days. The result of kettukalyanam is a huge expenditure of money and aberration for the modesty of the woman. Usually what happens is that after these celebrations and receptions practically people become houseless and penniless.

It is true that the progress and welfare of Thiyya community was the main goal of Adv.Krishnan. At the same time he had sincere and earnest desire for the upliftment of other communities also. His

66 Mithavadi, August 1916.
67 Mithavadi, April 1914, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.
perspective was that every community should progress for a nation to develop. Only thereby, we could be able to dispel inequality and blind belief and create a situation in which fraternity and prosperity are maintained. An excellent example for this is the editorial he wrote in *Mithavadi* in respect of Nair community. “In the early days the Nair community had not much vigour and vitality that we see at present. But we are happy to see that members of the Nair community is on a forward march. Although Nairs are much ahead of other communities in respect of education, wealth and progress no other community so badly needs a social correction and reformation. We are very sure that every community that loves the Nairs will certainly advise them to revamp and renovate their matrilineal system and rights of succession. All their prosperity we see today is earned by their great grand patriarchs. To retain that prosperity in future also, necessary changes and renovation are inevitable”.

*Mithavadi* encouraged the reformation woks in the Namboothiri community which had spent the time in eating and fun making. It published the reports of the Namboothiri Yogkshema Sabha with due importance. It gave advance warning to Namboothiri community that if it maintained only the status quo without undergoing change, within a century the ‘namboothiri voice’ alone would remain. Also *Mithavadi* dedicated its pages to carry in-depth reports about the agitations against pollution which were raging over Kerala then. It advised the Christians to dispel hostility among them. *Mithavadi* noted that it is a pity, that the Syrian Catholics did not participate in the Christian Congress held at Kottayam and that the hostility between them is on the increasing scale.

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Among the Syrian Catholics the differentiation between the aristocratic and the non aristocratic families is increasing. The higher graders will not voluntarily allow the lower graders to climb to a lofty level, unless they surpass the higher class with wealth and wisdom. *Mithavadi* published frequently articles and speeches explaining the means of progress for Christians and Muslims along with articles tracing the history and origin of these communities. No other paper like *Mithavadi* has published a true and in-depth report about the agitations between Nairs and Pulayas at Neyyattinkara and Perinad near Kollam. A research student who would enquire into the actual conditions of Pulayas six or seven decades back, cannot get any other detailed report than the one in *Mithavadi*. It was with such impartial mind that *Mithavadi* criticized the abuses and excesses unleashed by those who upheld pollution, and analysed their mind-set brimming with blind beliefs. Those reports were something which would make the agitators shy and make them repent over their deeds.\(^{69}\)

Apart from *Malayala Manorama* there was only one paper in Malayalam, the *Mithavadi*, that attached much importance for the reports of the First World War. *Mithavadi* used to publish everyday a single sheet paper containing war reports and sold at the rate of half an anna. In those days in Kerala there was not any daily newspaper. Therefore, *Mithavadi*’s novel endeavour got wide approval. Dr. Ayyyappan commemorates that for Keralites during the time of First World War, *Mithavadi* was a synoymn of daily newspaper. The locals sat around *Mithavadi* copies and discussed the course of the German war. The editor’s philanthropic attitude and calibre for the analysis of

\(^{69}\) G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, pp. 152-161.
world situation was unique and the same reflected in its editorials. Amidst the war, a British pilot had dropped the bomb over the building where German emperor Kaiser stayed. But the emperor had left the building twenty minutes earlier. About this, the editor’s comment was that it was world’s misfortune, that the pilot had not reached 20 minutes earlier.\textsuperscript{70} 

\textit{Mithavadi} was subscribed by various groups of people even outside Malabar or Kerala. The Maharaja of Travancore Sree Mulam Thirunal sent the subscription fee to \textit{Mithavadi} regularly. In Ceylon also where Thiyyas were in greater number, Krishnan and \textit{Mithavadi} focused its attention.\textsuperscript{71}

**Literary efforts**

C.Krishnan had genuine interest and taste in Malayalam literature. When he was in the college he had read the Venmani poems and other works. Also he used to read regularly \textit{Vidhyavinodini} magazine.\textsuperscript{72} It may be those interests that led Adv.Krishnan to give much importance for literary items of various natures in \textit{Mithavadi}.

The services of \textit{Mithavadi} for the development of language and enrichment of knowledge are invaluable. It was \textit{Mithavadi} that published for the first time the biography of O.Chandu Menon. This biography written by Ambroli Kunhiraman Vaidyar was published in five issues from November 1914. \textit{Mithavadi} published the brief biographies of various personalities who have proved their calibre and mettle in various fields. Thus it published the abridged biographies of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p.142.
  \item \textsuperscript{71} P.V.K Nedungadi, \textit{op.cit.}, p.64.
  \item \textsuperscript{72} K.R Achuthan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.291.
\end{itemize}
people like Ooraacherry Gurunaathanmar, Uppottu Kannan, Rarichan Mooppan, Paravoor Kesavan Asan, T.M Appu Nedungadi, Dr.T.M Nair, C.Krishna Pillai, K.Paramu Pillai and so on.  

A regular column for the criticism of books entitled *pusthakaabhiprayam* (book review) was a special item in *Mithavadi*. This was meant to introduce among the readers the newly published books. If any novel aspect of aesthetic sense is found in a work then that will be appreciated with due importance in the evaluation. Also it encouraged the translation works from English. Whether the work is independent or translation, it was a must that language should be simple, pure and sweet. *Mangalamaala* (Appan Thampuran), *Bilathivishesham* (K.P Kesava Menon), *Rajayogam* (Translation by Kumaran Asan), *Chithrayogam* (Vallathol), *Viruthan Shanku* (Karaatt Achutha Menon), *Vyaapara Charithram* (K.C Manavikraman Raja), *Prarodanam* (Kumaran Asan), *Pourasthya deepam* (Naalappatt) etc. were the prominent books for which review was published in *Mithavadi*. This column was handled by Murkoth Kumaran and Mooliyil Kesavan. C.Krishnan wrote the abridged biography of the Thiyya noble Choorai Kanaran (1812-1876) who had achieved fame in various levels as the first Malayali Deputy Collector, the first Indian to that post from a lower

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73 G.Priyadarshan, *op.cit.*, pp.160-161. Ooraacherry Gurunaathanmar was the scholars who helped Dr.Gundert in the compilation of the first Malayalam dictionary. Uppottu Kannan had amazing knowledge in Malayalam, English and Sanskrit. Paravur Kesavan Asan was the founder of *Sujananandini*, the first Ezhava newspaper in Travancore. T.M Nair was the one who championed the non Brahmin movement in Madras. C.Krishna Pillai was the first Secretary of Kottayam Kavisamajam, the first organization of Malayalam writers. Although he was the organizer of Keraleya Nair Samajam, Krishna Pillai ardently fought for the rights of the lower classes. K.Paramu Pillai was the first M.A holder in Travancore. He was also an educationalist and a reformist in Nair community.
community, the unique personality who got the full salary as pension, the great social reformer and the first Municipal Chairman in Kerala.\textsuperscript{74}

Krishnan had great fondness for the works of Kumaran Asan. It was due to his request that Asan wrote the poem *Prabhatha Prarthana* (Morning Prayer) to publish in *Mithavadi* in 1913. This was followed by other poems of Asan like *Karshakante Karachil* (The Cry of a Farmer), *Oru Ulbhodhanam* (An Enlightenment) etc. which were also published in *Mithavadi* for the first time.\textsuperscript{75} Also it published many modern poems. But always it attached much importance to the works of Kumaran Asan.

**A forum for other streams**

Western education, the leadership of Sri Narayana Guru and the enlightenment obtained through *Mithavadi* injected among the Thiyyas a new vigour and vitality. A quest for entity starts among the lower classes from the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century itself. A craze for independent integrity free of caste, and a fascination for casteless Budhism are born among these classes now. Swami Sivaprasad, a disciple of Sri Narayana Guru, disgusted by caste discrimination and fascinated by Budhist preachings, wrote a letter requesting Sri Narayana Guru either to found a religion sans untouchability and pollution, or let the Thiyyas to espouse Buddhism. It was that letter that favoured the Thiyyas to voyage in favour of Buddhism. Subsequent to that, several debates were held, for and against in Thiyyas espousing Buddhism. Adv.Krishnan though still a Hindu, allowed *Mithavadi* to be the forum for the Budhist activists and their activities. Since he had strong belief in Sri Narayana Guru, he

\textsuperscript{74} C.Krishnan, “Churai Kanaran Avarkal” in *Mithavadi Supplement* 1925, p.44.
\textsuperscript{75} K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.292.
wrote his opinion as editorial in *Mithavadi*. “We do not say that the opinion of Swami Sivaprasad is ridiculous. To speak frankly we too have several times thought about such things. Thiyyas if getting converted, it would be better either to Christian or to Islam religion”. He wrote this opinion with his signature as *Mithavadi* Editor.

But anyhow a general thinking was by now rampant such that it is impossible to obtain equality in Hindu religion. The debates and discussions for salvation from the framework of Hindu religion and clutches of Brahminical hegemony were very live. As a result the conversions were very vibrant during these times especially among the educated people of middle class communities. But Krishnan was against such isolated conversion of individuals. So he told that the community as such should anchor upon one independent structure. Subsequently, the general opinion that Buddhist religion suits the Thiyyas much more was strengthened. Among the affluent people of Thiyya community the attraction towards Budhist religion thus became very vehement. Translations of Buddhist works, articles and poems were published in plenty. The novels like *Saraswathivijayam* and *Sukumari* are in a way the representations of the above ideology. The author of *Saraswathivijayam*, Adv.Potheri Kunhampoo was a visionary who argued much earlier that Thiyyas should sever the links with Hindu religion. He was of the opinion that Buddhism is the best religion suited for them.

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76 *Mithavadi*, March 1917.  
Even when Krishnan espoused Buddhism, he was not that kind of a believer as we imagine. He had his own convictions. “Perhaps you may wonder that I deny other religions while I advise you to espouse Buddhism. But Buddhism is not a religion asking you to bow, to chant songs or to do pujas. If you think pujas, prayer and worship as unavoidable rituals for a religion, Buddhism is not a religion at all. Sri Buddha says only that one should say truth, do not commit violence, do not use alcohol and walk along the path of virtue.”

In 1925 Mithavadi published in its second special supplement a very long article by C.V Kunhiraman entitled “Theeyarkku Nallathu Buddhamatham Thanneyanu” (For Thiyyas the best is Budhist Religion) tracing historical, political, social and economic reasons. But Kunhiraman conveniently changed his stand after a decade, advocating in favour of Christian religion.

Although he became a Buddhist believer, Krishnan honoured other streams of thought including rationalism and gave sufficient space for them also in his paper. It was Mithavadi and Sahodaran that had played a major role in the growth of rational movement. M.C Joseph, April 1924.

C.V Kunhiraman, Mithavadi Supplement, 1925, p.6.

G.Priyadarshanan, “Pazhamayil Ninnu-Mithavadi Visheshal Prathikal” in Bhashaposhini, November 2006. When the social leaders changed their opinion for their expediency, the task of enlightening the readers about their former stand was performed by newspapers even in the first decades of the 19th century. C.V Kunhiraman, the renowned Ezhava leader published his historic article in the second special supplement of Mithavadi published in 1925 entitled “Thiyyarkku Nallathu Budhamatham Thanneyanu” (For Thiyyas the best is Budhism) which paved the way for the spate of conversion. After a decade Kunhiraman wrote another article cleverly showing that for the Ezhavas it is better to espouse Christian religion. This was published as a small separate booklet. In this context Malayala Manorama exposed the contradictory stand of Kunhiraman by carrying in three issues his article that appeared in Mithavadi earlier.
the father-figure of rationalist movement in Kerala says, “In those days *Mithavadi* of Calicut and *Sahodaran* of Cochin were the only newspapers ready to publish articles related to rationalism. The other newspapers and magazines did not publish articles that resist blind religious beliefs or unhealthy rituals”. 83

**The Perspective Broadens**

*Mithavadi* which was a successful Malayalam magazine for more than seven years after its re-birth was once again re-launched as an English-Malayalam weekly from 3rd January 1921 onwards. Many leaders like Annie Beasant, Sir Narayan Chandravarkar and so on and other important persons like K.Natarajan, (Editor, *Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay), Malabar Collector J.A Thoran (Thoran was the Zamorin’s Estate Collector during Tali Road issue) and so on sent best wishes to the new venture. 84

The statement carried in the first issue signified a beginning as well as end. “When serious changes are going to be made in the administration of Indian empire there is no other reason to say why *Mithavadi* is switching over to the position of a weekly. At this juncture when we are entering the threshold of self-rule it causes great anxiety among the Hindus those who sans power and freedom. Self-rule is satisfactory to all the people in India only after exorcizing the devil called the ‘caste discrimination’ or when a convincing situation is emerged in which there are strong evidences of upper classes showing generosity and compassion towards the lower classes…We felt that first

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and foremost is to run a paper for the above class, the downtrodden. We know that it should not be a weekly but must be a daily. But for the time being, we have decided to run it as a weekly considering the acute shortage of newsprint. *Mithavadi* when it was a monthly magazine, it was the special magazine of the Thiyyas. But when it is made a weekly it broadens its purview and perspective. It has been made the paper of all those who have been suffering the tyranny of caste devil. As far as *Mithavadi* is concerned there are only two castes. One caste is those who agree that in social matters also, Indians should change the stand according to the changing times to climb the ladder of progress and reach the level of all other civilized communities of the world. The other caste is those who object the above stand.\(^{85}\)

In the first issue there was also an annexure on the topside of the Malayalam editorial entitled “Avasha Samudayangalude Magnacarta” (Magnacarta of the downtrodden). “We institute, command and declare as follows: you should make all necessary conditions for the progress and social upliftment of all those subjects under you, especially those who are minority and those who are not able to make a united political move for want of education, wealth or some other reason. You should take special care to see that the above category of people should not come to bear any torture or difficulties”.\(^{86}\)

**Criticising Congress and Gandhi**

It was a time when the tides of freedom movement was getting transmitted and transferred to Malabar. Then Malabar was under the

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\(^{85}\) *Mithavadi*, 3\(^{rd}\) January 1921.

\(^{86}\) *Ibid.*
British rule. Since Travancore and Cochin were under the rule of the princes and the hegemony of the upper class was so severe there, the caste discrimination problems were also more intense and rigid. But Malabar, where the caste problems were not so rigid, was a fertile soil for the national movement. So in Malabar the Government was trying to curtail the protests against the British rule in the bud itself. Since C. Krishnan who took the initiative for Thiyya reformation was a landlord, he had more loyalty towards the British. This admiration for the British coerced him much to prevent the Thiyyas from the path of national consciousness born out of the venom towards the British.\textsuperscript{87} Adv. Krishnan upheld the idea that lower communities should acquire self-reliance to move in par with the upper class and he believed that under British rule it will be easier to attain that goal than under Congress rule. It was because of this reason that he resisted the Congress and the Non-co-operation/ Civil Disobedience movements.

Adv. C. Krishnan continued the fight for communal representation aimed to acquire equality and opportunity, social justice and fraternity even until his old age. Because of this single reason, he could not agree with the Congress policy of solving the social infirmities after getting political independence. He wrote about it in \textit{Mithavadi}, referring to the speech made by Jinnah. “The Congress policy is that it may decide the matters pertaining to the community, after getting political independence. But if political independence is obtained before resolving the problems of the community, it may lead to hegemony of the majority community which will ultimately lead to the torture of the weaker communities. Therefore the so-called communalists, who are actually

\textsuperscript{87} Swami Brhamavruthan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.89.
the true nationalists, now vindicate that the genuine independence is to be built only up on the foundation of peace and fraternity evolved from the eligible rights of the weaker sections”. 88

C. Krishnan was a journalist who unfailingly fought for his own convictions. K.P Kesava Menon says that in criticizing the Congress Mithavadi (moderate advocate) was indeed an ‘Amithavadi’ (extremist advocate). Krishnan’s belief is that once the British quit India it will be like a house without a sentinel. 89 Yet Krishnan awarded considerable finance towards the funds for Guruvayur Sathyagraha and Kalpathi freedom struggle. Although he had objection against the philosophy of Sathyagraha as a movement, he helped unconditionally the movements of Congress for eradication of untouchability. He did not hesitate to congratulate the efforts of Congress in staging Vaikam Sathyagraha. 90

Mithavadi and C. Krishnan always resisted Gandhiji, Non-co-operation Movement and Khilafat. Mithavadi pestered and taunted the above movements whenever it got opportunities. The news item in January 1922 stated that it is now proved and admitted that the immediate cause of the Mappila riots and of the consequent hardships of the people, is the Khilafat and the Non-co-operation movements. It observed that if the Khilafat and the Non-co-operation workers who have been proved to be guilty of inciting the Mappila fanatics to rebellion are not brought to book by the Government, the restoration of peace and safety is likely to be indefinitely delayed. As a result the people will not find satisfaction in any of the steps that may be taken by

88 G. Priyadarshan, op. cit., p.151
89 K.R Achutan, op. cit., p.142.
90 N.K Damodaran, op. cit., p.35.
the Government for the future well-being of the country.\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Mithavadi} also said that Gandhiji was lying down for 21 days not for the sake of the Harijans and depressed classes but for the sake of the Hindu Community.\textsuperscript{92} It advocated a vigourous campaign against Non-co-operation, and suggested that officials can do their part separately by helping to open the eyes of the common people to the dangers of the Non-co-operation movement.\textsuperscript{93}

\textit{Mithavadi} was very much against the Civil Disobedience Movement. It evaluated that this Movement in Malabar has reached a peculiar phase. The bulk of the people in Malabar are fortunately indifferent to it. It is confined at present to Calicut. In North Malabar the Movement is practically dead…It is afraid that if the Movement is allowed to grow it will soon assume larger dimensions which will make repressive and coercive measures of a severe kind necessary…It takes the form of picketing of cloth shops…But the authorities have to bear in mind that people who do not believe in Civil Disobedience are at least as much entitled to the consideration of the government as those who believe in Civil Disobedience.\textsuperscript{94}

Along with \textit{Mithavadi} other papers like \textit{Sahodaran} and \textit{Gajakesari} were also the spoke-persons of Thiyya resurgence and British rule. Several attacks that may injure the sentiments of Gandhiji and the creative works of Congress originated from these papers. ‘Gandhi who thinks that India will get freedom by spinning in charka

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Mithavadi}, 30\textsuperscript{th} January 1922, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Mithavadi}, 6\textsuperscript{th} May 1933, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Mithavadi}, 9\textsuperscript{th} May 1921, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Mithavadi}, 28\textsuperscript{th} December 1930, NMML, New Delhi.
and by prohibition is indeed an idiot’ (Gajakesari), ‘In fact Congress may represent the vested interests of the caste Hindus, no one has done so much harm to the oppressed classes than Gandhiji, this is very evident from Gandhi’s stand in the Round Table Conference’ (Mithavadi), ‘Congressmen are the born enemies of the oppressed classes’ (Sahodaran) are examples.\(^95\) There is another criticism that when the peasants started the revolt during the 1920’s Adv.C.Krishnan and Mithavadi deliberately tried to hide the factor of tenants agitations contained in it. Thus favouring the side of government they presented the revolt as a communal riot and accused the Congress men for all the problems.\(^96\)

**Thiyya representation**

Although C.Krishnan and Mithavadi toiled for the representation of the Thiyyas in the Legislative Council for more than a decade it did not bear any fruit. Krishnan could not endure this kind of unconcerned attitude of the Government. With utmost despair he wrote that we seem to live in a sort of political shadow land. We have shadow councils and shadow ministries and we have a shadow electorate and shadow elections...We have got to realize that the elective system in this country at this stage of our social evolution is a solemn farce...The depressed classes in India today have no representation in the Legislative Council. The only manner in which they can bring their views to the notice of the Government is through their nominated representatives in the Councils. When the question of representation to

\(^{95}\) K.K Pavithran, *Vagbhadanandan Atmeeya Himalayathil*, (Mal), Kollam, 1995, p.221.

the Councils is discussed they say, “we will represent you. We will not eat with you, we will not bathe in the same tank with you or marry with you, will not worship with you or study with you or allow you to use our streets but you may vote for us. You may send us to the Councils and will rule the country for you”. If we continue this process without change, we shall have in the place of bureaucracy the reign of caste. That is why the depressed communities in India are grim and unenthusiastic in the matter of political reforms. They do not want a further apotheosis of caste and the elective system of misrepresentation.97

*Mithavadi* was of the opinion that it was high time to make substantial changes in the present systems of elections which allowed members of one community to represent another. The paper thought that the system which allowed *janmis* to represent tenants and caste Hindus to represent non-caste Hindus, would be more harmful than allowing for instance the representatives of Tories to represent Labour in England.98 Referring to the elections of September 1930, *Mithavadi* expressed strong protest against the policy of clubbing together the Brahmins, the Nairs, the Thiyyas and the Cherumas in one constituency and opined that separate communities should be given separate representatives.99

*Mithavadi* attacked the lack of representation of Thiyyas in the administration also. Regarding the demand of the Thiyya deputation to IG of police for greater representation in police Department, *Mithavadi* wrote, “the cast Hindu have monopolized not only the Police

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97 *Mithavadi*, 7th December 1925, NMML, New Delhi.
99 *Mithavadi*, 9th June 1930, NMML, New Delhi.
Department but the Revenue, Judicial, Education and Abkari also and they have driven the other communities to the wall. All revenue collected in the country is being appropriated among the officials…The more the Congress gains support in the country and clamours for the rights and privileges of Mother India, the more will the caste Hindus bring the other communities under their control…The Thiyyas suffer because they are labelled as Hindu non-Brahmins. That is why we ask them to cast off that label and form themselves into a separate and independent community. The injustice shown towards Thiyyas in the matter of appointments in Government service is intolerable. The Government derives all their excise revenue from Thiyyas. For taking to the profession of toddy tapping other communities condemn Thiyyas. But the Nair and Brahmins preponderate in the excise Department. We cannot shut our eyes and put up such acts of injustice for long.\(^{100}\)

**Spokesman of Tenants**

Although a *janmi*, even from the collegiate days Krishnan’s attention was focused on the *janmi*-tenant issue of Malabar. In *Madras Mail* in July 1900 he published an article entitled ‘Malabar Janmi’. After that he became an active participant in the Malabar Tenant agitations. It was the *Mithavadi* that stood in the forefront, among the papers that gave leadership for this struggle. Krishnan extended active co-operation for the tenant conventions that held at Pattambi in 1922 and 1926. Though Mannath Krishnan Nair’s Bill for permanent rights to all *kanakudiyans* and *verumpattakudiyans* was passed by the Legislative Council it was vetoed by the Governor. Subsequently it was Krishnan

\(^{100}\) *Mithavadi*, 19th September 1934, NMML, New Delhi.
who gave active leadership for the strong agitations that broke out against the injustice of the Government. As a result of this continuous struggle, the Government was made to negotiate the issue, which eventually led to the passing of the Malabar Tenancy Legislation Act of 1930, permitting permanent rights to *pattakudiyans* and *kanakudiyans*.  

**Collective Efforts**

Although the vernacular newspapers had its own views, in common issues they worked in harmony. The hasty purchase of a burial ground for Thiyyas by Calicut Municipality and the posting of non-Malayali officers are examples.

The article in *Mithavadi* said that an acre of ground acquired by Calicut Municipal Council for Rs.800 without a compound wall or road is not at all sufficient to meet the requirements of the community. Also the resolution of the Council is passed by only nine out of 25 members. Therefore it is hoped that the authorities will redress the grievances of the community after proper enquiry into the matter. At the same time the leader in the *Manorama* condemned the action of the Council in rushing through the resolution in such haste and the disregard shown to the feelings of the community. It invited the attention of Government, the Collector of Malabar and the Municipal authorities to the just grievances of the Thiyyas. A paragraph in the *Kerala Sanchari* of the

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101 N.K Damodaran, *op.cit.*, p.35.
102 *Mithavadi*, 30th August 1908, NMML, New Delhi.
103 *Manorama*, 28th August, 1908, NMML, New Delhi.
26th August observed that the ground acquired for the purpose is hardly sufficient or convenient for the purpose.\textsuperscript{104}

The appointment of non-Malayali officer Mr. Bheema Rao to the post of Huzur Sirastadar at Calicut was also an issue that became the thread of discussion in newspapers. An editorial in \textit{Mithavadi} referring to the appointment of Mr. Bheema Rao said that the principle hitherto followed in filling up the post was to appoint a native of the district, well acquainted with the traditions and customs of the District. But the principle is strangely enough has been violated, in the present arrangement. The Sirastadar is the Secretary of the Collector on whom devolves the duty of advising the Collector in his dealings with the various communities comprising the population of the district, so that due respect should be paid to local prejudices and customs.\textsuperscript{105}

Similarly the appointment of Mr. Panchapakesha as District Munsiff of Tirur was also much criticized due to his lack of proficiency in Malayalam. \textit{Manorama} wrote that although he has passed the vernacular test, the new Munsiff does not seem to have a good command in it. Hence however capable he be, it will be much better both to himself and to the people if he is transferred to a Tamil District and a Malayali, put in his place here. It is unfortunate that such matters do not receive due consideration at the hands of the High Court.\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Kerala Pathrika} also highlighted this problem the next day. “One of our contemporaries says that as soon as he assumed charge Mr. Panchapkesha Iyer, the newly appointed District Magistrate of Tirur

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Kerala Sanchari}, 26th August 1908, NMML, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Mithavadi}, 18th October 1908, NMML, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Manorama}, 10th July 1914, NMML, New Delhi.
ordered that he should be furnished with an English summary of the complaints, petitions etc. written in the vernacular language. This shows that the Munsiff is ignorant of Malayalam which will cause much inconvenience to the litigant public. It is to be hoped that the matter will receive the attention of the High Court.\textsuperscript{107}

**Mathrubhoomi-Heralds New India**

During the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century *Kerala Pathrika, Manorama, Kerala Sanchari and Mithavadi* were the four vernacular newspapers printed and published from Calicut. None of them had much favour towards national movement. At the same time some of them were vehemently against it. The stand of English weeklies like *Westcoast Spectator, Westcoast Reformer and Champion* were also not much different from the above. In those days the media were not ready to publish anything in favour of the national movement or something against the authorities. In such a situation without a press and a newspaper it was difficult to push the Congress movement forward. The necessity of starting a newspaper became the thread of discussion among K.P Kesava Menon and his colleagues like K.Madhavan Nair, Kuroor Neelakandan Namboothiripad, P.Achuthan and K.Kesavan Nair.\textsuperscript{108} The long cherished desire of these Congress leaders finally took the shape of *Mathrubhoomi* newspaper which spearheaded the national movement for a quarter century leading the nation towards a new age of liberty and fraternity.

\textsuperscript{107} *Kerala Pathrika*, 11\textsuperscript{th} July 1914, MNNPR, TNA.

The statement of the Kerala State Congress Committee Secretary Madhavan Nair issued in a box column in *Mathrubhoomi* is an example for its commitment for national movement. In the statement entitled ‘Possible for everyone’ he said, “In India wherever you look, you can see daring children working hard for the liberation of Bharathamatha even forsaking family life, wealth and other comforts and embracing many difficulties and even hugging death itself. For those who are not able do such heroic deeds can exercise it in a humble and simple way by taking membership in Congress. Are we, the Keralites incapable even for that”?

*Mathrubhoomi* in its editorial on New Year day of 1925 reminded that one’s country is above his caste, religion and community. “Whether in England, Germany or Japan people first say ‘my country’, and not my caste, nor my community nor my religion. In these countries whichever party comes to power is not a matter. But they all work for the progress of the nation. That is the secret of their unity and liberty. But here pride of one’s religion and community is one step ahead over pride of one’s nation. Even the senior leaders are more anxious about the means and ways which are more advantageous for their community than the welfare of the nation. Some of such leaders even engage in parley for such temporary gains. To strengthen this kind of narrow mentality of leaders and to divide the Indians they have even implemented communal representation in Legislative Councils. Now this system has been extended to other areas also. Instead of competence the caste and community have become the rule and norm for appointments. The reality is that the community as a whole does not

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benefit out of communal representation but it provides a few who belong to that community the convenience to get nomination to Legislative Council or to get appointment to some post”. In fact this editorial was clearly aimed at Thiyya leaders like Adv.C.Krishnan and Murkoth Kumaran who favoured the British rule and fought for communal representation.

The campaign to boycott Simon Commission was given very extensive coverage in *Mathrubhoomi*. It appealed on several days to the citizens of Calicut to boycott the Commission. It reminded that the national organizations like Congress, Mithavadi Federation, Hindu Sabha, Muslim League and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Moulana Muhammadali, Sen Gupta and Pandit Malavya have called for the boycott of Simon Commission. Calicut is a city that has proved its commitment to the national cause. In 1917, Calicut created history by making struggles against the District Magistrate, to safeguard the honour of the mother tongue. In 1919 it observed a successful hartal against the Rowlatt Act. Also it gave warm reception to Mahatma Gandhi and Moulana Shaukath Ali. In 1921 non Co-operation movement was inaugurated at Calicut. In 1927 again Mahatma Gandhi was welcomed by Calicut. A city which has done so many great services already knows what its obligations are. Therefore Calicut will not forget its duty and work according the persuasions of a dozen individuals who have not thought of their country’s welfare. If those dozen persons are anxious to pass a resolution to welcome the Simon Commission let them do in their own name but not in the name of Calicut city. Also the citizens of Calicut should be vigilant not to happen anything in the

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110 *Mathrubhoomi*, 1st January 1925.
Town hall that may taint the reputation of Calicut or tarnish the image of Malabar.\textsuperscript{111}

Propagation of khaddar was also a programme of \textit{Mathrubhoomi}. It resisted the moves against wearing khaddar clothes. It carried a report when a student in Payyanur Board School was beaten by his \textit{karanavan} for wearing khaddar and not for taking bath after being polluted at school. But that brave student endured all the tortures saying that one day he too will become a \textit{karanavan}. But now to regard the advices of the teachers and to give some relief to his parents he has started wearing mal clothes giving up khaddar. It is doubted that he was tortured by the elders due to the belief that he will not get government job if he wears khaddar. \textsuperscript{112} When the meeting of the citizens of Calicut passed a resolution asking the people to work hard for the propagation of khaddar and boycott of foreign dress \textit{Mathrubhoomi} gave good coverage.\textsuperscript{113}

Publication of in-depth reports about the violence of the police against Congress volunteers was also an important programme, among the multifarious activities of \textit{Mathrubhoomi} during the period of Civil-Disobedience Movement. Such reports boosted the morale and inspired the workers for more strong agitations. Fed up with such reports the District Magistrate stamped \textit{Mathrubhoomi} as a paper encouraging extremism and sent a report to the Secretary to Government. The report said, "\textit{Mathrubhoomi} is a paper of extremist tendencies and has published a good deal of matter making allegations of unnecessary and

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 28\textsuperscript{th} January 1928.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} March 1928.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 16\textsuperscript{th} March 1929. This meeting was chaired by \textit{Al-Ameen} editor Muhammad Abdu Rahiman.
illegal violence by the police in dealing with the Civil Disobedience movement”.\textsuperscript{114}

**Fighting Social Injustice**

Along with the works for the promotion of national movement *Mathrubhoomi* led the chariot in several battles against social injustice and inequality. It shouted for the rights of the ordinary people when the landlords trampled over them. It extended its help and assistance when human dignity was questioned and human cry was reverberated. Untouchability was one of the issues that *Mathrubhoomi* fought with tooth and nail. In the editorial *Mathrubhoomi* said, “We are of the opinion that untouchability should not have a place not only in roads, schools, offices and families but in human hearts also. We have to change our life and make a continuous satyagraha against untouchability. Also we have to continue our efforts for the upliftment of the brethren of lower communities who have endured so far the bitter experiences of untouchability.\textsuperscript{115}

*Mathrubhoomi* through its reports always helped the lower castes to assert their right to use public ponds. In Calicut city there were public ponds in Mankavu and Panniyankara in which all the public were allowed to take bath. But some high caste members of the Municipal Council were strongly against in permitting lower caste members to take bath in the above ponds. The District Collector expressed his view that the courts may settle the disputes. But the court decision was in favour of the conservative group. Against this *Mathrubhoomi* expressed great

\textsuperscript{114} Letter from Russell, Dt.Magistrate of Malabar to the Chief Secretary to Government, Public Relations Dept. Madras, dated 17\textsuperscript{th} October 1932.

\textsuperscript{115} *Mathrubhoomi*, 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1927.
concern and protest. As a result the Council appointed a Committee for taking decision in this matter. The Committee consisted of one Thiyya, one Mappila, one Brahmin and some other members of the Municipal Council. Some of the members of the Committee suggested allotting the ponds on caste basis. But the majority decision was that the public ponds are the property of the public.\textsuperscript{116} In Cannanore the Municipality allotted the Pulaya community a separate cemetery. This was objected by the Congress members. Yet it was passed by the Council due to the support of other members in the meeting.\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Mathrubhoomi} staunchly upheld the idea that public grant may be allotted only to those schools which give admission to all communities. When a school in Tali which allowed admission only to certain communities was taken over by Calicut Municipality, \textit{Mathrubhoomi} published reports as to gather public opinion against that.\textsuperscript{118}

This kind of experiences made \textit{Mathrubhoomi} to strengthen the fight against untouchability and pollution. It carried the speeches of Lala Lajapat Rai and Shanmugham Chetty made at Ernakulam motivating the works for the upliftment of the downtrodden. “Pollution is the cruelest face of caste discrimination. Therefore all those who are engaged in the service of the country should give a prominent place to the eradication of pollution also. But in Kerala such efforts have not become strong so far. The leaders are also lethargic in this respect. Anyhow the interest of the people in pollution and caste is decreasing day by day now. If everybody tries to strengthen the public opinion towards this cause we

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 19\textsuperscript{th} September 1925.
\item \textsuperscript{117} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 25\textsuperscript{th} September 1925.
\item \textsuperscript{118} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 7\textsuperscript{th} June 1928.
\end{itemize}
can eradicate this curse for ever. That will further empower all the other progressive movements”.  

Mathrubhoomi exhibited much interest in enlightening the masses against all unhealthy customs and traditions. It continued the campaign against murajapam, which was already started by Murkoth Kumaran two decades back while he was the editor of Kerala Sanchari. As a part of this programme it had published a statement regarding the decisions of the Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha held at Mavelikkara. In the statement it was said that since the subjects of Travancore have much aversion towards murajapam, the image of Namboothiri community seems to be tainted now. Considering this, the Sabha requested the Throne of Travancore to find some alternative measures. Thus even though the Namboothiris who were to do the sacramental works for murajapam were ready to withdraw from it, the Government went ahead with its decision to observe the ceremony. Then Mathrubhoomi in a report said, “The authorities of Travancore have decided to observe murajapam this time also despite the desire of the people of Kerala to stop it forever. The public opinion may not have attained the organizational strength to coerce them to cancel it this time. But it is desirable that the public opinion is strong now so as to make it the last one”. In a report after the murajapam festival, Mathrubhoomi observed, “It is true that the authorities celebrated murajapam against the will and wish of the people. But there is much deterioration in its pomp and festivity and people who participated in it is fewer in number.

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119 Mathrubhoomi, 24th April 1928.
120 Mathrubhoomi, 3rd January 1929.
121 Mathrubhoomi, 19th November 1929.
Those who came were also not happy and satisfied. To end this custom we have to surpass this kind of uncultured and feeble minds. It is sure that the people will be empowered for it within the next six years”.\(^1\) It solicited the help of the public in doing campaign works to eradicate the unhealthy rituals in Kodungallur Bharani Festival.\(^2\) At the same time it carried reports of Kerala Yukthivadi Samgham (Kerala Atheists’ Association) founded in Calicut elaborating its aims and objectives.\(^3\)

*Mathrubhoomi* taunted the Municipal administration by several of its reports. *Mathrubhoomi* is the successor of Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar and predecessor of Sanjayan in lampooning mercilessly, the authorities of Calicut Municipality. In a report it depicted the picture of the city during 1920’s. “In Calicut Municipality wherever you look you can see dilapidated houses, dusty streets, stinking and muddy streams, carts carrying human excreta and so on. In many of the places wells are not clean. Pure water and pure air is unavailable in the city. Beggars having serious ailments beg and die in the roads and shop verandas. We doubt if there is any other municipality anywhere in the world as lazy as Calicut. It is high time that the Municipal authorities resigned their posts admitting their incompetence. Without mosquito bites one cannot live in Calicut city. The unconcern attitude of the authorities in keeping this municipality so unprotected, with a sagging health care is not pardonable.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) *Mathrubhoomi*, 3\(^{rd}\) December 1929.
\(^2\) *Mathrubhoomi*, 12\(^{th}\) February 1929
\(^3\) *Mathrubhoomi*, 9\(^{th}\) February 1929.
\(^4\) *Mathrubhoomi*, 8\(^{th}\) March 1930.
The reports in *Mathrubhoomi* established that Brahmasamaj and Aryasamaj had become vibrant in Malabar during the second decade of the 20th century. *Mathrubhoomi* says that nine persons of Calicut including their families have espoused ‘Brahmadharmam’ and became members of Brahmasamajam in a function chaired by Devendranath Vikram of Calcutta.  

In another report the office bearers of the Aryasamaj have expressed much satisfaction in its work in Malabar. Also it is mentioned in the report that Swami Pranavananda Saraswathy has come to Malabar in place of Mr. Venkitachala Iyer who led the movement for the last four years.

*Mathrubhoomi* condemned in its reports those men who work for the political independence of the country and at the same time hate the social independence to his fellow men referring to the state conference held at Palakkad. During the conference the mixed meal programme organized became the target of attack of some Congress men who belonged to high castes. In the report *Mathrubhoomi* agreed that mixed meal programme is not a mission of Congress. But eradication of untouchability and pollution are its objectives. That is why Cherumas and Nayaadis were seen in the conference along with members of other communities. It is very ridiculous to argue that we cannot dine with somebody, only because of him being a member of a lower caste.  

*Mathrubhoomi* also denounced the mentality of the high caste people.

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126 *Mathrubhoomi*, 22nd October 1929.
127 *Mathrubhoomi*, 7th September 1929.
who raised protest in giving admission to the girls of Aadi Dravida community in the Board Hindu School at Aamayur near Pattambi.\footnote{Mathrubhoomi, 12\textsuperscript{th} September 1928}

\textit{Mathrubhoomi} vehemently argued for reformation of matrilineal customs among Nairs. It suggested that as long as the custom exists, there would be only loss and ruin for the community.\footnote{Mathrubhoomi, 20\textsuperscript{th} November 1930.} It worked for the promotion of women’s education by carrying the news items of various agencies like All India Women’s Education Conference. \textit{Mathrubhoomi} was of the opinion that satisfactory results may ensue in the case of reforming and propagating women’s education, only if women themselves try for their upliftment.\footnote{Mathrubhoomi, 6\textsuperscript{th} December 1928.}

\textit{Mathrubhoomi} worked wholeheartedly for the reform movements in the Namboothiri community by extending adequate encouragement. It cautioned the Namboothiri youths that the community will perish unless they reform themselves with the change of time. It asked them not to befool the Namboothiri women in the bondages of absurd customs as they did in the past. They are also human beings like men with pulsating heart and vigour of spirit.\footnote{Mathrubhoomi, 27\textsuperscript{th} August 1927.} It carried with due importance the news item informing the incorporation of the first lady member Mrs. S.S Sankaran Namboothiri in the Namboothiri Yuvajana Samgham. In the report it appealed all Namboothiri women to awake from slumber and asked to feel shy of their customs and rituals.\footnote{Mathrubhoomi, 11\textsuperscript{th} December 1928.} It published as a news item the resolution passed by the Namboothiri Yuvajana Sabha at
Vellinezhi which requested the lady members of Kochi, Travancore and Malabar Legislative Councils to prepare a Bill to ban the most abominable and obnoxious custom—the polygamy among Namboothiri men. It suggested that for the progress of Namboothiri community its girls and boys should be brave enough to breach the ridiculous customs.\textsuperscript{134} Mathrubhoomi advised the affluent Namboothiris to send their boys to public schools as other communities do. If so, they can live in harmony with boys of other communities. Since today’s girls are the mothers of tomorrow it is high time that we should pay attention in their education also.\textsuperscript{135} It was very happy to publish the progressive decisions of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha. When the Sabha passed the resolution asking the members of the Legislative Councils of Madras, Kochi and Travancore to prepare a draft Bill to eradicate the wretched custom of polygamy Mathrubhoomi published the news item with splendid display.\textsuperscript{136}

Education and reformation of the Muslim community was also Mathrubhoomi’s thrust area. It quoted in full text the speech of Komukutty Maulavi made at the public convention of Kozhikode Muslim Samajam in which he highlighted the need for reforming the Muslim community. The Musaliars are the sole cause for the deterioration of Muslim community. The present deplorable situation is due to the fact that they use to hide certain realities and misuse the community as a puppet for their selfish ends. Their aversion and detestation towards modern systems like schools, newspapers and co-

\textsuperscript{134} Mathrubhoomi, 13\textsuperscript{th} December 1928.
\textsuperscript{135} Mathrubhoomi, 27\textsuperscript{th} December 1928.
\textsuperscript{136} Mathrubhoomi, 5\textsuperscript{th} January 1929.
operative societies is known to all. He asked the Muslim community not to be carried away by the words of such clergymen.\textsuperscript{137} It also brought to the notice of the public that the Muslim Girl’s School opened at Vatakara on an experimental basis was closed due to the deliberate deeds of a few. Though the students attended the classes almost a week, due to their mal-advises that acquiring education from school is against Islam, the children stopped coming school. Actually they are ignorant of the real picture in countries like Turkey and Afghanistan, the centres of Islam.\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Mathrubhoomi} highlighted the need for higher secondary schools in Kurumbranad Taluk. At present there are only four such schools for the entire area though there are more than sixty elementary schools under Taluk Board. In fact a student who studied up to fifth standard knows only just to read and write. Actually he does not have any use by that. Because of this lack of facility the student who passed the fifth standard again continues in the same class. The condition of Thikkodi Board School is also the same”.\textsuperscript{139}

As in \textit{Mithavadi} the conversion of Thiyyas to Buddhism was widely discussed in \textit{Mathrubhoomi} also. It carried a news item of the Thiyya convention held at Kuzhalmandam in which Sahodaran Ayyappan, Swami Satyavruthan and Swami Sivaprasad suggested the necessity of Thiyya community following Buddhism.\textsuperscript{140} But in another report \textit{Mathrubhoomi} pointed out that the \textit{Mithavadi} version about the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{137} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 7\textsuperscript{th} January 1926.
\item \textsuperscript{138} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 21\textsuperscript{st} August 1928.
\item \textsuperscript{139} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 18\textsuperscript{th} March 1926.
\item \textsuperscript{140} \textit{Mathrubhoomi}, 5\textsuperscript{th} April 1923.
\end{itemize}
mass conversion of Ezhavas of Palakkad taluk to Buddhism makes a distorted impression among people.\footnote{Mathrubhoomi, 1st November 1923.}

\textit{Mathrubhoomi} was a playground for the writers also. The special supplement of \textit{Mathrubhoomi} that issued for the first time in 1926 was a major event. The writers and readers of Kerala were very eagerly looking for such supplements every year. \textit{Mathruhoomi} weekly in those days tried to include new columns and endeavoured to welcome new writers. In respect of ideology and morals total impartiality was the general norm. Therefore the weekly could make the parade of diverse opinions in a common platform and by this kind of healthy interaction it could extract novel thoughts and ideas. The leading writers of the subsequent times were all trained in the pages of \textit{Mathrubhoomi} weekly. Vidwan C.S Nair, K.V.M, K.Kelappan, A.K Pillai, A.Balakrishna Pillai, Puthezhathu Rama Menon, M.R Nair, K.P Kesava Menon, Chelanatt Achutha Menon, A.Ayyappan, A.D Harisharma, Joseph Mundasserry, Kuttikrishna Marar, P.Kesava Dev, Murkoth Kumaran, Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai, Vagbhadananda Gurudevan and so on were the prominent writers thus mellowed and ripened.\footnote{V.R Menon, \textit{op.cit.}, p.374.} It was through \textit{Mathrubhoomi} that the famous poem of Mahakavi Vallathol \textit{Ente Gurunathan} reached the readers. The biography of Mahatma Gandhi which was translated by Madhavanaar was serialized in \textit{Mathrubhoomi} under the title “Ente Sathyanweshana Pareekshana Kathakal” (\textit{My Experiments with Truth}). \textit{Mathrubhoomi} published it in the book form also. The influence it exerted upon the readers was tremendous. \footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.243.}
Witnessing the steep increase in the number of newspapers in Malayalam, *Mathrubhoomi* made a proposal to form a Council of the newspapers and magazines of Kerala. “Now day by day newspapers and their readers are increasing. At present their total number is more than two hundred. These newspapers have given contributions not only to change the opinion but also to manifest new thoughts among thousands of readers of Kerala. To exercise this larger obligation of the newspapers, certain arrangements like a Council is necessary. The newspapers have a major role in the development of the language also. In order to chalk out new words and to reform certain words having various shades of meaning in various parts of Kerala, the Council can help. Therefore a Journalists’ Association is quite necessary”.

**Mathrubhoomi versus Mithavadi**

During the boycott struggle of foreign dress the police of Calicut extended a sympathetic treatment towards the satyagrahis. But in places like Pappiniserry, Kannapuram, Kalyasserry and Cherukunnu in North Malabar they had to suffer much torture from the police. At this moment Adv.C.Krishnan in his editorial in *Mithavadi*, justified the policy of the police in North Malabar and requested them to implement the same in South Malabar also. Then K.P Raman Menon sent a reply to *Mithavadi* which Krishnan rejected. Later it was published in *Mathrubhoomi* with the heading ‘policine akramathinu preripakkukayo’ (Actuating the police for violence?). In that Raman Menon said, “At present pseudo-patriotism like that of Adv.Krishnan is on an increasing scale in the district. From a paper like *Mithavadi* everybody expects moral

144 *Mathrubhoomi*, 14th July 1928.
endurance, and broad outlook. Its name itself indicates ‘moderate advocate’. Don’t aggravate the agony of Congress workers by this kind of distorted pieces of advice which may eventually lead to restlessness and bloodshed.  

*Mithavadi* once qualified *Mathrubhoomi* as ‘Nayanmaarude pathram’ (the paper of the Nairs). Then *Mathrubhoomi* asked if it is the religion or caste of the editor that determines the caste of a paper? If so *Mithavadi* is also not beyond the consideration of caste. Then *Mithavadi* replied that Budhism is based neither on caste nor castelessness. To this *Mathrubhoomi* retorted by expressing the doubt, why some Buddhists are saying that they are Thiyyas?” To this *Mithavadi* gave a repartee that if *Mathrubhoomi* is not a Nair paper it may be a Brahmin paper. To this *Mathrubhoomi* gave the reply that so far we had only an impression that *Mithavadi*’s caste discrimination is very harsh. We had not thought that their idiocy and ridiculousness is so intense. At this *Mithavadi* asked if the editor of *Mathrubhoomi* hasn’t any caste feeling why he is using the caste name. Then *Mathrubhoomi* replied that the Budhist editor of *Mithavadi* hasnot got any special permission to use a Hindu name.

When South Indian Railway Employees went on a strike *Mithavadi* criticized it sharply. It said that majority of the strikers do not know for why they have done so. It also said that there are a few persons in our country who have been creating this kind of problems, a part of their profession. Then *Mathrubhoomi* asked from where it was and when it was that *Mithavadi* came to know as to majority of the strikers

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do not know the cause of the strike. It also wrote that they do not think that employees are idiots as Mithavadi imagine. In the public meetings held at the Town Hall during the last two three days, the representative of Mithavadi should have been present. If so from the actions and discussions of the employees they could have known the real fact indeed.\textsuperscript{147}

\textit{Al-Ameen - Synonym of Honesty.}

In the history of national movement \textit{Al-Ameen} has a very important place just like Mathrubhoomi. After the Malabar riots of 1921 the Muslim community was almost kept apart from the national mainstream and Congress movement. It was \textit{Al-Ameen} that brought them back to the fold of national movement and presented vehemently the stance of the minorities for the consideration of the public.\textsuperscript{148}

\textit{Al-Ameen} Company was registered in 1923 under the leadership of Muhammad Abdurahman even before the launching of Mathrubhoomi. Under its auspicious a newspaper \textit{Al-Ameen} which means ‘honesty’ was started on 12\textsuperscript{th} October 1924, on Prophet Muhammad Nabi’s birthday.\textsuperscript{149} The first issue was published with a message from Mahakavi Vallathol. In the beginning it was published as tri-weekly. Before the launching of \textit{Al-Ameen}, Abdurahiman issued a statement in Mathrubhoomi highlighting the essential character of his paper. “..In \textit{Al-Ameen} along with the local news and telegraphic messages there will be various articles borrowed from English, Arabic,\textsuperscript{147} Mathrubhoomi, 24\textsuperscript{th} July 1928.\textsuperscript{148} N.P Chekkutty, \textit{Muhammad Abdurahiman}, (Mal), New Delhi, 2005, p.65.\textsuperscript{149} Khadar Pannikkottur, “Al-Ameen, Swathanthrya Samarathinte Padavaal”, \textit{Varadya Madhyamam}, 16\textsuperscript{th} November, 1997.
Urdu and Tamil newspapers in India and abroad. It will be very helpful to know about Khilafat and Congress related news. The opinions published by Moulana Muhammadali Sahib in his *Comrade* will be carried in *Al-Ameen* also”. Greeting *Al-Ameen* the *Mathrubhoomi* published a write up under the heading ‘Njangalude Puthiya Sahajeevi’ (Our New Mate). The first issue of *Al-Ameen* came out with the editorial criticizing the Andaman scheme, which had been manifested to destroy the Mappilas who were brimming with national pride, mental courage, valiance and British hatred.

In order to make the motherland independent, to instil national pride and sense of independence among the people and to invigorate the Muslim community dumped in blind beliefs and illiteracy were Abdulahiman’s aims. He wanted to cultivate honesty, serenity and morality in political, cultural and administrative sectors. He also waged a fight against injustice and dishonesty of any kind, without thinking of future consequences. Theruvath Raman has underlined the sincere and unrelenting role played by Muhammad Abdurahiman. “*Al-Ameen* edited by Muhammed Abdurahman made a biforked approach, an attack against the social evils prevalent among the conservative Muslim society and an attempt to bring the Muslims to the mainstream of nationality. By and large the reform and regeneration of his community was the mission. It had no business intentions at all”.

It was *Al-Ameen* that installed the Muslims in the forefront of the

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150 *Mathrubhoomi*, 16th September 1924.
151 *Mathrubhoomi*, 14th October 1924.
153 Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9th March 2004.
fight against the imperial forces. It played foremost role in elevating the Muslims of Kerala in political, educational and cultural spheres. *Al-Ameen* which always fired shots against the British imperialism was a nightmare of the authorities. Because of that reason the paper was banned more than once.\(^{154}\) Abdurahiman was the first political leader who endeavoured much to redeem the Muslim community from the yoke of Muslim clergy. All Muslim organizations that worked against blind belief and unhealthy rituals got support from him.\(^{155}\) As a result *Al-Ameen* and Abdurahiman had to resist attacks from several corners. The conservatives of the Muslim community, the rightist group of his own party and the white dominated foreign government together darted arrows simultaneously. The Muslim orthodoxy observed *Al-Ameen* as not a fighter for freedom, but as a paper that favoured the Hindus as it resisted all the blind beliefs, unnecessary interventions of the clergy and all unhealthy customs. By giving publiciy to labour strikes and leftist ideology *Al-Ameen* became the enemy of the right wing of the Congress party especially the ‘Sunday Congressmen’\(^{156}\) who branded it as a Muslim paper.\(^{157}\)

In fact Abdurahiman wished the Muslims should be an inseparable part of the Indian nationality. He was of the view that patriotism is a part of one’s faith in religion. The heading for the famous

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\(^{154}\) *Islamika Vijnjanakosham*, p.526.


\(^{156}\) The right wing of the Congress party was mainly constituted of the upper class Hindus. Many of them were advocates and employees who could spare only Sunday for Congress activities.

\(^{157}\) Khadar Pannikkottur, “Al-Ameen, Swathanthrya Samarathinte Padavaal”, *op.cit.*
editorial in *Al-Ameen*, written in connection with the Salt Satyagraha was ‘Jihad-ul-Akbar’ (The Great Holy War). He wrote, “If patriotism is an integral part of one’s faith and if Islam is a religion that hails the message of freedom it is the duty of a true Muslim to sacrifice everything for the salvation of the mother country and for salvation to heaven…..It is sure that the successors of the ancient Mussalmen who preserved perpetual peace and perennial happiness in this world, will not bow their heads before this foreign evil ghosts, as long as they have life in their body. If the Muslim folk of today are indeed the successors of those great heroes who made a valiant battle against these foreign evil ghosts and became martyrs, they may stand like rock in this battle for freedom”. This kind of appeals made by *Al-Ameen* based on Islamic ideology provoked the conservative Muslims. The Muslim nobility who were one with both the Muslim League and the British Government attacked *Al-Ameen* and its editor overtly and covertly. But *Al-Ameen* marched forward overcoming all such obstacles. It was not ready to dilute its ideology and belief.

To confront all such ordeals Abdurahiman got an inner-strength derived from spirituality. He observed the principles of Islam strictly in his life. The roots of his desire for freedom were ramified in nationalism and faith in his religion. It is his religion that manifested the personality of Abdurahiman which made him to choose a Quran sentence as the motto of his paper *Al-Ameen*. “Believers, observe justice and witness the way of God, though it is against your relatives, parents or yourself.”

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158 *Al-Ameen*, 6th July 1930.
Abdurahman taught the lesson of endurance and sacrifice. Service of the community and service of the country were the principles that he highlighted through *Al-Ameen*. “The troubles and sorrows we endure on account of the scarcity that has befallen on our country are not a few. Various kinds of miseries like economic, physical and spiritual consequent to drink and intoxication are indeed insufferable. ..God blesses such suffering and sacrifice. The history of Islam teaches us that by suffering, sacrifice and non-violence, the Muslim community, the religion and the country have derived great benefit. The service of the community and the service of the country are indispensable duties of ours. It is deplorable that Kerala Muslims are now backward in these matters. To remove the ill-fame, he asked his people to undergo some sacrifice.\(^{161}\) *Al-Ameen* once pointed out that Abdurahiman Sahib suffered all the persecutions at the hands of the police with a smiling face. He went to jail only to save the fair name of the Kerala Muslims and that it is the duty of the Muslims of Kerala to make his efforts successful.\(^{162}\) His writings and appeals had the desired effect. During the days of Salt Satyagraha he wrote, it is creditable for Muslims that the number of their warriors who are bold enough to sacrifice their lives for India and Islam is increasing. He wished that the war of Salt Satyagraha (Jihad-ul-Akbar) be victorious.\(^{163}\)

Honesty was the hall mark of Abdurahiman. “The former communist leader of Delhi and a disciple of Abdurahiman, M.Ishak once narrated about his guru’s honesty and the perseverance in the

\(^{161}\) *Al-Ameen*, 9\(^{th}\) December 1930, MNNPR, TNA.

\(^{162}\) *Al-Ameen*, 15\(^{th}\) May 1930, MNNPR, TNA.

\(^{163}\) *Al-Ameen*, 6\(^{th}\) July 1930, MNNPR, TNA.
mission of journalism. Abdurahiman was perfectly honest. It was this honesty that his enemies exploited to make Al-Ameen tight-lipped. Once Abdurahiman borrowed 5000 rupees from a person on pronote to purchase types and machinery for Al-Ameen press. Due to financial problems he could not repay it on time. Since the creditor had no such problems he forgot about the pronote. According to law, one need not give the money back to the creditor after the expiry of the pronote. At last when the creditor approached, Abdurahiman said that though law is in his favour it is not proper for a true Muslim to breach the promise. Therefore Abdurahman agreed to renew the pronote. Subsequently another Muslim landlord who had close contact with the British government and the Muslim League purchased that pronote giving more money. Next time also Abdurahiman could not give the money on time. Immediately the landlord filed a suit against Abdurahiman. In the court Abdurahiman said that he has no money and so he is ready to go to jail. In those days if the borrowers failed to give the money they were sent to ‘civil jail’. The petitioner has to bear the expenses of the borrower during this period of detention. But the Sub-judge Krishnan Nambiar asked Abdurahiman to see him personally in his chamber in the afternoon. Sub-judge told him that although he is ready to go to jail, the court is not ready to send him. The Sub-judge extended the repayment period by one more month. But this time also he could not pay the creditor. On the day of next posting, before going to court Abdurahiman gave directions to publish the report ‘I am Going to Jail’ anticipating his imprisonment. But this time also the Sub-judge did not sent him to jail, but allowed two more months to repay. Unfortunately, before his reaching Al-Ameen office, the paper had come out with the report of his
imprisonment. Due to the acute financial difficulty he did not go for reprint, but allowed to distribute the same copies with the report of his imprisonment even when he was free. It was thus his followers came to know about their leader’s financial constraints. Subsequently they collected funds and repaid the creditor”\textsuperscript{164} This also highlights the difficulties he has undergone to exercise fair journalism in those days of trials and tribulations, when print media was just passing its infancy.

The news item published against a Muslim landlord of Calicut Mr.Khan Bahadur Pookkoya Thangal is another example. Reading the report Pookkoya Thangal gave Abdurahiman an ultimatum to withdraw it. He also threatened that otherwise he will make more than five hundred of its subscribers to stop the subscription. But Abdurahiman gave him a reply that what has been published in the paper is true to his conscience and so no matter of withdrawal of the news-item. At this time the Muslim youth took the threat of the nobility as a challenge and they constituted Youth Forums to help \textit{Al-Ameen}.\textsuperscript{165}

Abdurahiman was always with the have nots and the downtrodden. He fought against the exploitations of the \textit{janmis} and landlords. Therefore he extended all co-operations to socialists to organize farmers and labourers with the knowledge that they are materialists. \textit{Al-Ameen} also carried with importance the news items which were ignored by other papers so far. All these deeds provoked its detractors and out of venom advertisements were denied to \textit{Al-Ameen}.


\textsuperscript{165} Khadar Pannikkottur, “Al-Ameen, Swathanthrya Samarathinte Padavaal”, \textit{op.cit.}
Yet *Al-Ameen* and Abdurahiman did not budge an inch from their ideological stand.  

*Al-Ameen* provided miraculous service to the people of Lakshadweep by publishing reports which exposed the corruption rampant in the concerned section of the Hajur office. Once a man from Agathi named Kunhikoya, was urgently in need of some records to argue a case in the court. But the clerk dealing with the records in the section did not give him the papers for want of bribes. Immediately an in-depth report was published in *Al-Ameen*. Also Abdurahiman met the Collector with the complainant. When the Collector was convinced of the bribery in the office, the clerk in charge was expelled from service. A few others who used to receive bribes along with him were transferred to some other places. In retaliation to this the officials again continued to harass the people of Lakshadweep. Then *Al-Ameen* wrote an editorial giving the warning ‘if crushed too much, the rat-snake will also bite’. That ultimatum was found very effective and fruitful.  

To create public awareness *Al-Ameen* wrote several reports questioning the malicious intentions of the British Government. It observed that poverty, the most widespread evil is the result of the British rule. The Government only thinks of new means to increase the revenue and never thinks of improving the condition of the people. In respect of education, health and economic conditions of the people there is no room left for complimenting the Government. There is no other country in the world which has such a huge illiterate population as 95%.  

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166 M.Rasheed, “Sahibinte Vyakthithwam”, *op.cit.*  
As for health, the average life is only 23 years.\textsuperscript{168}

With the mission of spreading nationalism \textit{Al-Ameen} took up various issues. During the advent of Simon Commission it appealed the people to boycott it. It wrote that the task before the freedom loving Indians is not to be frightened by threats of the British and not to be misled by their pretty promises. It also appealed the people of Calicut to prove their manhood and self-esteem by observing a successful hartal on the day of the arrival of Simon Commission.\textsuperscript{169}

Among the Khilafat leaders Muhammad Abdurahiman alone could bring the issue of Mappila relief before the Government as well as to the public. He had sent a letter to the District Collector E.F Thomas calling the government attention to the need for relief work among the Mappila women and children in the rebel area. Even after he sent many reminders, the Collector paid little heed to the letters. But eventually the letter was published by the \textit{Bombay Chronicle} and \textit{The Hindu}. This aroused the sympathy of the public especially the Muslim public. But Abdurahiman was arrested according to military law, on 21\textsuperscript{st} October 1922 for creating disappointment in the refugee camps and misunderstanding among the outside people.\textsuperscript{170} As a result of the works of Abdurahiman, Muslims of North India got sensitized to the issue. A mammoth meeting was convened at Chawpatti in Bombay to discuss the issue and mobilize fund for Mappila relief.\textsuperscript{171} Two sons of the President

\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Al-Ameen}, 17\textsuperscript{th} June 1926, MNNPR, TNA.

\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Al-Ameen}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} February 1928.

\textsuperscript{170} M.P Mujib Rahman, “Malayali Maranna Sahib”, \textit{Madhyamam} daily, 23\textsuperscript{rd} November 1999.

of Congress-Khilafat Committee of Punjab reached Calicut to organize relief work for Mappilas. They were Muhyudhin Ahmed Ceasuri and Muhammedali Ceasuri. They visited the rebel areas to have direct experience of the situation. Consequently they started six relief centres in rebel areas and Calicut.\textsuperscript{172}

It is true that \textit{Al-Ameen} was not born during the days of wagon tragedy. When the Malabar riots broke out in 1921, there was not any newspaper favouring the nationalists to expose the real events and so the people were left in the lurch. It was only after the advent of Abduahiman and \textit{Al-Ameen} that people got an exact picture of the devilish deeds of the British imperial Government. It was keen and attentive in reminding those bitter days experienced by the Muslim community and waking up their conscience. On 19\textsuperscript{th} November, the anniversary of the train tragedy of 1921, \textit{Al-Ameen} recapitulated the circumstance that led to the death by suffocation of 70 Mappila prisoners in the goods wagon to Coimbatore. It observed that such an incident as this, will not be found even in the history of the notorious cruelties of the rulers of the Roman Empire. There is little difference between the Malabar rebellion and the Punjab massacre. It asked if the Black hole of Calcutta which was the product of the imagination of British merchants would excel the cruelty of this wagon.\textsuperscript{173}

In the report ‘On the road to Non-co-operation’ \textit{Al-Ameen} expressed joy in the decision of the Working Committee of the Congress that all Congress members should resign their membership of the

\textsuperscript{172} Malayil Muhammadkutty, “Jeevitham Udaneelam Samaramaakkiya Nethav”, \textit{Chandrika} daily, 24\textsuperscript{th} November, 2002.

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Al-Ameen}, 19\textsuperscript{th} November 1925, MNNPR, TNA.
Legislative Council. It wrote, “Our opinion is that the Congress should not deviate from its straight path but should proceed steadily towards its goal of liberty. It should be ready even now to revert to Non-co-operation, to liberate its members from the Councils and to do everything necessary to prepare the country for the fight for freedom that might become necessary in 1930.”

At first *Al-Ameen* was published as a tri-weekly. When the Civil-Disobedience Movement was started in 1930 it had to become more vibrant to disseminate the news of the agitations as early as possible. As a result it became necessary to publish *Al-Ameen* as a daily from 25th June 1930 onwards. But for the single reason that Abdurahiman participated in the Salt Satyagraha he was arrested and imprisoned on 12th May 1930 along with several other Congress leaders including Chief Editor of *Mathrubhoomi* K.Kelappan. Abdurahiman was released only on 30th December 1930. While he was in jail he wrote an editorial in *Al-Ameen* entitled ‘Government and the Newspapers’. “It is doubtful whether the rulers here are aware of the importance, the modern Governments attach to newspapers which are in fact the public’s tongue. The newspapers that speak the truth are forced to make a premature death here. Even if it is harmful to us, what Muhammad Nabi taught is to speak out the truth. But in the present situation it is difficult to run a newspaper according to the preachings of the Prophet. His teaching is that one who does not make his frank opinion is a ‘deaf Satan’. Some parties who have vested interests want to make *Al-Ameen*, a deaf Satan. But if *Al-Ameen* is coerced to surrender to such a situation it will be

174. *Al-Ameen*, 16th July 1929, MNNPR, TNA.
extremely happy to extend its neck to any sharp weapon but will not like to live even for such a moment”. The editorials written against the curfew and the reports of the agitations made by the Congress enraged the authorities. Immediately they imposed upon Al-Ameen on August 4th the Press Ordinance which ordered it to remit Rs.2000 as advance security. Since Abdurahiman denied paying the amount the Al-Ameen press was sealed.

During the Civil-Disobedience period when Abdurahiman continued to write articles attacking the government, Mathrubhoomi which was supposed to be the official organ of the Congress party, although strangulated by ordinances and unfriendly Acts, took only a sober stand. At the same time Al-Ameen sacrificed even its life. The daring editorials and the inspiring reports fascinated more and more Congress workers for Civil-Disobedience. In fact Al-Ameen did not think of its future, but made homage on the altar of the ultimate goal of Congress party-India’s freedom. On the other hand Mathrubhoomi which left the editorial column blank protesting in the arrest of Kelappan dared to open its mouth only on 13th November. Mathrubhoomi issued a statement justifying their stand in this issue. “Had we expressed our opinions without hiding the facts and betraying our conscience, about the amazing news breaks during the last six months in the history of India, Mathrubhoomi would have been a victim of the Press Ordinance. If so it would not have been possible for us to inform the public about the news regarding the tortures unleashed by the

176 Al-Ameen, 29th July 1930.
177 N.P Chekkutty, op.cit., p.64.
178 Interview with M.Rasheed, Ponnani on 04-01-2006.
despotic rulers in an unkindly manner in various parts of India. It was because of this strong conviction that we left the editorial column blank since the arrest of Kelappan Nair.”\textsuperscript{179}

In this issue it can be seen that \textit{Mathrubhoomi}’s stance was totally pragmatic. It thought that existence is more important than exercising the duty. This approach won for them long term gains. But \textit{Al-Ameen} was more committed and emotional. It was the unrelenting determination of Abdurahiman and \textit{Al-Ameen} that inspired more and more workers to court arrest in the agitations and make Civil-Disobedience Movement a success. For this the price he had to pay was the life of his paper. Yet in the political level the short term gains it achieved was wonderful.

\textit{Al-Ameen} was in the forefront of the Congress even when there was a feeling that the right wing was forsaking the Muslim community. Abdurahiman had great compassion and respect for Gandhiji. \textit{Al-Ameen} published the notice issued by the President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee Calicut, announcing 24\textsuperscript{th} November as the ‘Boycott Day’ and to be observed with processions, public meetings and picketing of foreign cloth shops. It reminded that while Gandhiji and more than seventy thousand brothers and sisters are suffering in jails, our lives will be futile if we do not try to stop the trade in foreign cloths.\textsuperscript{180}

After cessation of publication for three and a half months, in consequence of its unwillingness to pay security demanded of it, the \textit{Al-}

\textsuperscript{179} V.R Menon, \textit{op.cit.}, p.277.
\textsuperscript{180} \textit{Al-Ameen}, 21\textsuperscript{st} November 1930, MNNPR, TNA.
Al-Ameen re-appeared on 20th November 1930. The statement carried in the first issue after republication showed the editor’s indomitable courage and commitment. He wrote, “We who had the good fortune or misfortune to receive on ourselves one of the ordinance sword blow, dealt by Lord Irwin’s Government on new India, are very glad to appear once again without the shadow of slavery.”

Bearing great difficulties, with crippled legs it continued until 1939. Consequent to the editorial in Al-Ameen, asking the Indians not to co-operate with the war efforts of Britain, it was banned on 29th September. Within months Abdurahiman was also arrested and sent to jail. Until September 1945 he was in various jails. After his release he lived only for 77 days. Thus Al-Ameen and its founder Abdurahiman, though short lived like lightning, could radiate immense light in the heart of a people who were under fetters. Al-Ameen could give vigour and vitality to a crucial period in the history of Kerala. It inspired not the nationalist workers of those times alone. But it showered its immense influence as leader of leaders.

The services of Al-Ameen were confined not to politics alone. The contributions it paid to Malayalam language and literature are immense. It gave much encouragement to educational workers and all those who love the language. It had a major role in finding correct Malayalam translations for English words. It could nurture a cultural group behind it and contribute a new style of writing and usage. Al-Ameen had the courage to publish the articles of the leftist leaders like K.Damodaran and N.C Shekhar. It encouraged the writers like Vaikkam Muhammad

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181 Al-Ameen, 20th November 1930, MNNPR, TNA.
182 N.P Chekkutty, op.cit., pp.64-65.
183 S.K Pottakkatt, et.al, op.cit., p.163.
Basheer, K.A Kodungallur, N.P Muhammad, M.Rasheed, Vakkam Abdul Khadar and Vaikkam Said and so on. S.K Pottekkatt was a daily visitor to Al-Ameen office. When K.Damodaran translated *Communist Manifesto* into Malayalam entitled ‘Samashtivada Vijnjapanam’ in 1937 none was ready to print it for him since Communist Party was banned during that period. At last K.Damodarn, A.K.G and N.C Shekhar approached Abdurahiman. Without delay the copies of *Communist Manifesto* printed in the Al-Ameen press came out.\(^{184}\) Thus *Al-Ameen* was credited with printing the *Communist Manifesto* for the first time in Malayalam. He supported the Jeeval Sahithya Samgham (the new literary trend that developed in Malayalam during the 1930’s in which the writers said, art for lifesake instead of the earlier argument art for art sake) which made vibrations in the literary field.\(^{185}\)

E.M.S comments about the services of *Al-Ameen* and Abdurahiman. “Subsequent to the riots of 1921 when the Muslims of Eranad and Valluvanad taluks were suppressed brutally, it was *Al-Ameen* paper that inspired in them self-confidence and thirst for freedom. It was Abdurahiman who gave them leadership. During the time of Salt Satyagraha in the 1930’s I was a student. In those days I read regularly *Al-Ameen* just like *Mathrubhoomi*. *Al-Ameen* could exert in young nationalists like me, an influence not less than *Mathrubhoomi*.\(^{186}\) It is because of his valiant deeds and immense heroism that Muhammad Abdurahiman became the title of almost half a dozen poets of Kerala. Edasseri’s ‘Abdurahiman’, P.Kunhiraman Nair’s


\(^{185}\) M.N Karasserry, *op.cit.*, p.28.

‘Veera Musalman’ (Brave Musselman), Vailoppilly’s ‘Abdurahiman’, Akkitham’s ‘Maranamillatha Manushyan’ (Immortal Man) etc. are such literary creations hailing his outstanding deeds.  

**Nationalist Newspapers- But with Different voices**

*Al-Ameen* and *Mathrubhoomi* were both nationalist newspapers with the same goal of achieving freedom of India. But it was, these two papers and their leaders, who actually paraded the Congress workers in two different camps and became their spokespersons and prophets. E.M.S says, “No sooner *Mathrubhoomi*, which was generally regarded as the official organ of Congress had launched than came another Congress paper *Al-Ameen* under Muhammed Abdurahiman Sahib. From that day onwards upto 1942 there was a competition mostly indirect and sometimes direct between Chalappuram Congress and Ameen lodge”.

E.M.S exposes the contradictory stands taken by the two diverse groups of congress led by K.Kelappan and Abdurahiman. He says, “Though the Congress has been able to make the simultaneous parade of Hindus and Muslims in the national struggle against the British, its central leadership is still not able to advise with acceptable and justifiable principles as to how the Hindu-Muslim unity is to be structured. Hindus argue that it is unjust and anti-national to allow special schools and Mulla teachers for Muslim students. At the same time Muslims claim that their demands are just and the Hindus who try to deny them are in fact communal. This was the basic reason for the

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187 Dr.Asad, “Muhammad Abdurahiman, Kavithakalil”, *Granthalokam* magazine, Novemeber 2001, p.42.

188 N.P Chekkutty, *op.cit.*, p.58.

tussle between *Mathrubhoomi* and *Al-Ameen*. Muhammed Abdurahiman, a pious and an ardent lover of Muslim community advocated in the strong language for the social and religious needs of Muslims. He said that if the Congress allowed them, the Muslim community will have more trust and confidence in it and so hundreds of Muslims will join the organisation which ultimately will help the growth of nationalism. At the same time if the Congress denied the above needs the Muslims will come to think that it is an anti-Muslim organisation and so anti-national. Just opposite to this, is the stand of K.Kelappan who claimed himself as not at all communal. He said that the demands of Abdurahiman will only perpetuate the special privileges granted to Muslims at present and so his demands are anti-national. In course of time Kelappan thought and said of Abdurahiman as a ‘communal Muslim in khaddar dress’ and Abdurahiman thought and said of Kelappan as ‘a communal Nair who just deleted the suffix ‘Nair’ from his name’.  

*Al-Ameen* questioned the religion of *Mathrubhoomi* also. The reason was the objection of *Mathrubhoomi* against the conversion of Hindus during those times. Then came the allegation that the editor of *Mathrubhoomi* K.Kelappan is a follower of Aryasamaj movement. As a reply *Mathrubhoomi* juxtaposed the contradictory argument of *Al-Ameen* in respect of religion. “*Al-Ameen* says that Islam allows freedom of religion to all. But at the same time it says that any attempt of the believers of Islam to espouse other religions should be resisted. A religion which claims that it tolerate freedom of religion to all, if dislikes the conversion of somebody to some other religion and if

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190 Ibid., pp.368-69.
advises to resist such attempts, that amounts to the denial of freedom of religion. We denounce the attempt for conversion by anyone. Mathrubhoomi has not any religion. Islam and Hinduism are alike for Mathruboomi. We don’t see it as a danger in somebody receiving or rejecting a religion. Al-Ameen should understand that Kelappan is not an Aryasamajist.”  

Together with One Voice

But in several issues of common cause Mathrubhoomi and Al-Ameen raised their voice together. Whether it is the Press Regulation of Travancore or Prohibition or Andaman scheme they fought with one mind and voice.

1. For the Freedom of the Press

Mathrubhoomi published several reports and editorials against the Press Regulation Act of Travancore and the despotic orders of Diwan Watts. In the editorial which sharply criticized this black law, Mathrubhoomi said, “The Regent Maharani of Travancore by the use of her pen for a split second was destroying the freedom of expression of the subjects of Travancore and thus tarnishing the good image of her Government among the governments of other princely states. So far the people of Travancore had one solace that they have at least the right to express their opinion, although they don’t have the freedom to participate in the democratic rule of the country. But in this 20th century instead of acquiring more freedom they were losing what all they already have”.

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191 C.Uthama Kurup, et.al., op.cit., p.82.
192 V.R Menon, op.cit., p.149.
Mathrubhoomi in another report said that the authorities of Travancore might have the desire to extinguish the civic consciousness of their people. But now it has become clear that such wish is really out of place. Now the people have explicitly told that until this Act is called off they will not remain idle. The protest meetings held at Trivandrum and other places bear witness to the determination of the people of Travancore. If this regulation indirectly incites them to fight for responsible Government, in a way the despotic act of Watts may become a boon.\textsuperscript{193} Three days after this report, it published the resolution of the Kochi Journalists’ Union which denounced the Press Regulation Act of Travancore and asked the Government to withdraw the same immediately.\textsuperscript{194} Without delay Mathrubhoomi published another item expressing strong doubt whether the Government is vowed to rule against the wish of the people and their liberty. It said that now the Regent Maharani has denied permission for the journalists’ deputation who came to submit her a memorandum. Also it gave a warning that sooner or later Maharani and her advisers will become fully aware of the fact that torture is not a pragmatic policy to rule the country.\textsuperscript{195} Mathrubhoomi sarcastically wrote that the first and foremost good that Diwan Watts has done to the country is the Press Regulation Act and thereby the ban exercised over the newspapers of Travancore.\textsuperscript{196}

Al-Ameen also responded to the atrocities in the neighbouring princely state. About the Travancore Press Regulation Act it wrote, “If

\textsuperscript{193} Mathrubhoomi, 5\textsuperscript{th} June 1926.
\textsuperscript{194} Mathrubhoomi, 8\textsuperscript{th} June 1926.
\textsuperscript{195} Mathrubhoomi, 17\textsuperscript{th} June 1926.
\textsuperscript{196} Mathrubhoomi, 24\textsuperscript{th} March 1928.
the Government really thinks of retaining this black law (Travancore Press Regulation) which has robbed the people of their freedom, which is their birth-right, we shall have to surmise that Travancore has lost the prestige and enlightenment which she had till now”.  

The paper considered it a misfortune that such an irresponsible Government ruling over an enlightened and public-spirited people.

2. Against Liquor

*Mathrubhoomi*’s endeavours for prohibition and temperance are amazing. It published all kinds of reports aimed at achieving the above goal. It blamed the Madras Government that it has given liberty only in drinking alcohol. When four lakh rupees was sanctioned by the Madras Government for campaign works towards the necessity of temperance, *Mathrubhoomi* wrote that it is a mere waste. If the Government sincerely regards temperance as an immediate experience instead of a distant goal it should close a few shops at least. It is ridiculous to campaign against consuming liquor with all liquor shops open. The fact is that the Government is not prepared to give up the income from liquor. This four lakh rupees is to conceal the above truth. Therefore the people should come forward for a struggle against liquor. 

To spread the message of prohibition *Mathrubhoomi* carried the contents of the speeches of the famous American social worker Pussy Futt Johnson made at Madras and British social worker Rev. Herbert Anderson made at London, raising the need for total prohibition.

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197 Al-Ameen, 15th and 27th June 1926, MNNPR, TNA.

198 Mathrubhoomi, 2nd March 1929.

199 Mathrubhoomi, 19th November 1929.
As a part of the campaign works of Madras Government towards temperance, Malabar Temperance Board was constituted with Mr. Mooliyil Kesavan as secretary and Mr. Koppan (Aadi Dravida), Mr. Karunakaran (Thiyya) as its members. \(^{201}\) Mathrubhoomi hailed the decision of the Palakkad Municipality in passing the resolution to remove all the liquor shops in the city. \(^{202}\) But it blamed the stand of Calicut Municipality for having given up the idea of prohibition in its purview. \(^{203}\) The Temperance Board expressed its strong protest in the above stand of the Calicut Municipal Council. \(^{204}\) At this stage Mathrubhoomi wrote an editorial blaming the liquor policy of Madras Government. “Due to consumption of liquor the adverse impact is larger in our country than in other countries. Much of the liquor used in India is imported from abroad. Due to the consumption of this liquor it causes not only moral degeneration but also economic deterioration. Even though majority of the people are in favour of prohibition it has not materialized here only because that we are under foreign hegemony. The campaign policy of Madras Government is only a farce. Allowing the liquor shops to open on one side and doing campaign work to avoid its consumption on the other side will not do any good. After the implementation of this double dealing policy the number of liquor shops has only increased, not even a single one closed. Although the Indians

\(^{200}\) Mathrubhoomi, 15\(^{th}\) October 1929.

\(^{201}\) Mathrubhoomi, 26\(^{th}\) October 1929.

\(^{202}\) Mathrubhoomi, 23\(^{nd}\) November 1929.

\(^{203}\) Mathrubhoomi, 23rd November 1929.

\(^{204}\) Mathrubhoomi, 28\(^{th}\) November 1929.
said, *en masse* that we do not want this kind of liberty in liquor, it is amazing to see that the Government is imposing liquor on us”.  

*Al-Ameen* was also very enthusiastic in diffusing the message of prohibition. It asked the Government to implement the resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly regarding restriction and ultimate prohibition of drink. It denounced the drink evil in India under the heading ‘A Dangerous Industry’. In it *Al-Ameen* criticized the attitude of the Government in respect of the drink evil in India. “Though all the industries of India were ruined with the advent of the British rule, the liquor industry is alone thriving; it is very difficult to get a school or post office or dispensary in spite of repeated petitions by the people…..but not so with liquor shops. For these no petitions are required”.

### 3. Do not Drive away to Andamans

*Al-Ameen* and Abdurahiman responded strongly against the bestial scheme of banishing the Mappilas to Andaman islands. By touring in the North Indian cities Abdurahiman gave wide propaganda against the scheme. He wrote several articles in English and vernacular newspapers against it. This scheme was meant to make the Muslims

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205 *Mathrubhoomi*, 3rd January 1930.

206 *Al-Ameen*, 6th September 1925, MNNPR, TNA. *Al-Ameen* wrote: “Although the representatives of the people have passed the resolution, will the Government which looks upon revenue alone as the most important matter, try to to carry it out? When we hear the argument advanced by the Government side, that this is a resolution that runs counter to the freedom of the people, we cannot suppress a smile. Great indeed is their solicitude for the freedom of the people!”

207 *Al-Ameen*, 13th July 1926, MNNPR, TNA.

of Eranad, who were invincible in respect of national pride, mental courage and British enmity, silent by throwing them away to incurable diseases and cruelties of nature in Andamans. Thus Al-Ameen became more the subject of the dislike of the authorities.\footnote{Khadar Pannikkottur, “Al-Ameen, Swathanthrya Samarthinte Padavaal”, \textit{op.cit.}} It resisted the scheme with all its might. \textit{Al-Ameen} wrote, “It would appear that the attitude of the Government is not to recede from their position whatever might be the popular opinion in the matter of taking Mappila prisoners to the Andamans. The Mappila representative in the Legislative Assembly and the representatives in the Madras Legislative Council condemned this scheme severely. In Madras and Malabar, many public meetings have been held to condemn it. It is a great injustice on the part of the Government to appoint special officers and to misuse money on an affair not at all wanted by any amongst the public. Nobody will believe that the Andaman Islands have been rendered fit for human habitation within the last four or five years. Even if it be so, what is the meaning of saying that only Malabar Muslims need go there”.\footnote{\textit{Al-Ameen}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} September 1925, MNNPR, TNA.}

\textit{Al-Ameen} exposed the ulterior motives behind the Andaman scheme. The supply of labour to develop the island is one of the motives for launching the scheme while the ulterior motive of the Government is to prevent once and for all the return of the Mappila convicts to Malabar and to destroy their turbulent race in the Andamans. It observed that no other Government in the world whether civilized or uncivilized would ever award for any offence, this kind of punishment”.\footnote{\textit{Al-Ameen}, 29\textsuperscript{th} September 1925, MNNPR, TNA.} \textit{Al-Ameen} also questioned the impartiality of the Andaman enquiry committee. It did
not consider the representatives of the public while nominating the members of the Committee. The paper suggested that the Mappila community should awake and do the needful to hold a public meeting to choose some Hindu and Muslim members of Council, who enjoy the confidence of the people to be sent out as a deputation.\footnote{Al-Ameen, 1st November 1925, MNNPR, TNA.}

\textit{Mathrubhoomi} also by all its strength objected the Andaman scheme. The very next week since its birth, \textit{Mathrubhoomi} wrote that the enthusiasm shown by the Government, to bring to the Andaman convicts their wives, has created many doubts. \textit{Mathrubhoomi} asked the Government to make it clear whether it is for the benefit of the prisoners they are taking the ladies to Andamans. It also asked the authorities whether, before implementing the scheme they have made a genuine effort to know the mind of the Muslim society of Malabar. It opined that by sending the ladies to such an island where the attention of the authorities is less and public opinion is bad, it will help to accumulate wealth though it will not help to protect their modesty.\footnote{Mathrubhoomi, 24th March 1923.} But without considering the objections raised by the Muslim community or other organisations like Congress the Government started to send the ladies of the prisoners to Andamans.\footnote{Mathrubhoomi, 10th April 1923.} Then \textit{Mathrubhoomi} wrote that even the Committee appointed by the Government has opined that Andamans is a land not at all suitable for the spiritual or physical growth. But as in the tenant issue the Government is adamant here also. Yet we do not need to
be desperate. Our obligation is to strengthen the agitation as in the past.\textsuperscript{215}

**Mangalodayam Rises**

*Mangalodayam* which was originated in 1084 Vrischikam (1909 November) was aimed at the well-being of Namboothiris. Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha was the motivation and inspiration behind its birth.\textsuperscript{216} It was due to the efforts and encouragements of Appan Thampuran, that Deshamangalam Namboothiri started *Mangalodayam*. In the beginning it was the official organ of Yogakshema Sabha. Later Appan Thampuran and Kodungallur Kunhikkuttan Thampuran showered their literary exuberance in *Mangalodayam*. It could continue only for sixteen years. During 1943-44 periods Prof. Joseph Mundasserry renovated it again as the official organ of Appan Thampuran Sahithya Samajam.\textsuperscript{217}

Right from the beginning *Mangalodayam* agreed with the fact that, as a community Namboothiris have lost the glamour which they inherited in the past. Also it tried to explore various ways to reform and renovate the community. In the ‘statement’ carried in the first issue it was said that although the Namboothiris were once embellished with the power of knowledge, is at present in a state of *Thrishanku* Heaven (a heaven-like place in between heaven and earth where mythological character Thrishanku was held by Hermit Viswamithra) in which they lost the traditional education but not gained the modern one. It also said

\textsuperscript{215} Mathrubhoomi, 30\textsuperscript{th} November 1926.

\textsuperscript{216} Mangalodayam, 1909 November.

\textsuperscript{217} Puthupppalli Raghavan, *Kerala Pathapravarthana Charithram*, (Mal), Thrissur, 1985, p.133.
that it was due to the work of Yogakshema Sabha that the members of Thaliparamba and Travancore who are hundreds of miles apart have now the convenience to see and understand the agony and ecstasy of both. In this issue the report about the second annual conference of Yogakshema Sabha held at Trichur was also given. The major decision of the conference was to create a Namboothiri bank. Among the Namboothiris there are many who borrow money for pennkoda (marriage of Namboothiri girl) and other functions. It was observed that a Namboothiri bank would help them much. It was viewed that other communities will also benefit out of this bank.218

In the second issue of Mangalodayam there started a debate on the topic ‘Namboothiri and Education’. The first article was written by Punnasserri Nambi Neelakanda Sharma. He said, “Now it is the British Government that rules us. Not Namboothirippad or others. The British have made English as the royal language, not Sanskrit or Malayalam or any other language. For the British it is the Acts they make from time to time, the instrument to rule. To understand them we should have education. If we remain studying only ‘vedam’ and ‘sasthram’ we cannot think that others would work and feed us. That period in which we could remain as dictators is gone for ever. One should be able to do his own affairs. For that we should have education. It is ridiculous to say that English being the language of the British is a sub-standard one”.219

The debate was continued in the third issue by Kodungallur Kunhikuttan Thampuran. It was a response to the opinions of Punnasserri Nambi

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218 Mangalodayam, op.cit.
219 Mangalodayam, December 1909.
carried in the second issue.\textsuperscript{220} Being fascinated by this dialogue Kerala Chinthamani in its third issue made an appraisal of contents of Mangalodayam magazine. It assured that it would also opine on Namboothiriri education once the debate in Mangalodayam is over. It also said that since Mangalodayam is a newspaper run by Kerala Brahmins it would be very nice if there appeared articles in it about the unwanted practices and rituals in Kerala.\textsuperscript{221}

In another issue of Mangalodayam Mathur Vasudevan Namboothirippad joined the debate by arguing that English education is very essential for the progress of Namboothiri community. The debate was concluded by publishing a letter of the noted Namboothiri scholar Kudallur Kunhunni Namboothirippad in which he invited (1042 Chingam 27, 1872 September 13) the Namboothiri janmis to think of a school to teach unni Namboothiris, the English language. It was amazing to note that Kudallur Kunhunni Namboothirippad had the vision to start an English school at a period when the Nair community was treading fast for modern education.\textsuperscript{222} In this issue there was the review of the book Kerala Charithram written by Kannambra Ramanunni Nair which was earlier serialized in Manorama, published from Calicut.\textsuperscript{223}

Even in the first decade of the 20th century it was very difficult for the newspapers and magazines to survive due to many reasons. This is explicitly made clear in the statement carried in the Mangalodayam

\textsuperscript{220} Mangalodayam, January 1910.
\textsuperscript{221} Kerala Chinthamani, June 1909.
\textsuperscript{222} Mangalodayam, 1910 July 1910.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
published in connection with its first anniversary. “At present there is only one among 8000 who read Malayalam magazines and only one in 32000 pay the cost and read. This readership is to be shared between 12 magazines. Therefore one can imagine how difficult it is for magazines to survive”.224

Namboothiri community which was almost against in studying English was at last convinced of its advantages. Even the Secretary of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha wrote a letter to Mangalodayam praising its efforts for English education. “Material benefits, positions and all other benefits now lie in English education. Therefore that language every day ascends to glory where our language Sanskrit descends to death. At present it is observed that only those who study English reach glamorous positions”.225

Alongwith suggestions for community reformation it carried items dealing with various legislations including that on land. In the issue of October 1911, it published the anomalies of the ‘Kuzhikur Chamayam Act’ (Improvements Act) of 1900. In that issue it was given one by one the reasons for the increase of litigations between janmis and tenants to evict each other from the property.226 In fact it was to redress the anomalies of this Act, that the tenants later strengthened their agitation under the banner of Malabar Kudiyan Samgham during the early decades of 20th century.

**Yogakshemam-To Uplift Namboothiris**

224 Mangalodayam, November 1910.
225 Mangalodayam, April 1910.
226 Mangalodayam, October 1911.
When the Thiyyas and Nairs were fast acquiring modern education in the 19th century, the Namboothiris were only just passive onlookers. The Namboothiri community was in the grip of a few elders and was enveloped by wretched customs and rituals. But the youths brimmed with thirst for change and some elders having progressive vision wanted to break the bondages that clasped the community. For this onward march the Namboothiri community formed organizations like Yogakshemam and Namboothiri Yuvajana Samgham, and publications like *Yogakshemam* and *Unni Namboothiri*. Due to this kind of strenuous works the Namboothiris could acquire some modernity by the 1930’s what the Nairs could do by the 1890’s. The heroines Indulekha in the novel *Indulekha* published in 1889 and Sulochana in the novel *Aphante Makal* 227 published in 1932 establish this wide gap in the march of progress among the above communities.

Anticipating the need for reformations in the Namboothiri community *Malayala Manorama* in 1905 wrote, “The Namboothiris should educate their children considering the need of the time; if so this community can develop in many fields. They would be able to protect their property from being grabbed. It is desirable that their ancient traditions are refurbished and used for the well being of the community”. 228 After a span of 14 years *Manorama* presented a totally changed opinion. “We are happy to see that the Namboothiri community has adapted to the timely changes. Giving up the aversion for the English language they have shown willingness to espouse it. They had the belief that learning English would make them outcastes from the

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227 A novel in Malayalam by Moothiringott Bhavathrathan Namboothiripad.
228 *Malayala Manorama*, 19th July 1905.
community and the school life with the untouchables would make them polluted. But all these have changed”.

The pathetic condition of the Namboothiri community during the early 20th century is very evident from the above observations of Malayala Manorama. It was with the help of Namboothiri’s official organ the Yogakshemam and other publications, that the community was able to lift itself from the clutches of traditions and rituals. Along with the fight for the janmis in the tenancy issue Yogakshemam worked much for the progress of the community in the realms of reformation and renovation. It published several articles with modern outlook to incite and inspire the community. It also quoted or lifted reports of all kinds pertaining to Namboothiri community carried in other publications, with a view to construe the impression about them among the members of other communities.

The report lifted by Yogakshemam from Prathibha\textsuperscript{230} magazine is an example. “Nobody will accuse even if any amount is spent for the modern education of Namboothiris. It is better to stop oottupuras and educate the Namboothiris”.\textsuperscript{231} Mangalodayam was happy to welcome the suggestions made by Kerala Pathrika in its report. “The opinions like, to live in fraternity with other communities, without fascination to the western culture, observing the swadeshi style and enduring the traditional modes as far as possible are of course very valid suggestions.

\textsuperscript{229} Malayala Manorama, 8th March 1919.
\textsuperscript{230} A magazine which was edited by Kumaran Asan from Aluva from September 1919 onwards.
\textsuperscript{231} Yogakshemam, 29th October 1920, NMML, New Delhi.
These opinions are quite acceptable not only to the Namboothiri community but to other communities also….“

Malayala Manorama which highlighted the progress observed in Namboothiri community during the 1920’s wrote another report about its ongoing forward march during the 1930’s. Yogakshemam lifted this also. “…It is very urgent to take necessary initiatives to redress the pathetic condition of antharjanams (Namboothiri ladies) who spend their whole life within the isolated anthapurams (the harem of illam/mana). The initiatives of some Namboothiri youths in taking their better halves to public places with them, in modernizing their costumes, and in giving them education is welcome. The publication of the books like Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangatheykku (From Kitchen to Stage), Mamoolinte Mattoli (The Reverberations of Rituals) etc. and the initiative shown by some Namboothiri women in coming to the forefront are of-course signs of progress in Namboothiri community.”

Due to various kinds of interventions several progressive changes were noticed in the condition of Namboothiri women. This is noted by Mathrubhoomi in its report. “The Namboothiri women who were in the habit of wearing clothes up to their knees, holding marakkuda (the cadjan umbrella used by the Namboothiri women to hide themselves from the public when going out) and wearing bangles made of bronze are eschewing such evils. They now read the newspapers such as Yogakshemam and learn about the outer world. They are now aware of the problem of the increasing number of spinsters in the community and so the need for all male members to get married from the same

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232 Yogakshemam, 3rd June 1920, NMML, New Delhi.
233 Yogakshemam, 11th June, 1930, NMML, New Delhi.
community. They now conduct samajams. Certainly they should be appreciated for all these”.  

This transformation in Namboothiri community is portrayed well in the novel *Aphante Makal*. Here Namboothiri ladies like Ittichiri, Innikkal and Ittangeli study at home reading and writing. Madhu, a Namboothiri boy reads newspaper and refers ‘wanted’ columns in search of a job. He denounces the polygamy in Namboothiri community and declares, “Each MahanMoos (Eldest Namboothiri boy) in our community is a trap. In it three or four she-elephants fall one upon another. Some die in the instance of fall. Some die in that dungeon inch by inch. And some die in the course of life. Anyhow everybody suffers much and sheds tear. To redeem the community from this wretched state all the younger Namboothiris should marry from the same caste”.  

During the 1920’s itself topics like Namboothiri family regulation, women’s education, marriage from the same caste etc. had become the thread of discussion in *Yogakshemam*. In the subsequent period this naturally helped in the formation of public opinion. During this time some antharjanams started to write on topics like dress code, education etc. Also open debates were held in *Yogakshemam* with other papers on communal issues. As a result, an atmosphere of discussions and dialogues emerged in the Namboothiri community.  

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234 *Mathrubhoomi*, 8th June 1929.  
238 *Yogakshemam*, Vol. 11, Issue 27, 1921, p.3.  
This atmosphere even inspired some of the Namboothiri women who were not ready to endure the tyrannies in the family anymore. Yogakshemam narrates the story of one such antharjanam who went away from the illam. She was the antharjanam of Edakramancherry Illam in Perumanna Amsam of Kozhikode city. Scared of the first veli (wife) the Namboothiri was not even ready to look at this antharjanam, who was an eighteen year old girl. Two days before her departure from the illam she went to the temple nearby when her husband was present and narrated her grievances before the other Namboothiris. Then she had given a warning that if her husband does not care her, she will do whatever deemed proper for her. But the Namboothiri did not respond to her then.\textsuperscript{240}

It is true that by 1930’s there was tremendous progress in the reformation process in Namboothiri community. But when compared to other communities like Nairs it was not satisfactory. They were convinced of the fact that the community was treading towards modern education and progress only with crippled legs. So they were ready to go to any extent to uplift the community. Namboothiri Satyagraha Committee in its letter to Mahatma Gandhi apologetically presented the deplorable condition. “While all other communities in Kerala have made great stride in point of education, population and social condition the Namboothris still stick up to their old customs and manners and consequently degenerate day by day. Of all the evil customs prevalent among the Namboothiris the most obnoxious is that only the eldest male member can marry from the caste and all other junior members must resort to sambandham (liaison of junior Namboothiri sons with

\textsuperscript{240} Yogakshemam, 26\textsuperscript{th} March 1930, NMML, New Delhi.
Kshatriya/Nair women) with the females of other communities… Finding that there is no other way the Yogakshema Sabha and Yuvajana Samgham have recently decided that all Namboothiris should adopt the inevitable course of Satyagraha and hartal”.

When the agitation spirit and reformation drive in the Namboothiri community gathered momentum, progress in terms of education and life style also became hasty. This was appraised and evaluated by Yogakshemam in its annual report. “Namboothiris who have been engaged in social reforms have actually come to the work only this year. The annual conference of this year have revealed the fact that an awareness is created in the members of the community to the effect that only actual work brings fruitful results instead of making resolutions and speeches. The experience of the last two years have taught that unless we convince others our might nobody will listen to us…Youths were ready to start satyagraha, hartal or any other style to achieve the goal. It can be said that after Edakkunnu convention a creative awakening is visible in the community”.

Consequent to initiatives many, a new found vigour started to pulsate in the Namboothiri community. Yogakshemam lifted the report in the Samadarshi newspaper regarding the social reformation attempts among the Namboothiris. “Namboothiri community endowed with so many solemn virtues are hastily bidding farewell to their conservative outlook in respect of community rituals and English education. Their organizational strength is also becoming greater. The

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241 Yogakshemam, 8th February 1930.
242 Yogakshemam, 22nd January 1930.
243 A newspaper published from Trivandrum.
conventions held by Yogakshema Sabha in various places of Kerala and the Malayala Brahmana Convention held at Thiruvananthapuram exhibit their organizational strength.”

It was at this stage that the Yogakshemam announced the arrival of a women’s magazine run by antharjanams. “A magazine run by antharjanams to highlight the matters of antharjanams will be started from Chalavara (Thrukkadeeri) soon. The first issue of this magazine, with the name Sredevi will be published in the beginning of Kanni. V.T Sredevi Antharjanam, Mrs. Muthiringod and so on will be the persons behind this endeavour. Like us, other community members are also eagerly waiting for its advent.

Though Yogakshemam was mainly intended for the upliftment of Namboothiri community it did not give a deaf ear to the progressive changes in the other parts of the world. In one of its report, praising the new rule in Russia it sharply criticized the British Government in India. “In Russia they do whatever is possible to make the life of the ordinary public most comfortable. They try to enrich the countryside. They have introduced several schemes in the rural areas to bring industrial and agrarian progress. They implemented the five year plan in 1927. ..Our Government can also do something in this respect, even though not to that extent in Russia. Anyhow Soviet Government is a government for the people.”

Vagbhadanandan-Propounder of ‘Atmavidya’

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244 Yogakshemam, 22nd January 1930.
245 Yogakshemam, 30th July 1930.
246 Yogakshemam, 11th June, 1930, NMML, New Delhi.
Vagbhadanandan is a stalwart who greatly helped the growth of the Thiyya community. In the profundity of knowledge and eloquence he surpassed even Sri Narayana Guru. There is no doubt that he has a major role in the social transformation of North Malabar.\footnote{E.M.S Namboothirippad, \textit{Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhoomi}, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, p.281.} In the beginning through Aryasamaj and later by Atmavidyasamgham (which he founded by himself) he made intensive work against caste discrimination, idolatry and alcohol consumption and he made even the members of the upper castes his disciples.\footnote{K.K Pavithran, \textit{op.cit.}, 1995, p.92.}

Vagbhadanandan struggled for all his life time to build up a new Kerala pervaded with spiritual knowledge and universal fraternity.\footnote{Swami Brahmavruthan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.81.} He fought to destroy the caste-demon which had been making a nude dance throughout Kerala.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} Theruvath Raman says, \textit{“Atmavidya Kahalam} under Vagbhadananda Gurudevan from Cheruvannur (Calicut) carried on the tradition of the fight against caste. It highlighted the unjust treatment towards lower caste students in Taluk Board Schools and Aided Schools. It criticized the decision to collect four \textit{annas} from each student in Chirackal Raja’s School for Navarathri celebrations and at the same time not to let the lower class students to participate in them is a violation of natural justice.\footnote{\textit{Athmavidyakahalam}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1929.} It laid its emphasis against social evils and unhealthy rituals. Vagbhadanandan vindicated that the existing interpretations of God and observance of traditions are wrong and there is no rebirth of soul. In conventions he used to speak continuously for
two to three days. At the end he could create an impression among the audience that God is only a beautiful imaginative concept. He fought against the unhealthy practices like *kettukalyanam, thirandukalyanam* and idolatry.\(^{252}\)

Also he tried his level best to propagate newspaper reading among people. To inspire the women to read newspapers he wrote several reports in *Atmavidya Kahalam*. The letter to the editor written by Kalyaniyamma, Feroke showers enough light on that. “Do not grieve on the fact that some of us are illiterate or lack education. If we have a determination we can have knowledge, culture and other qualities we desire. No need of searching hills and mounts to find remedies to acquire them. Newspapers including *Atmavidya Kahalam* are box of medicines in which all remedies for knowledge is kept”.\(^{253}\)

*Atmavidyakahalam* tried to enlighten the people to take precautionary measures to check the spread of leprosy which was not fully curative in those days. It wrote, “Leprosy is a fierce contagious disease. If somebody in one house happens to be a victim to that disease, due to lack of care it spreads among other members of that house……In such a situation the village officials should be authorized to make a list of such patients and to coerce them to go to hospitals for treatment. If we do so now at least we can protect the children to be born in future from the curse of this disease”.\(^{254}\)

\(^{252}\) Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9\(^{th}\) March 2004.

\(^{253}\) *Atmavidyakahalam, op.cit.*

\(^{254}\) *Atmavidyakahalam, 3\(^{rd}\)* October 1929.
Atmavidyasamgham was an organization that was founded by him. He shaped his ideals on the basis of Adwaitha philosophy. Infact the movement led by Sri Narayana Guru had included in its renovation programmes the rituals of Brahmins and paved the way for sanskritisation among the lower communities. But Atmavidyasamgham did not help such kind of sanskritisation since they were against idolatry. Like Sri Narayana Guru he too resisted the caste tendencies and organized agitations against all sectionalist ideas. He propounded the idea of human love. To propagate his ideals Vagbhadanandan founded in 1921 a newspaper named Abhinavakeralam. “Wake up, remember the Almighty, Get up to fight against injustice”, was the motto of that paper. He manifested for his followers a set of rules to be observed in times of birth, death and marriage. Even in the remote places of Malabar this samgham had followers. Even the Brahmins and upper castes were fascinated. But majority of the members were Thiyyas. He laid thrust on social programmes like mixed meal and inter-caste marriage. He organized a mixed meal programme at Azhikode. That was regarded as a revolution in those days.

Vagbhadanandan extended support to the Civil Disobedience Movement of Gandhiji. His paper Atmavidya Kahalam supported the national movement. The article he wrote in Atmavidya Kahalam entitled ‘Who are the law breakers’ provoked the British. They gave him last warning. Vagbhadanandan not only supported the rights of the

untouchables but also published a book in the name *Gandhiji and Scientific Interpretations*.\textsuperscript{256}

When newspapers like *Gajakesari, Mithavadi, and Sahodaran* continued to publish articles that injured the sentiments of Gandhiji and Congress, Vagbhadanandan could not remain silent. He resisted these kinds of anti-national opinions with tooth and nail. He gave repartee to these three newspapers through his paper *Atmavidya Kahalam*. He asked, “Is Gandhiji who held mixed meal programmes with Hindu, Christian and Muslim and ate from one table, a caste Hindu? He is the greatest philanthropist in the world. Gandhiji is a true socialist who accepted a Harijan girl as her adopted daughter by exorcising the ghost of caste”.\textsuperscript{257}

Vagbhadanandan was not ready to sacrifice belief for respect. It was out of respect for his Guru Brahmananda Sivayogi that he named his newspaper *Shivayogi Vilasam*. But there took place a tussle between them about the concept of God. Brahmananda was of the view that God is happiness. But Vagbhadanandan said that in Advaita, Soul is God. As the tussle went to a climax the name of *Sivayogi Vilasam* was changed to *Sivayoga Vilasam*.\textsuperscript{258}

*Kerala Kesari of Vadakara*

The 1920’s was a period when Malabar riots startled the forward march of national movement. The rulers and the vested interested parties tried to propagate the message that all works of Congress will end only

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid., pp.55-56.

\textsuperscript{257} K.K Pavithran, *op.cit.*, p.221.

\textsuperscript{258} Interview with Dharmaraj Kaloor on 8\textsuperscript{th} July 2006.
in massacre. The leader of the Home Rule League Manjeri Ramayyar opined that the sword that was used to cut human throats in Eranad was to be in fact directed against Mahatma Gandhi and Khilafat leader Shaukath Ali. Murkoth Kumaran was another personality who spoke against the national movement. He used to wonder that what will happen if British say good bye to this land. Then the rule will reach the hands of a few princes who do not know anything. Congress is an organization of the upper classes and Nairs are at its helm. It was through his *Gajakesari* paper that Kumaran made his anti-Congress stand.²⁵⁹

To give reply to the false propaganda against the Congress and its leaders, and to liberate the people from the clutches of conservatism which was very strong in Kadathanad, prominent Congress workers like K.V Krishnan, G.Chathu Master, Mooyarath Sankaran and so on felt the need for a newspaper. Thus *Kerala Kesari* was born at Vadakara in 1924 under Mooyarath Sankaran who was the Secretary of Kurumbranad Taluk Congress Committee.²⁶⁰

*Kerala Kesari* exised only for two years as a newspaper. Meanwhile it grew as the people’s tongue. It made mortal fight in the fortresses of landlordism and in the administrative centres of bureaucracy. Its editor wrote, “The motive of my paper is to eradicate the evil deeds like torture and exploitation that make this land a hell”.²⁶¹

In the beginning *Kerala Kesari* was printed in the Manorama Press at


²⁶¹ Kaviyur Rajagopalan, op.cit., pp.42-44.
Calicut and later in Prince Press Cannanore. Due to the threats of the authorities and due to the spate of lawyer notices everyone was scared of printing that paper. When it published a report against Kunhikkoru Mooppen of Mayyazhi it got a lawyer notice demanding compensation of Rs.2500. At this juncture it could not push forward and as a result the publication was ceased. Again Kerala Kesari was re-started in 1927 purchasing a press of its own.

In the first issues, Kerala Kesari attacked the mis-rule of Taluk Board which ended in the termination of its President Kadathanat A.K Sankara Varma Raja. Then it attacked the Vatakara Union President Njalikkara Kunhiraman Nair, who was also removed from the post. The article “Gajakesariyodu Kerala Kesari” (Gajakesari versus Kerala Kesari) was widely discussed everywhere. Though started with 500 copies, after every important news report its circulation increased considerably. “Ulakkabhadante Dinasari” (The Daily Routine of Ulakkabhadan) was a popular column in it. Certain corrupt bureaucrats used to say that until finishing this column their hands would shiver. Due to the popularity of this column no other paper in North Malabar had this much of circulation”.

**Unni Namboothiri-Exploring Reforms**

Namboothiri Yuvajana Samgham was started as the youth wing of Namboothiri Yogakhema Sabha. Unni Namboothiri was published as the official organ of this Yuvajana Samgham from Trichur. But later Yuvajana Samgham became ready to work as an independent registered organization liberating itself from the organization of the elders. Many a

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time there developed diverse points of view between Yogakshema Sabha and Yuvajana Samgham in matters related to community and public. Also there held ideological dialogues and debates between them which sometimes even took the shape of competitions. The forum for such debates was the Yogakshemam and the Unni Namboothiri. A different voice among the young Namboothiris emerged mainly due to their dissatisfaction in the retarded pace of social reformation.\textsuperscript{263}

**English newspapers in 20\textsuperscript{th} century**

It may be assumed that the English newspapers had fairly good circulation in the Malabar District in the early decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Newspapers like *Madras Mail* carried even the local reports of the Calicut city. The send-off given by the Ladies Club of Calicut to the wife of District Collector,\textsuperscript{264} cattle lifting in Walluvanad by Mappilas\textsuperscript{265}, proposal to introduce a leper clinic at Calicut by the Municipal Council,\textsuperscript{266} heavy rains in Calicut\textsuperscript{267} etc. are not reports of much seriousness or wide repercussion or far reaching consequences to be known by the entire people of the Presidency or by the whole folk of the District. They do matter only to a limited number confined to the city and suburbs. In those days it is impractical to have regional editions to carry exclusively local news as we do today. Therefore the paper edited and published from Madras might be allotting a certain space to Malabar District which is meant for carrying the local news of Malabar. From this it is very clear that such a situation occurs only when the paper has wide

\textsuperscript{263} E.MS Namboothirippad, *Aathmakatha*, *op.cit.*, p.114.
\textsuperscript{264} *Madras Mail*, 26\textsuperscript{th} March, 1925, NMML, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{265} *Ibid*.
\textsuperscript{266} *Madras Mail*, 16\textsuperscript{th} January 1925, NMML, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{267} *Madras Mail*, 27\textsuperscript{th} July 1927, NMML, New Delhi.
circulation and readership in the Malabar District and Calicut Municipality.

Another notable point is the comprehensiveness of Malabar in respect of news items. The planting notes from Wayanad, abnormal rain in Palakkad, administration report of the Municipality of Kannur etc. are examples of such news from various parts of the District. It means that a paper like Madras Mail did not leave any place in Malabar from attaching importance in respect of news. All these news items are shown as reported by ‘From Our Correspondent’ which means the paper had its own correspondents to report even the local events in Malabar. It also indicates to the point that it had fair circulation here and it is because of that reason it was able do justice to its readers by extending a balanced approach in respect of the treatment of news.

Madras Mail had a regular column, “Our Readers’ Choice”. Some of the letters published in this also point to its vibrant readership in Malabar. This was in fact a column in which the editor published the letters and opinions of the readers. Such a column is relevant only when readers have opinions, responses and reciprocations. In a way this is an exchange of ideas, a give and take in which the newspaper and the readers fuse together, one knowing the mind and sentiments of the other. A letter from one J.C.G is very notable at this point. In it he said that while there has been so much talk of Hindu-Muslim unity he has not seen a single Muslim other than Mr. Yakub Hasan condemning the atrocities perpetrated by the Mappilas upon Hindus. The Mappilas have

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268 Madras Mail, 27th December, 1899.
269 Madras Mail, 30th July 1927.
270 Madras Mail, 1st August 1927.
by their excesses against the Hindus have terribly injured the cause of Indian Nationalism. The letter concludes with a question to Mr. Yakub Hasan if he would tell the Hindus whether he proposes to raise a fund for the relief of the victims of the Mappila outrages.\footnote{Madras Mail, 17\textsuperscript{th} September 1921.} This is again vindicated by the Malabar District Collector publishing his appeal for help in \textit{Madras Mail}.\footnote{Madras Mail, 16\textsuperscript{th} September 1921, NMML, New Delhi. The ‘Appeal for Help’ of the Malabar District Collector E.F Thomas addressed to the Editor, \textit{Madras Mail}: Sir, I have received information from many sources that in the Eranad and Walluvanad taluks, as a result of wholesale looting of Hindus by Mappila rebels, scarcity is beginning to be felt; private food stores have been dissipated by loot, economic and industrial life is at a standstill, and much of the standing crop ruined or abandoned. In Calicut we have realized that help is required now, and some gentlemen of the headquarters town have already undertaken to supply food-stuffs…It is certain that much more aid will be required than local efforts in Calicut can supply. The need is urgent for the military and civil authorities must devote all their energy to the restoring of order and rebuilding the fabric of administration. Government aid will perhaps, be necessary later on. I address this appeal to the public for help to tide over the immediate distress and I know I shall not appeal in vain. The administration of such funds as are forthcoming will be entrusted to a committee of non-official gentlemen, working hand in hand with the District officers and I am taking steps to form such a Committee. Donations may be paid to the Imperial Bank of India, Madras, for credit of the Malabar Relief Fund.} If the paper had only negligible circulation he would not have taken the burden to see the appeal carried in a paper published from Madras. The three English newspapers that were published from Calicut, the \textit{Westcoast Spectator}, \textit{Westcoast Reformer} and \textit{Champion} continued during the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century also, with earnestness and vigour.\footnote{G.Priyadarshanan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.201.}

In fact the early decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century were an epoch making age in the history of journalism in Malabar. During this period it witnessed the steady growth of public opinion.
newspapers of the 19th century, new journals of diverse nature also appeared in this period. Most of these papers had their own policy, objective and style. Due to these unique differences they engaged in dialogues, debates and verbal exercises. As a result every subject was treated from several corners providing the readers an overall outlook to enable them to make their own opinion. Thus when the print media became more and more vibrant the civic consciousness of the people and their awareness about the rights increased considerably. This in-turn inspired them to fight for the cause of the freedom of human-beings from caste and conventions, and freedom of the country from the hands of the foreign government.