Chapter III

Dalit Awakening in Pre-Independent Kerala

Dalits have been subjected to numerous kinds of deprivations viz social, political, economic and cultural in Kerala since time immemorial. The long history of their deprivations and exploitations led to the emergence of dalit protest movements in the state as in other parts of India. A favourable environment for the emergence of the protest of dalits in Kerala was created by the social reform movements in the state during the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. Simultaneously the dalit community also produced charismatic and enlightened social reformers who led the struggles of the downtrodden castes. They awakened the consciousness of the dalit masses and taught them to become aware of their rights. Consequently the oppressed and the exploited castes started to rally round the demand for a legitimate place in the social order. Yet the caste-ridden social structure of Kerala often resisted such liberation struggles of dalits as their empowerment would defeat the interests of the upper castes. The peculiar features of the caste system in Kerala systematically kept dalits as slave castes and the same class/caste structures continue to play a pivotal role in dalit marginalization even today.

The state of Kerala came into being in 1956 with the reorganization of three regions: Travancore in the south, Cochin in the central and Malabar in the north. In the pre-independent period, Travancore and Cochin were Princely States. Malabar was part of Madras Presidency in British India. As this study is focused on Kottayam district, which belonged to the old
Travancore, the present chapter discusses the history of dalit protest movements which originated in this region and makes a brief sketch of other social reform movements of this region which maintained a sympathetic approach towards dalits and supported their endeavour to emerge as an organized community. This enquiry also looks at the socio-historical features of the period to get a better understanding of the intensity of varied deprivations suffered by the downtrodden castes.

3.1 Caste System in the Travancore Society

The caste system in all its rigidity was a dominant feature of Kerala society, as anywhere else in India. It was introduced by Aryans in India. Before the arrival of the Aryans, writes Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, the caste system was unknown in Dravidian society. Aryan invasion and the subsequent process of sanskritization propagated caste system as a means to enslave the original inhabitants of the land. Society was divided into four varnas viz as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras as the process of Aryanization progressed. The people who were outside the pale of varna system were considered as ‘avarnas’ or ‘untouchables’. This type of division of society resulted in the emergence of a high caste ‘savarna’ governing class which was considered as pure and a low caste ‘avarna’ subjugated category considered as polluted. Thus the distinction of purity and pollution set one section of the people above the other section and thus the polluting castes were suppressed by the so-called pure castes. The ruling caste monopolized resources, social status and power while the enslaved castes led a life of deprivation and marginalization.

The caste system which evolved in Kerala was peculiar as it did not constitute into the conventional fourfold varna scheme. While the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Sudras were present, Vaishyas were conspicuous by their
absence. Their role was performed by people belonging to other religions especially Christianity and Islam. Probably in the absence of Vaishyas, the trading community, non-Hindu communities like the Christians and Muslims carried out trade and commerce. Moreover the demarcation of the high caste ‘savarna’ ruling castes and low caste ‘avarna’ subjugated castes has been characterised as the common feature of the caste system in Kerala.

The analysis of the caste system as practised in Travancore, illustrates that it was characterized by the hierarchy of different castes and the roles played by each caste as either masters or slaves in the casteist social fabric of this region. People in Travancore were hierarchically categorised into Brahmins, Nairs, Ezhavas, Nadars and Slave castes or Untouchables. The savarnas such as Brahmins and Nairs who enjoyed special powers and privileges of wealth constituted the higher castes. The avarnas viz the Nadars, the Ezhavas, the Parayas and the Pulayas were considered as the polluting castes and were looked down on and had to perform various services for the savarna Hindus. At the same time, it is also interesting to note that each caste in Kerala had its subdivisions, which was by nature and outlook as distinct from one another as to constitute almost separate castes.

3.1.1 The Dominance of Brahmins and Nairs

Brahmins in Kerala better known as Nambudiris or Nambudiri Brahmins occupied the most superior position among the different castes in Kerala. Their high social status was interwoven with their ritual purity, wealth and political influence. They were considered ritually as holy, representing God and possessing the sole right for the interpretation of the scripture and sacred laws which formed the basis of the laws of the land. As a part of religious duty Brahmins were provided free food in free inns (oottupuras) throughout the state. This practice was conducted at the expense of the state
and kings considered it as a sacred duty to feed them. Brahmins were big landlords who owned large areas of land and possessed immense wealth. As feudal lords they divided the land among their close allies in the jenmi system, the Nairs, who constituted the military castes. The lower caste kudiyans were at the mercy of the landlords. Brahmins also wielded tremendous political power and exerted extraordinary control over the Kings. The Nambudiris were the real rulers of Kerala from the 11th to the 16th centuries. They excelled in and controlled the diverse facets of social welfare such as education and learning, arts and culture as well as science and medicine.

In the social hierarchy of the state, after the Brahmins, the Nairs held a respectable position. They were primarily soldiers trained in the art of warfare. Very often this caste is spoken of as the Sudras. The alliance of Nairs with Brahmins increased their influence and the latter appointed the Nairs as the custodians and trustees of their property. As such the role of Nairs were redefined as the protectors of land and its people. The people who were ready to serve the Brahmins were formed into a new caste, the Nairs, who in turn became their protectors in all respects. 3 Though the entire land of Kerala was under the tutelage of the Brahmins, in practice, the Nairs were the owners. 4 They also supplied soldiers to the king in times of war. The Nairs followed marumakkathayam or the matrilineal system of inheritance where the female line determined the descent of a family. Under this system people lived in ‘taravads’-a cluster of joint families. Though the form of inheritance was in the female line, the family system in existence was patriarchal in its running, since the Karanavar, the eldest male member of the ‘taravad’, became the guardian of the joint family.
3.1.2 The Subjugated Ezhavas and Nadars

The next castes after the Nairs in the social hierarchy of Kerala were the Ezhavas and Nadars. Ezhavas were the most prominent and widespread low caste in Kerala. Ezhavas were spread all over Travancore, Cochin and Malabar and in certain parts of south Canara. They were known as Ezhavas in south Travancore, as Chovans or Chogans in north Travancore and Cochin, as Tiyas or Tiyyars in Malabar and as Billavas in parts of south Canara.5 They were engaged in different occupations - toddy tapping, agriculture, weaving, coir-making etc. There were also a few businessmen, ayurvedic medical practitioners, astrologers, learned people in Sanskrit etc. among them. Like Nadars, Ezhavas were considered as a lower caste but above the outcastes or untouchables. As a polluting caste they were subjected to many social disabilities and exploitations of higher castes. Many restrictions were forced on them due to their low social status. They were not allowed to walk on public roads, they could not use public wells or public places. They could not get admission in educational institutions. They were forbidden the dignity of an umbrella or a shoulder cloth, but they wore a tuft of hair at the front of the head. Their women were prohibited from covering their breasts and from wearing certain types of jewellery.6 They were not allowed to worship in temples and even roads close to temples were forbidden for them. They were said to pollute a Nambudiri from 36 paces and a Nayar from 12. They were also harassed by the government in different ways as in the form of oozhiyam, the free services rendered to government and through several other public controls and restraints.

The Nadars also known as Shanars were found in southern part of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The hereditary occupation of the Nadars was that of cultivating and climbing the palmyra palm, the juice of which they boil into a
coarse sugar. During the 19th century many people of this caste were turning to different employment other than the traditional one. They were engaged in agricultural works also. The Nadars occupied a social limbo somewhere between the Sudras and the outcaste untouchables. As lower castes, they were victims of the social disabilities of untouchability and unapproachability. The civil disabilities which applied to Iravas applied also to Shanars. They were offensively polluting to higher castes; their women were forbidden to cover their breasts. The government exploited Nadars by collecting different oppressive taxes even in a brutal manner. The most oppressive one was a capitation tax which they collected even for the deceased members of the family. Moreover, the upper castes and the government used to force them to do many gratuitous services to the government, the temples and the landlords.

3.1.3 The Wretched of the Earth: The Slave Castes

The slave castes mainly the Pulayas, Parayas and Kuravas formed the lowest order in the social hierarchy of Kerala. They were considered as the slaves of higher castes who treated them like animals and imposed brutal discriminations on them. They were so wretchedly provided with the necessities of life that the most loathsome things were a treat to them. They were bought and sold like cattle and were often worse treated. The owners had the power to flog them and enchain them, and even to deprive them of their lives. Everywhere they were paid for labour at the lowest possible rate sufficient to sustain life. They were considered as untouchables and unapproachables and their sight and presence were polluting. In order to avoid the pollution of the upper castes, the slave castes were required to keep a specific distance from them. Simultaneously it is interesting to note the strict rules regarding the distance to be maintained by the avarnas from the
savarnas (see the Table 3.1). As such they were denied free access to public roads, wells, temples and even markets considered as polluted by their presence. The dwelling places of slave castes were tiny huts made of reeds or mud, situated away from the visibility of higher castes. They had no right to education. Decent dressing or wearing gold or silver ornaments were considered offensive. Payments were imposed on their marriages. They never worked or earned living for themselves. Their entire life was dependent on the masters. They did not even own their children. They begetted children so that the master could have a continuous supply of workers.\(^{11}\) Thus the tyrannical and brutal discriminations imposed on the slave castes made their life setting highly dehumanizing and uncivilized.

**Table 3.1**

**Range of Caste Pollution**

| I | Brahmins → Nairs | 4 feet |
| Brahmins → Kanians | 24 feet |
| Brahmins → Chogans | 36 feet |
| Brahmins → Polluted castes like Pulyas, Parayas etc. | 96 feet |
| II | Nairs → Chogans | 12 feet |
| Nairs → Pulayas, Parayas etc. | 96 feet |
| III | Chogans → Pulayas, Parayas etc. | 36 feet |

*Note:* Regarding the distance of pollution between pure and polluting castes, there exists difference of opinion among scholars and a rather standard calculation of distance pollution is given above

The slave castes were often employed as agricultural labourers and paid at the lowest rate in kind. The work of Pulayas were almost exclusively in the rice-fields—pumping them dry, making up embankments, hedging, digging, manuring, ploughing, weeding, transplanting and reaping; yet the grain was not considered as polluted. Parayas and Kuravas also were engaged mainly in agricultural fields as labourers. They were also engaged in the production of mats, baskets etc. They possessed no property at all and were often subjected to deprivations at various levels. Being frequently engaged in digging and manuring, transplanting the young rice, repairing the banks, and performing other labours in the rice fields, sometimes standing for hours in the water, they are subject to rheumatism, fever, cholera and other diseases, which carry off many, long before they approach the old age. The survivors are often left, when past work, to beg or steal for their support or to perish with hunger.

3.1.4 The Bondage of Slavery

Slavery existed in Kerala as a corollary of its rigid caste system. Higher castes kept slaves, possessing the absolute right to sell, chain or kill them. They were forced to toil in the soil from dawn to dusk without enough food or remuneration. The masters treated them in the most inhuman manner subjected them to untold cruelty and suffering. The laws of slavery were hereditary as children born to slave parents remained as slaves. Slaves were mainly used as agricultural labourers. Slaves were not allowed to enter the houses of their masters because of the laws of pollution. Consequently domestic slavery was not encouraged. There were many evidences to prove that slavery was practised in Kerala. The inscription of 849 AD of the Venad Raja, Ayyan Adikal, Thiruvadigal granting certain privileges to the Congregation of the Tahrisa Church at
Quilon is the earliest among the inscriptions relating to Adimakasu (slave levy).\(^{14}\) From this inscription it is understood that slaves could be bought or sold and those who kept slaves should pay ‘slave levy’ to the government. A well known foreign account, ‘Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies’ by Abbe J. Dubois, who between the year 1792 to 1823 AD did missionary work in India, gives a detailed description of Malabar slaves whom he called Pariahs.\(^{15}\) The early travellers who visited Kerala like Varthema in 1505 AD or Buchanan in 1800 AD narrated the system of slavery which existed here.

The document which transferred ‘Mundothuruth’ to Church Missionary Society in 1819 speaks about the transfer of slaves too\(^ {16}\). There are also references of slave trade in different parts of the state where the cruel exchange and separation of slave family members took place. Kottayam, Changanacherry, Ambalapuzha, Harippad, Kayamkulam, Eraniel etc were the chief centres of slave trade and the price of a slave varied from rupees 3 to 14.\(^ {17}\)

European companies established in Kerala were also engaged in the trading of slaves both within and outside the country.

Slave castes often resorted to religious conversion as a means of escaping from the clutches of slavery. Consequently, many of them in Travancore and Cochin were converted to Christianity. This fact is amply illustrated by the statement of the Church Missionary Society’s Bishop of Travancore and Cochin: ‘owing to the fact that Christianity has readily welcomed the poorer classes such as the Parayas, Pulayas and Kuravans, they have become Christians in large numbers’.\(^ {18}\) At the same time, slavery abolition laws were implemented in Malabar, Travancore and Cochin as part of the intervention of the state to abolish slavery. Consequently, in 1792 the Commissioner of Malabar, in 1812 the Maharani of Travancore and in 1814 The Dewan of Cochin passed the slavery abolition law.
However slavery was fully banned only when it was declared as a crime in the Indian Penal Code implemented in 1862. Though slavery was legally abolished, the subaltern sections continued to face the worst forms of caste oppression and social discrimination as imposed by the upper castes. The downtrodden had to wage a prolonged and protracted struggle against the dominance of the governing class in the eternal hope of a bright future.

The caste system, thus, followed in Kerala was typically rigid having a hierarchical gradation of different castes. Caste determined one’s rank in the social ladder and upper castes, though numerically small in size, were at the top of it enjoying the benefits of power, wealth and social status. The subaltern sections who were at the bottom of the ladder were a toiling mass of people who survived at the mercy of their masters and destined to lead a life of marginalization. As such the savarna castes were placed at the helm of affairs while the avarna castes remained as a subjugated group of people. Caste system systematically kept the marginalized groups, particularly the dalits in bondage and suffering for centuries. It was a system which created a luxurious life setting for the upper castes at the expense of the labouring marginalized castes. They were denied the right to education, social justice, employment opportunities, political representation and economic prosperity. Consequently the socio-political and economic empowerment of the dalits remained as a difficult task to be addressed.

3.2 British Intervention in Travancore

The objective of British intervention in Travancore, as in other parts of India, was guided primarily by the economic interests of the Empire. It opened an era of exploitation of the rich resources of the country and later it turned out to be the subjugation of its people under the yoke of colonial
rule. A benevolent face of the colonial rule also may be elaborated in terms of the creative interventions it made in certain areas of our social system. It facilitated an opportunity for the native people to come into contact with English educational system, modes of administrative skills, development of infrastructure and above all a philosophy of life based on the principles of discipline, hard work and courage. Of course, this was the manifestation of the fact that British rule in India was utilizing their full potential for achieving their colonial designs. Yet the native people often failed or were incapable of utilizing these benevolent features of the colonial presence favourably for the future development of the nation.

Before examining the impact of British intervention in Travancore, a brief analysis of the modern history of Travancore will show the nature of its polity during the colonial era. Travancore was the largest of the three constituent parts of Kerala. Its territory was consolidated under a single kingdom by its most important eighteenth century ruler, Martanda Varma (1729-58) with the help of the Company. Travancore was earlier known as Venad—a small kingdom till the middle of the 18th century. Its modern history starts with Martanda Varma who extended the borders of Venad by conquering all the neighbouring small kingdoms and feudatories. After his military conquests, he dedicated the land and country to the main deity of Travancore family-Sree Padmanabhaswamy and accepted the name ‘Padmanabha dasa’ or ‘servant of Padmanabha’. Land was brought under state control, and the ceremonial consecration of the state of Travancore to Ananta Padmanabha, the family deity of the royal family of Travancore, was symbolic of Travancore’s unification and of the conquest of scattered sources of military-feudal power.¹⁹
Martanda Varma maintained a very warm relationship with the English East India Company and it lasted till the last decade of the 18th century. During this period, the Company was guided mainly by commercial interests. But later, their colonial designs made it strategically important to have Travancore under their control. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, British suzerainty was well established. The rebellion of Velu Thampi—the Dewan of Travancore from 1800 onwards—had been crushed down and the State of Travancore came under the control of the British Resident in Trivandrum who was the representative of British rule in Travancore. Among the British Residents in Travancore, Col. John Munro deserves special mention. He was the Resident from 1810-19 and was responsible for many reforms in the socio-political, educational and cultural spheres of Travancore. His reforms laid the foundation of rebuilding wholly the static social culture of Kerala. He also maintained a very sympathetic approach towards the activities of Christian missionaries. Sir John Munro was influenced by the London Missionary Society (LMS) and its work (particularly in South Travancore) in the spheres of education and health, the elimination of slavery and other forms of oppression of the lower castes. Although they practised untouchability themselves, the rulers of Travancore accommodated the activity of the LMS and absorbed important features of missionary activity into state policy.\(^{20}\)

Travancore also witnessed far-reaching reforms and changes initiated by its administration during the second half of the 19th century. The government introduced many sweeping changes in the administrative system and in its agricultural and commercial policies. Free and universal education was declared to be an objective of public policy. Schools were opened and instruction was introduced in Malayalam. The first public library in India
was established in Thiruvananthapuram and the state sponsored a remarkable programme of translations. Legislation against chattel slavery was passed. Civil and Criminal laws and laws of legal procedure were codified. A system of public health was introduced and hospitals were built. Land tenure legislation brought Travancore closer to a system of ryotwari, investing proprietary rights in new sections of persons who were actually responsible for farming the soil. There was an important programme of agricultural colonization. Public works became an important sphere of state activity. There was progress in road transport in Travancore.21

The Christian missionaries played a vibrant role in Travancore both as zealous missionaries called to preach the gospel and at the same time being the promoters of educational and social reforms. The objectives of the Protestant missionaries in Travancore particularly the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the late 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries were motivated by these goals. The objective of these organizations was, of course, to evangelize among the people of Travancore; in practice, their activity also took on the character of movements for educational and social reform.22 Regarding Protestant missionary activity in the 19th century, the Church historian C.M. Agur wrote: ‘it has always been the method of the Gospel, first to find its home among the humbler classes, the despised and rejected ones… it was so and is so in India; as it is remarkably so in Travancore’.23 Missionaries extended them education and developed in them a new self-respect and the faculty of critical enquiry, all of which ultimately emboldened them to interrogate the deviations of Travancore state and society.24 The missionaries found education as the best tool to empower the untouchables and their children were admitted in the schools established by them. It was a revolutionary step
at a time when the right of education was denied to lower castes. They worked among the poor to eradicate illiteracy and poverty. They educated the rural masses about the need for hygiene, health care etc. and established medical mission hospitals in Travancore for all people without the distinctions of caste or creed. They fought against the evils of casteism and related taboos which were imposed on the oppressed castes. They demanded anti-slavery legislation to be enacted. Thus the missionary work generated a new social awakening among the subaltern sections.

If the missionary activities were viewed from a colonial perspective, it is found that British rule always wanted to protect colonial interests as their primary objective, though the works of evangelization or other zealous social service programmes were promoted along with it. As Col Munro wrote: ‘Regarding as I do, the diffusion of genuine Christianity in India, as a measure equally important to the interests of humanity and to the stability of our power, I view, with the most sincere pleasure, the commencement of a systematic plan for the attainment of that object…indeed from the situation of the Portuguese in India, strong arguments may be adduced for the diffusion of the English Language, as a means of supporting the British Power, as well as of extending the protestant religion…’.25 This would be further clear if one telescopes the historical processes which unfolded in the country during the latter half of the 19th century. There was a sequential order in them looked from the vantage point of the growth and consolidation of the British colonial interest.26

Moreover some scholars have developed arguments in support of the close link between missionary activity and interests of plantation lobby. Colonial rule maintained hundreds of acres of plantations and the lower castes constituted the major portion of labour force employed there. At the
same time, missionaries were keen to get these subaltern sections converted to Christianity. Christian influence and gospel teaching boosted their morale and outlook of life. Missionaries inculcated in them the values of obedience, discipline, hard work and cleanliness. Anantha Krishna Iyer writes, ‘many now-a-days become converts to Christianity and under Christian influence and teaching they are rendered more sensible and acceptable to their employers’. This meant that the missionaries not only facilitated an uninterrupted supply of cheap labour but also ensured that the labour so supplied was docile and pliant. It was in this sense that the missionary activity in Travancore was alluded to as rearguard action to serve the British colonial interest.

However, the contributions of Christian missionaries in Travancore have been particularly significant in empowering the subaltern sections. The people who were in the bondages of casteism and slavery for centuries, through missionary influence, began to resist those social evils. The missionaries also left an indelible impression in the educational field as well. The learning opportunities given to the lower castes made them conscious of their rights. They began to show signs of a new social awakening which prepared the way for social change among them. There is no doubt that the missionary work laid the foundation for the subsequent growth of social reform movements and other dalit protest movements in Travancore during the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th century.

3.3 Social Reform Movements in Travancore

Social reform movements inaugurated an era of great social renaissance in Travancore. They revolted against the age-old bondages of caste-oppression, irrational social practices and varied superstitions that crept into the social fabric of this land and wanted to reform its social life in
accordance with the noble and humane visions of social reformers. In this context, a brief historical overview of the important social reform movements in Travancore starting from the latter part of the 19th century is relevant to understand the socio-political background of the emergence of such movements and their impact on the political socialization of dalits. In fact, many agitations of polluted castes took inspiration from these movements and they maintained a supportive and sympathetic approach towards the empowerment of subaltern sections. In this context, it should be remembered that among different social reform movements, the Ezhava movement assumes pre-eminence as the first powerful protest movement of lower castes which originated in Travancore and acted as the agent of a great social reform in Kerala. It has also inspired subsequent dalit protest struggles particularly the Ayyankali Movement.

3.3.1 Shanar Revolt (1859)

The Shanars or Nadars of south Travancore were a polluted caste and they revolted for the right of their women to dress like the upper caste Hindu women. The agitation is also known as the ‘breast-cloth agitation’ as it was waged for the right to cover the bosom of Shanar women. The Christian missionary work instilled in them a new spirit of social reform, and they began to wear jackets. It was resented by the caste-Hindus and large scale confrontations erupted in different parts of south Travancore such as Neyyatinkara, Kalkkulam, Irraneal etc. During the Dewanship of Col Munro an order was issued permitting the Shanar women who became converts to Christianity to cover their bodies with jackets (kuppayams). Yet they were not allowed to wear upper cloth (an additional scarf over their shoulders) in the manner of the Hindu caste women. But gradually the Hindu Shanar woman also began to wear jackets and sometimes they dared
even to wear upper cloth, which invited strong protests of the upper castes. The confrontations between upper castes and Shanars often led to violent situations and arson attacks on the houses and other properties of Shanars. Finally the revolt came to an end with the intervention of British government who forced the Travancore administration to implement the reform. The agitation of the Shanars eventually led to the Royal Proclamation of July 26, 1859, abolishing all restrictions in the matter of the covering of the upper parts by Shanar women, though there was still the stipulation that they should not imitate the dress of the women of upper castes. Even this stipulation was subsequently removed at the instance of the British Government.\(^{31}\) Shanar Revolt, thus, is counted as the first organized social revolt of untouchable castes in Travancore against caste oppression and social inequality. It has also asserted the basic freedom of polluted castes to choose their dress code which gave a great impetus for their social mobility towards modernity.

3.3.2 Malayali Memorial (1891)

It was the memorandum submitted to Sree Mulam Tirunal-the Maharaja of Travancore, on 1\(^{st}\) January 1891 against the monopoly of the outsiders of the region particularly the Tamil Brahmins in the government services of Travancore. The memorandum was signed by around 10028 people belonging to different communities including Nairs, Ezhavas and Christians. There was widespread resentment among the educated classes against the government’s policy of importing persons from outside, particularly Tamil Brahmins, to hold the most important posts in the public services even when persons with similar qualifications were available inside the state. The main objective of the Malayali Memorial was to impress on the Maharaja the gross injustice involved in denying the people
of Travancore an adequate representation in the administration as well as their systematic exclusion from higher grades of service. The leaders behind this initiative were G.P. Pillai, K.P. Sankara Menon, C.V. Raman Pillai and so on. Though the immediate response of the government on the memorandum was not favourable, there was a gradual change in the attitude of the government towards this issue. This agitation is considered as the first popular uprising against the government of Travancore. The Malayali Memorial is an important landmark in the political awakening of the people, a beacon for mightier movements in later days aimed at the attainment of civic rights and responsible government. It provided a model in the method of political campaigning for marshalling public sympathy.32

3.3.3 Ezhava Memorial (1896)

The Ezhava community under the leadership of Dr. Palpu submitted a memorandum signed by around 13176 Ezhavas to Sri Mulam Tirunal—the Maharaja of Travancore on 3rd September 1896 which came to be known as the Ezhava Memorial. They demanded employment for Ezhava community in government services and admission for their children in government schools as these rights were denied to them as untouchable castes. Dr. Palpu himself had to seek employment in Mysore service after being denied entry as a medical practitioner in the Travancore medical department. The Ezhava Memorial requested the Maharaja to confer on the Ezhavas the same rights and privileges which were being enjoyed by those of their caste who had become converts to Christianity.33 The government’s reply to the Ezhava Memorial was negative and it reflected its traditional reactionary attitude. In fact, there is a second ‘Ezhava Memorial of 1900’ which was presented by the leaders of the Ezhava community to the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon. The Ezhavas made use of Lord Curzon’s visit to Travancore in 1900 to request him to take steps for the
redress of their educational and political grievances. The response of the Viceroy towards their demands was negative as found in his reply that the ‘Viceroy would not interfere in minor details of local administration.’ Nevertheless, the Ezhava Memorial agitation helped to rouse the social and political consciousness of the Ezhavas and prepare them for future struggles in the cause of social justice. Hence Ezhava Memorial may be counted as a curtain-raiser for the polluted caste’s subsequent agitations for asserting their social rank as equal citizens.

3.3.4 Chattampi Swamikal (1853-1924)

Chattampi Swamikal initiated the social reformation in Kerala during the 19th and 20th centuries and made tremendous contributions towards the social renaissance of the state. He was born on 25th August 1853 at Kolloor village in Kannanmula near Trivandrum. He was known as ‘Chattampi’ which means monitor or leader of the class. He was a man of spiritual enlightenment, a scholar in Hindu philosophy and yogic practices and well versed in various branches of knowledge like Mathematics, Ayurveda, Music etc. He belonged to the Nair caste and his primary concern was to build up the social and religious life of the people of his own caste. As a social and religious reformer, his main achievement was that he could rouse the social consciousness of the Nairs and make them fight against the social evils that had crept into their rank. He was one of the early reformers who attacked the orthodoxy of Hindu religion and fought against the evils of casteism, many irrational social practices and superstitions. In fact, Chattampi Swamikal worked in close cooperation with Sree Naraya Guru in the common cause of Hindu social and religious regeneration. Though he did not establish any movement for social change, modelled on the examples of Sree Narayana Guru or Ayyankali,
Chattampi Swamikal was the inspiring force behind the social reform in Kerala. He gave reform movement in Kerala a new life and vigour. Above all, he established a positive link with the polluted castes particularly the Ezhavas in the struggle against casteism, untouchability and other social evils and as such it opened a common platform of resistance against the ascendancy of Brahmins.

3.3.5 Sree Narayana Movement (1903)

The Sree Narayana Movement which originated in Travancore, had been the most powerful social reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Though this movement was established with the objective of mobilizing the Ezhava community, subsequently it transformed itself into a forerunner and role model of various protest movements of the oppressed castes in Kerala. As such this movement heralded an era of great social renaissance and spiritual awakening among the people and Sree Narayana Guru has been hailed as the ‘father of modern Kerala renaissance’.

Narayana Guru was born in AD 1856 in Chembazonth, a quiet little town, about 12 kilometers north of Trivandrum, the capital of the then Indian native state of Travancore. His father, Madan ashan, a teacher and a physician and his mother, Kutty, belonged to the Ezhava community. His early education began with the study of Malayalam, Sanskrit, Tamil and Ayurveda and later he was fortunate to undergo an indepth study in Sanskrit and Ayurveda. He also availed the opportunities to learn poetry, drama and literary criticism. He had developed an innate taste for religious life and meditation from young age. At the age of fourteen, he was already known as a Nanu Bhaktan or devotee of Narayana. Though he married at the age of 28, at the behest of the family members, he did not lead a family life. He decided to lead the life of a wandering sanyasi and a person who is engaged in
spiritual enquiry. During this period of spiritual wandering, he met Chattampi Swamikal, the great social reformer of the Nair community. It was the beginning of a friendship which continued for the remainder of their lives. The work of Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru helped to rouse the Hindus from their age-long slumber and to give the Hindu religious reform movement in Kerala a social bias and a practical turn. 38

Narayana Guru campaigned against the rigours of caste system at a time when the rules of untouchability and unapproachability were brutally imposed on the oppressed castes. Among the different rules of caste oppression, one of the important social disability suffered by lower castes was that they were denied access to worship in the temples. Hence Narayana Guru consecrated temples for lower castes in different parts of the State. The first temple was established on Sivaratri day in 1888 at Aruvippuram in Neyyattinkara taluk. 39 It was the right of Brahmins alone then to consecrate temples and therefore orthodox Hindus questioned his right as an Ezhava to consecrate temples. To those who questioned his right as an Ezhava to consecrate temples, Sree Narayana Guru gave the challenging reply that he was consecrating the Ezhava Siva and not the Brahmin Siva. 40 It was a revolutionary act in the social reform history of Kerala, vindicating the resurrection of polluted castes.

Narayana Guru established an organization for mobilizing the Ezhava community who were subjected to different kinds of social discriminations. There was already a Committee known as Aruvippuram Association (‘Vavoottu Yogam’) registered in 1899 to manage the affairs of the temple and other establishments at Aruvippuram. This Association was changed into a social organization of the Ezhava community. Thus ‘Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam’ (SNDP) which meant an
organization for the propagation of the ethics of Sree Narayana was registered in 1903 under the leadership of Sree Narayana Guru in close association with Kumaran Asan, the great Malayalam poet and Dr. Palpu, the first doctor of Medicine among the Ezhava community. SNDP Yogam was blessed with a host of dedicated and reputed leaders in subsequent periods also and among them T.K. Madhavan, C.V. Kunjuraman, C. Kesavan, R. Sankar and others made significant contributions to the organization. The aim of SNDP, as written in the certificate of registration was to improve religious and secular education and to improve industry.\textsuperscript{41} In order to enrol members and to raise funds for the organization, Narayana Guru travelled extensively throughout Kerala. The efforts of Narayana Guru to mobilize the community and organization produced excellent results. The Ezhava community began to be mobilized under the banner of SNDP Yogam. He established an Ashram at Sivagiri, Varkala in 1907. It was officially inaugurated in 1911 and became its headquarters. SNDP Yogam also started a monthly magazine ‘Vivekodayam’\textsuperscript{42} in 1909.

Narayana Guru was a great social reformer who opposed many customs and rituals which retarded the economic and moral progress of Ezhavas. The expensive ceremonies like Talikettu Kalyanam (ritual marriage for infant girls prior to the actual marriage which took place only after a girl came of age), Therandukuli (a customary act performed in connection with a girl attaining puberty), Pulikudi (associated with the first pregnancy after marriage), Pulikudi adiyatram (celebrated on the 27\textsuperscript{th} or 40\textsuperscript{th} day after the birth of a child with the celebration of milk feeding) etc. economically ruined many families. Narayana Guru urged them to abandon these unnecessary ceremonies. He also prohibited the practice of polygamy and polyandry. He educated the people about the evils of drinking liquor
and wanted them to give up such habits. He found education as the best means to emancipate his community from its varied bondages. His sutra was, ‘strengthen through organization, liberate through education’. When Mahatma Gandhi visited him at Varkala, Gandhi asked him, ‘What should be done to rid the disabilities of polluted castes apart from the removal of untouchability’. Guru replied, ‘They should get education and wealth’.

Narayana Guru was philosophical and he was influenced by Sankara’s ‘advaita philosophy’ which depicted the eternal reality and the world as one and the same and not dual. Sankara’s non-duality between the ultimate reality and the reality in man influenced Narayana Guru very much. Relying on this teaching of advaita, he is strived to search the inner harmony of human beings beyond religious differences. He worked for a new society based on the concept of universal human brotherhood as found in his famous saying:

‘One Caste, One Religion, One God for man
One Womb, One Form, difference herein none’.

He propagated a philosophy of unity and harmony among the people who were divided by caste based differences and religious diversities. Such a vision based upon humanism is always necessary for social and economic progress. His dream was a casteless egalitarian society and he suggested intercaste marriages and interdining as measures to reduce the evils of casteism. He placed man above religions as his famous dictum, ‘it is enough that man be good, whatever be the religion.’ He stood for religious harmony and peaceful co-existence.

Narayana Guru established the ‘Advaita Ashram’ on the banks of river Periyar at Aluva in 1914 and preferred to spend a good numbr of years there
till 1925. During this period, an ‘All Religions Conference’ was held at the Ashram in 1924. The following words were displayed at the entrance hall of the meeting. ‘Neither for debate nor to win but to know and to let know’\textsuperscript{48}. It was a great attempt in fostering inter-religious dialogue and highlighted the inner harmony of all religions in the search for Reality. The Guru attained Samadhi in 1928 at Varkala. The ‘Sivagiri Ashram’ at Varkala subsequently became an important centre of pilgrimage in the state.

Sree Narayana Guru and the Ezhava movement met with remarkable success in empowering the Ezhava community and other marginalized groups. It is interesting to note that a reform movement initiated by polluted castes transformed itself into a vibrant movement for social change. The dalit protest movements began to show signs of self-assertion by drawing inspiration from the Ezhava struggle. The movement was laid on a spiritual and religious foundation together with the enlightened and charismatic leadership of Sree Narayana Guru which produced excellent results in the reformation of Hinduism. Meantime, the movement was also action-oriented, both in attacking the traditional caste structures and in suggesting alternative radical reforms for social change. All these factors created a favourable atmosphere for the Ezhava movement to play a crucial role in the social and spiritual awakening of Kerala.

3.3.6 Vakkam Abdul Khadhir Maulavi (1873-1932)

He is considered as a towering social reformer of the Muslim community in Kerala and a leader of the social reform movement of the state. Born in a rich family at Vakkam in Chirayinkeezhu taluk of Trivandrum in 1873, he grew up as a learned man acquiring knowledge both in religious and secular subjects. He was a scholar in different languages as Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Malayalam etc. and disseminated his
ideas through journalism and publication of different magazines and books. As a journalist, he started the ‘Swadeshabhimani’ weekly newspaper in 1905. The illustrious K. Ramakrishna Pillai became its editor subsequently. Apart from authoring various articles and books, Maulavi published a few magazines such as the ‘Muslim’ started for the reform of the community, the ‘Al-Islam’ an Arabic-Malayalam monthly, and the ‘Deepika’ which carried a translation of a few verses from the ‘Koran’ in each issue. He maintained warm relations with Sree Narayana Guru and on the pattern of Ezhava movement, he established certain organizations like the Travancore Muslim Mahajana Sabha and Chirayinkil Taluk Muslim Samajam. The main objectives of these organizations were the social emancipation and reform of the Muslim community. The social and moral regeneration of the Muslim community was the chief concern of Maulavi. In fact, it was the educational backwardness and other social disabilities suffered by the Muslim community that led Vakkam Maulavi into the public domain of reform movements. He exhorted the Muslims to discard all un-Islamic practices, to take to English education in increasing numbers and to play an active part in modern progressive movements. Thus, Maulavi laid the foundation for the social and educational uplift of Muslims in Kerala. Further he established a branch of Sahodaran Ayyappan’s, ‘Sahodara Sangham’ at Vaikom which was a testimony of his close association with the latter. The Sangham fought against many social evils including the challenges of casteism and his cooperation with it showed the broader and secular outlook of Maulavi who always worked in collaboration with other polluted castes. His unstinting support strengthened the struggle of the marginalized groups to resist the challenges of casteism and other social inequalities.
3.3.7 Mannathu Padmanabhan (1878-1970)

Mannathu Padmanabhan organized a group of young men and registered a Nair Karayogam at Perunnai, Changanacherry in 1912. It was expanded into Changanacherry Taluk Nair Samajam in 1913 with Sri Mannam as its secretary. In order to strengthen the organization throughout the state, Sri Mannam and a group of fourteen zealous young men gathered at Mannathu House at Perunnai, Changanacherry on 31st October 1914 and founded the ‘Nair Samudaya Bruthya Jana Sangha’ for the service of the Nair community. Besides, they aimed at inter-communal harmony, educational advancement and economic upliftment. K. Kelappan and Mannathu Padmanabhan were the founding president and secretary respectively. On 11 July 1915 the Sangha was renamed as the Nair Service Society. The headquarters of the organization was located at Perunna, Changanacherry. The history of the organization is closely linked up with the history of Mannathu Padmanabhan—the ‘icon of Nair identity’. The relentless zeal of this enlightened leader and the dedicated services of other great leaders of NSS like Changanacherry Parameswaran Pillai, Ambalappattu Damodara Asan, Kalathil Velayudhan Nair and others transformed it into a powerful and vibrant organization of Nair community. Though the primary objective of NSS was the reformation of Nair community, the organization extended its activities in different spheres such as social, economic and educational fields. It fought against the evils of casteism, untouchability, joint family system, expensive and unnecessary social practices like Talikettu Kalyanam, Therandukuli, Pulikudi etc. The reform of Marumakkathaya system or the matrilineal system of inheritance which existed among the Nairs also drew its attention. He understood the importance of education for the development of the community and
established a wide net work of educational institutions throughout the state. At the same time, he was keen on acquiring landed property and other assets including the founding of different institutions under the banner of the organization. In addition, he maintained a sympathetic attitude towards other communities particularly the untouchable castes. Sri Mannam played an important role during Vaikom Satyagraha and it was under his leadership that a ‘savarna jatha’ from Vaikom to Trivandrum was conducted as part of the agitation which demanded the right of temple entry for Hindu avarnas. He was also at the forefront of the Guruvayur temple entry agitation. He maintained a close association with the political movements of the state. When Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyyer resisted the integration of Travancore with India in 1947, Sri Mannam led a political struggle for the integration. Though he was arrested and imprisoned for two years, he was soon set free following the resignation of the Dewan. Subsequently the integration of Travancore took place. The ‘Vimochana Samaram’ (the liberation struggle) of 1959 which culminated in the dismissal of first democratically elected Communist ministry of E.M.S. Namboothirippad in the state was led by Mannathu Padmanabhan. Thus, the contributions of Sri Mannam have been multifarious—a political activist who was associated with the political history of the state, a social reformer who advocated the social uplift of the polluted castes and above all, an enlightened leader who reformed and empowered his own community.

3.3.8 Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25)

The Kakinada session of Indian National Congress in 1923, at the initiative of T.K.Madhavan, resolved to work for the eradication of untouchability in India. Accordingly, the Kerala Pradesh Congress formed a committee for the eradication of untouchability in 1924 with
T.K.Madhavan, K.Kelappan, Kuroor Neelakandan Nambudiri and others as its members. Vaikom Satyagraha was the first important struggle organized in this direction. In addition to T.K. Madhavan, several other top leaders like K.P. Kesava Menon, Mannathu Padmanabhan, Changanacherry Parameswaran Pillai, C.V Kunhiraman and K.Kelappan were associated with the Vaikom Satyagraha. The polluted castes of the Hindu community were not allowed to use the approach roads to the Lord Siva Temple at Vaikom in north Travancore. At the same time, it should be remembered that even Christians and Muslims enjoyed free access to the roads around it. The satyagraha was organized against this discrimination suffered by the untouchable castes. The agitators faced many difficult situations of arrests and harassments during the struggle which lasted for about 20 months. As part of the satyagraha, a ‘savarna jatha’ was organized from Vaikom to Trivandrum by the savarna Hindus who supported the agitation under the leadership of Mannathu Padmanabhan. At the end of the march, they submitted a memorandum signed by around 20,000 savarna Hindus to the Regent Setu Lakshmi Bai. The march created a favourable public opinion for the agitation. The satyagraha also witnessed the visit of a good number of great leaders like Sree Narayana Guru-the social reformer of Kerala, E.V Ramaswamy Naicker-the social reformer from Tamil Nadu and the Akalis from Punjab which generated wide publicity and popular support for the satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to Vaikom was a turning point in the agitation. He held discussions with the Maharani Regent of Travancore and a settlement was reached. Finally Her Highness of Travancore, after 20 months of the commencement of the satyagraha declared that any road used by the Christians and the Muslims could be used by Hindus irrespective of caste distinction. Though the outcome of the agitation was not completely
successful, it created a consciousness among the people regarding the eradication of untouchability. Through Vaikom satyagraha this subject drew the attention of whole nation. Though the satyagraha was organized by the Congress, it enjoyed the support of all communities particularly the Ezhavas and other untouchable castes. The Vaikom satyagraha, thus, marks an important milestone in the struggle for the civil rights of the polluted castes in Travancore.

3.3.9 Temple Entry Proclamation (1936)

It was the proclamation issued by Sri Chitira Tirunal Balarama Varma- the Maharaja of Travancore on 12th November 1936 by which entry for all Hindus irrespective of their caste distinctions was allowed into the Hindu temples of Travancore. The polluted castes were denied right to worship in the temples from time immemorial. This proclamation granted such rights to them which was the culmination of a series of protracted struggles waged by different sections of untouchable castes, social reformists and other enlightened sections of Travancore society. Among them were the Ezhava memorial, Sree Narayana movement, Vaikom satyagraha, Guruvayur satyagraha, the support of enlightened Savarna Hindu leaders and a series of representations made to the government by different sections of society. Sri Chitira Tirunal had appointed a committee in 1932 to study the question of temple entry and its report was submitted in 1934. The Government did not take any action on the report on account of the conflicting views of the committee members on temple entry. In 1936, however, the Government resolved that all public roads, public tanks, public wells, chatram etc. maintained by them out of the general public funds shall be thrown open to all classes of people irrespective of the caste to which they belong.\textsuperscript{55} During this period, as instructed by Gandhiji, a
memorandum signed by around 50,522 savarna Hindus was submitted to the Maharaja. Further, the Indian National Congress and other organizations as the Hindu Mission, NSS, SNDP Yogam and Harijan Seva Sangam were also campaigning for temple entry. Considering the pulls of multiple factors like the long-standing demands of polluted castes, increasing favourable attitude of the savarna Hindus and the favourable aspects of the reports of the committee, the Maharaja issued the temple entry proclamation. The proclamation of the Maharaja was a historical and revolutionary event as far as the destiny of the downtrodden castes were concerned. They were given a message of hope and confidence in their struggle for social equality. It is considered as the most progressive act ever made in the history of modern India. It brought about a silent and bloodless revolution in Hindu society. Gandhiji hailed it as a miracle of modern times and a smiriti which is the people’s charter of spiritual emancipation. Thus this proclamation has repaired one of the crucial social disabilities suffered by polluted castes for centuries and as such it has inspired subsequent dalit protest struggles and endeavour of dalits to emerge as equal citizens.

3.4 Dalit Protest Movements

In the pre-independent Travancore history, there were mainly three protest movements of dalits organized by the charismatic leaders of the dalit community: Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (SJPS) founded by Ayyankali in 1907, Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) founded by Poikayil Yohannan in 1909 and Travancore Cheramar Mahajana Sabha (TCMS) founded by Pampady John Joseph in 1921. Ayyankali has been considered as a pragmatic and action-oriented social reformer and the record of his movement lay in the development of a social praxis to confront the deprivations of the downtrodden. On the other hand, Poikayil
Yohannan and Pampady John Joseph have been involved in the formulation of a dalit identity by searching for the history of slave castes. They tried to construct the history of their own people to arouse their pride and consciousness. The focus of the enquiry, initially, turns towards the dynamism of the Ayyankali movement and subsequently tries to find out the role of Poikayil Yohannan and Pampady John Joseph.

3.4.1 Ayyankali and Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (SJPS) (1907)

Ayyankali (1863-1941), the first ever revolutionary social reformer produced by the dalit community in Kerala, is considered as the torch-bearer of dalit protest struggles in the state. Though he championed primarily the struggle of Pulayas in Travancore, he is counted as the leader of all untouchable dalit castes in the social history of Kerala. He was born in a Pulaya family at Venganoor near Thiruvananthapuram on 28th August 1863 as the son of Ayyan and Mala. Obviously he received no education as caste restrictions denied such rights to avarna castes. Not much is known about his early life. But from the age of thirty, he dedicated his entire life to fight for his people and to lift them from the morass in which they were condemned from time immemorial.\(^{37}\) In his revolt against caste oppression and social inequality which existed in the Travancore society, he was profoundly influenced by Sree Narayana Guru and the Ezhava movement. In fact, the Ezhava movement generated a great social awakening among the polluted castes. Ayyankali, the action-oriented social reformer, often intervened in a dynamic way in confronting opposition and dared to employ even physical force in the most unavoidable circumstances. Though he was an illiterate, he was fully conscious of the pulse of social realities and processes. Therefore the social praxis he developed was highly humanistic and democratic, though lacking in philosophical refinement. The movement
he launched was rich in action. Subtly and without any fuss, confining the use of violence to the most unavoidable of situations, he infracted many a caste law and entered the public sphere of Travancore with the people of his caste.\textsuperscript{58}

The first step that Ayyankali took in this fight for social freedom was to struggle for the right of Pulayas and other untouchable castes to walk along public roads. For centuries, entry to public roads was prohibited for them. In 1893, Ayyankali staged his first protest by travelling in a bullock cart all along a public road. He organised a group of young men who belonged to his own community and made the bullock cart ride along the prohibited public roads at Vengannoor, his native village. Ayyankali’s violation of the age-old bans met with the violent disapproval of upper castes. However he went on to organise more such violations. In 1898, a group of Pulayas led by Ayyankali walked along public roads to Arulmmudu market. They were stopped by the caste Hindus near Chalia junction of Balaramapuram for polluting public roads.\textsuperscript{59} Consequently large scale confrontations between Pulayas and upper castes erupted and it spread to other places like Parassala, Neyyattinkara, Nemom, Kazhakoottam, Kaniyapuram etc.\textsuperscript{60} The geographical spread of the agitations shows the extent of success attained by Ayyankali in making the issue a focal point of mass mobilization, eventually forcing governmental intervention in favour of scheduled castes.\textsuperscript{61}

The next important concern of Ayyankali was the issue relating to school entry and education of Pulaya children. Ayyankali, though an illiterate man, understood well the relevance of education as the best tool to liberate the untouchable castes from their bondages. He sought admission for the Pulaya children in the government schools at a time when polluted
castes were denied education rights. Not only did Ayyankali make representations to the government to admit Pulaya children to government schools, he even took children to the schools and demanded the authorities to enrol them. This naturally resulted in upper caste resentment and clashes.\(^{62}\) When Pulaya children were denied admission in government public schools, attempts were made by them to set up their own schools and one such school was started in Vengannoor village but was destroyed later by the caste Hindus.\(^{63}\) In the midst of such reactions of upper castes, he was not anguished but continued the struggle in a different form by transforming it into an agitation of the agricultural workers.

The strike by agricultural workers organized by Ayyankali was a unique form of social revolt as far as its objectives were concerned. This agitation was organized not for economic gains but for the right for entry to schools. Ayyankali gave a call to the Pulayas and other agricultural workers to desist from going to work in the fields of upper caste landowners until they stopped attacking their children and allowed them to attend schools in peace.\(^{64}\) In addition, they demanded higher wages and permanency of labour in the agricultural fields. As the ‘jenmis’ rejected these demands, large scale strike erupted among workers. Agricultural operations came to a standstill as hundreds of Pulaya agricultural labourers joined the strike. The massive impact of the strike restrained the government from using repressive measures. Meantime, a settlement was reached with the intervention of the then Dewan who appointed Kundalla Nagampilla, a first class magistrate, to mediate the issue between the Pulayas and the jenmis.\(^{65}\) In the end, a tripartite agreement was reached between Ayyankali, caste Hindu landlords and the government whereby scheduled caste children were granted permission to attend schools.\(^{66}\) The demand for higher wages
of labourers and other related issues were also settled as part of the agreement.

Ayyankali also challenged caste restrictions on dressing as the polluted castes were not allowed to dress neatly and appropriately. Besides, the untouchable women were not allowed to wear ornaments made of gold or silver, instead they used to wear stone necklaces - a mark of subjugation. The dalit women were not allowed to wear upper cloth to cover their breast. He persuaded the Pulaya women in south Travancore to discard stone necklace which was a badge of a slave past and to wear upper garments to cover their breasts. The upper castes reacted sharply against the call of Ayyankali to violate the age-old customs. Things came to a crisis, when one of the Pulaya leaders of central Travancore, Gopal Das, exhorted Pulaya women in that area to emulate their sisters in the south and discard bead necklaces. The attempt of untouchable castes to break the tradition created tensions and large scale confrontations between Pulayas and Nairs took place in different parts of central Travancore. The riots lasted for sometime incurring heavy losses on both sides. At last, Ayyankali arrived on the scene and an agreement was reached between Nair and Pulaya leaders. Following the settlement, a mass meeting was organized at Quilon town, where in the presence of Ayyankali and Nair social reformer Changanacherry Parameswaran Pillai, hundreds of Pulaya women publicly threw away their bead necklace. This was a great victory for the Pulayas and other downtrodden castes.

Ayyankali established an organization to protect the interests of the untouchable castes. Ayyankali and his co-workers Thomas Vadhyar and Harris Vadhyar, learning a lesson from their experiences tried to organize the untouchables both Hindus and Christians under the banner of
Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (SJPS) in 1907. He was a vehement critic of conversion, still he accommodated converts also into the organisation. Before the formation of SJPS, there was an organization for Hindu Pulayas known as ‘Brahma Nishta Madam’ led by Sadananda Swamy. However, SJPS envisaged a larger and broader outlook encompassing entire dalits. The organization was not meant for any single caste but it unified all the deprived castes. Thus, Ayyankali was successful in creating a common platform for the dalits for the first time.

The establishment of SJPS was modelled on the example of SNDP Yogam. Just as Narayana Guru championed the liberation of Ezhava community through SNDP Yogam, Ayyankali, through SJPS, aimed at the emancipation of the untouchable castes.

In order to strengthen the organization, he travelled extensively throughout the state. He intelligently utilized the public performance of cultural activities as a means to attract people to the organization and to spread its vision and mission. The rich folk arts of the Pulayas and other downtrodden castes were staged by the Sangham. Ayyankali used to organize people around cultural symbols from the time of his youth. He collected a motley crowd of youths of his caste belonging to the neighbouring villages and encouraged them to perform folk arts besides giving them training in martial arts. The ‘Samajam’ (private theatre) used to organize cultural programmes like Pattukacheri (musical programmes), Dramas, Parijakali, Koladi, Kurathikali, Kakarissi dramas, Valli dramas etc which created among them cultural awareness and organizational spirit.

SJPS aimed at the welfare of polluted castes and planned programmes to foster unity among them as found in some of its earlier
resolutions. Some of the important decisions taken at such a meeting of the SJPS were (1) To reduce the number of working days from 7 days a week to 6 days a week. (The labourers had demanded one day of rest every week). (2) All the deprived caste members should attend the weekly meeting held every Sunday to discuss their problems. (3) Male and female members should remit ‘ara (½) chakram’ and ‘kal (¼) chakram’ as membership fees respectively. The labourers who toiled in the agricultural fields for all the days of the week considered a day’s rest as a big relief. It was a revolutionary achievement for the downtrodden castes gained through their protests and agitations. The Sunday holiday opened an opportunity for them to come together, building bonds of fellowship. It also helped the people to associate with the activities of the organisation and all its members including women used to attend the proceedings. The participation of women in the proceedings of a public forum was a revolutionary step while considering the traditional social morass of the period which restricted women from entering the public sphere. The little collections raised by the movement as membership fees was used for acquiring a small plot of land to build an office for SJPS.

Ayyankali established a ‘Samudaya Kodathi’ (community court) at Venganoor, the headquarters of the ‘Sangham’ to settle disputes among his people. The local offices of these courts functioned in all branches of SJPS. The features of regular courts such as advocates, judges, bench clerks, warrant sepoys etc. adorned the functioning of the court with Ayyankali as the high power judge. One basic reason behind this experiment was to put an end to his people’s dependence for justice on regular courts manned by caste-Hindus in whom he had little faith. It was also expensive and time consuming. The functioning of the courts
strengthened the integration of his community with the SJPS and helped him to mould a disciplined community.

SJPS, thus, emerged as a vibrant organization of the dalits. The headquarters of the organization was established at Vengannoor and its branches were founded in different parts of Travancore within a short period of time. The Sangham also set up harijan hostels to assist in the education of Pulaya children. As part of his organizational activities, Ayyankali started a Malayalam monthly called ‘Sadhu Jana Paripalini’ with the help of his associates from Changanacherry. A small enlightened section of upper castes also supported the publication of the magazine which was started in 1913. Though short lived, the journal played an important role in the struggle of Pulayas and allied communities for social freedom. It is to be remembered that Ayyankali though an illiterate, understood the relevance of print media in the struggle for social equality.

The strenuous efforts of Ayyankali and SJPS in empowering the untouchable castes created a gradual change in their favour in the political terrain of Travancore. The government of Travancore decided to nominate the representatives of polluted castes to Sri Mulam Praja Sabha. In 1911, P.K. Govinda Pillai was nominated as the representative of the Scheduled Castes to the Sri Mulam Praja Sabha-legislature- and on December 5 1911, Ayyankali himself became its member, a position in which he continued until 1933. Though he advocated a wide range of demands of his castemen in the assembly, his primary concerns were three, namely education, employment and land. He fought for admitting Pulaya children in government schools of the state and demanded government scholarships and other fee concessions for them. He also suggested compulsory vernacular education, at least in the primary level, for his community and
proposed manual work and some industry along with their education so as to enable them to find a career. Ayyankali’s struggle for the educational rights of Pulayas attained moderate success. On 12 March 1912, he submitted that only seven schools in south Travancore had given admission to Pulaya children. He sought all schools in the state to admit them. The Dewan agreed to give admission to Pulaya children in all schools where the Ezhava children were admitted. He also secured many educational concessions as scholarships or fee-concessions for his community.

Ayyankali also raised the problem of inadequate consideration given to his community with regard to government jobs. He demanded the appointment of Pulayas in different government departments like public works, health, forest, education etc at least in the subordinate ranks or menial posts as they were not competent enough or qualified for higher posts. As per his suggestions, many Pulayas were appointed in these departments in jobs that did not require any specific scientific knowledge.

Another important concern he raised continuously in the legislature was the problem of land and housing for the Pulayas. Pulayas were agricultural labourers who possessed neither land nor house and they were considered as tenants who could be evicted at any time from the agricultural fields by the landlords. Therefore, during his tenure in the Sri Mulam Praja Sabha, he persuaded the state to assign ‘puduval’ (fallow) lands to agricultural groups like Pulayas. Yet the local revenue officials assigned such ‘puduval’ lands in which Pulayas lived to upper castes and evicted Pulayas from their holdings. After repeated struggles by the Pulaya representatives in the Sabha, the government allotted 300 acres of land in Vilappinsala, six kms away from the Vengannoor village and 200 acres in
Voozhamalukkal in Nedumangaad taluk. Of these 500 acres of lands, one acre each was allotted to each Pulaya.\textsuperscript{78}

Meanwhile SJPS met with challenges of internal schism due to disunity among its leaders. It raised doubts about its identity as a vibrant organization for the Pulayas and dalit community as a whole. In fact, the formation of Cheramar Mahajana Sabha under the leadership of Pampady John Joseph proved to be a set back for SJPS. At the same time, young leaders of SJPS like Kesava Sastri thought of a separate organization for Pulayas. In 1937 Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham itself came to a virtual end with the formation of All Travancore Pulayar Maha Sabha by T.T. Kesava Sastri, son-in-law of Ayyankali.\textsuperscript{79} There is no doubt about the fact that the decline of SJPS proved to be a set back for the historic and heroic dalit struggles waged by this organization for a long period. In fact, the internal disharmony among the leaders undermined the noble interests of the organization. It was unfortunate that even a great dalit leader of Ayyankali’s stature could not overcome such challenges of dalit unity.

Eventhough SJPS was started as a common platform for all dalit castes, it later changed itself into a movement for Pulayas only. A sectarian caste based orientation slowly evolved in the functioning of the movement. There is no doubt that this transformation of SJPS adversely affected its credibility as a movement for entire dalit community and a symbol of dalit unity. As Sanal Mohan comments, ‘while raising the demands of particular caste groups in the Sree Mulam Praja Sabha, even veteran Ayyankali resorted to press the problems of Pulayas who were Hindu’.\textsuperscript{80} At the same time, it is also noticed that a number of dalit representatives belonging to different dalit castes were nominated to the Praja Sabha after 1912.\textsuperscript{81} and they could not present a joint endeavour in raising the grievances of dalits
collectively in the legislature. Though the number of dalit representatives who were nominated to legislature increased, their voices often differed on issues concerning dalits as each representative began to argue for the case of his respective caste.

The image of Ayyankali movement an aggressive dalit organization weakened due to its submissive attitude, which it gradually developed, towards the state. As J. Prabhash comments, ‘it could be argued as was done by many, Chentharasserry and Abhimanyu for instance, that at that point of time Ayyankali could not afford to render a critique of government as many of the items on his agenda were those which could be fulfilled only with the active support of the state’. A pro-state attitude which emerged in the movement often compelled it to become subservient to the restraints of government. It was a serious limitation for the organization to function within the ambience of power set by the state, thereby sacrificing its innate dynamism and growth.

It is worthwhile to make a comparison between Sree Narayana movement and Ayyankali movement as movements for the empowerment of polluted castes. Of course, SJPS was not a powerful organization as SNDP Yogam. Their social and economic deprivations and degradations were so big that they could not use their numerical strength to effective purpose. Nor could they demand social and political rights like the Ezhavas who were economically strong as well. The Pulayas as a group of people who belonged to the lowest strata of the social ladder, lagged far behind Ezhavas in different spheres of life. The Ezhava movement was blessed with a host of charismatic leaders. It was the enlightened and spiritual leadership of Sree Narayana Guru, the able and effective leadership of Dr. Palpu, the social and cultural leadership of Kumaran Asan and others which
laid a solid foundation for the growth of the movement. However, the Pulaya movement was solely dependent on the charisma of Ayyankali and as such the movement faced stagnation after his time. Along with these differences, it is found that though both movements were endeavours of untouchable castes, they failed in forging a common bond of the exploited sections. Rigidity of the caste system and the differences in socio-economic and ritual status might have been the restraining factors for the failure of these two movements in building a broader platform of resistance against caste oppression and social inequality.

Still, Ayyankali has been considered as the icon of dalit resistance in Travancore and the most reputed leader of the dalits in the state. He was a highly practical social reformer who aimed at the socio-political and economic deliverance of dalits rather than any kind of spiritual liberation. He disassociated himself from being part of any religious sect at a time when the involvement of Christian missionaries and Hindu reformist organizations were vigorous among dalits. Ayyankali’s struggle was against the social disabilities suffered by the dalit community and various other deprivations faced by them in their daily lives. It was a struggle which continued for a long period even inside the portals of legislature. He was also the architect of a vibrant dalit organization and SJPS proved to be the first successful attempt in mobilizing dalits through a series of protest struggles. Its activities drew a road-map for the subsequent protests of dalits and their endeavours to emerge as an organized community.

3.4.2 Poikayil Yohannan and Prathyksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) (1909)

Poikayil Yohannan (1879-1939), the founder of Prathyksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) was born on 17\textsuperscript{th} February 1879 AD at Eraviperoor
village in Thiruvalla taluk, Pathanamthitta district as the son of Kandan and Lechi, a family belonging to the Paraya caste. His parents were labourers attached to a Syrian Christian landlord family belonging to the Marthomite Church. The family joined the Marthomite Church as instructed by the Christian jenmi. He had been named Kumaran by his parents, but at the age of five he was baptized, and thereafter went by his Christian name, Yohannan. Like any other child of the agricultural slave castes, he was expected to perform daily chores on the landlord’s estate, such as herding cattle and working in the paddy fields. Meantime he had acquired a certain amount of elementary education under the guidance of Muthoottu Kochukunjju Upadesi in a slave school run by CMS missionaries at Thevarkattu in Eraviperoor. The Christian Sankaramangalam family was not against the move to send their slaves’ children to this school for teaching them to read the Bible. As he turned a literate man, Yohannan was enthusiastic in studying the Bible and availed the opportunities to read the Bible in the religious gatherings of the Church. Considering his knowledge in the Bible and talents for composing songs and lively verses he was appointed as an ‘Upadesi’ of the Marthomite Church. However, dissatisfied with the caste based discriminations prevailing in the Church, he left the Marthoma Church and joined the Brethren Mission, a Christian sect. He left Brethren Mission due to the contempt and inequality faced by the untouchable members of the Church and joined another Christian sect, Verpadu Sabha. He was critical about the functioning of the Church as viewed from an evangelical perspective. Consequently he left the Church and became an independent preacher. Yohannan broke with the formal Church structure and struck it out on his own as an itinerant preacher.
implanting the message of the Bible in and around the villages of Tiruvalla. He soon attracted a small group of followers.\textsuperscript{88}

Once he went out of the congregations, he thought of propagating his own vision of religion which was prophetic and social in character.\textsuperscript{89} His was not an attempt at establishing a different Church within the Christian fold but one of establishing a new Dalit religion of which he was the prophet and the preacher. This resulted in the establishment of the Prathyasha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) in 1909.\textsuperscript{90} Through this organization, he wanted to unite all the dalit castes irrespective of their caste loyalties. It stood for the total unity of dalits of various ‘jatis’ or castes. The downtrodden castes found in him a new spiritual and social reformer. His charismatic leadership and unique oratorical skills attracted large number of followers to the organization. Subsequently the movement marked a rapid growth in the state. Eraviperoor, the birth place of Yohannan became its headquarters. Amarakunnu near Thiruvalla and Udiyankulangara near Neyyattinkara became subcentres of PRDS. The Sabha also acquired its own properties and established worshipping centres and educational institutions in different parts of Travancore.

Poikayil Yohannan critically explained the Bible and often challenged the Christian teachings. He argued that they were irrelevant to his caste as they did not address the concerns of his own people. Yohannan assumed a new prophetic role among them as found in his critique of the Scripture. He exhorted his people thus:

‘In the New Testament are certain Epistles by St. Paul and others. To whom did St. Paul write these epistles? To the Romans, Corinthians and so on. There is not one written to the Pulayas of
Travancore. Therefore, there is no revelation in those Epistles for you, but it is only for the Romans, Corinthians and so on. The revelation to you Pulayas of Travancore is through me.\textsuperscript{91}

By revolting against Christianity, he was attacking the existing structure of caste inequality within the Church. Often conversion has been considered as an immediate way for dalits to escape from the cruelties of caste oppression. Besides, it was also a search for a new identity for a race who were marginalized in all spheres of life. They tried to flee their past and risk a new and liberated future away from centuries of caste and class oppressions.\textsuperscript{92} However, within the Church, the life settings or the social status of dalits remained the same. Thus, Yohannan exposed the problem of caste oppression in the religious realm as an important area to be addressed. Most of the confrontations between dalits and upper castes in Travancore were on questions of admission to schools and entry into public space. Yohannan’s movement shows that entry into the religious realm was another important site.\textsuperscript{93}

Though Yohannan revolted against the Christian Church and the Bible, he extensively used the Christian teachings, symbols and imageries in preaching his new religion. The movement, though it provided a critique of the Scripture, it amply derived resources from it to make exhortations more convincing and appealing to the community of followers. He took his authority from God and made it locally relevant through a reinterpretation of Christian themes.\textsuperscript{94} During the first half of the twentieth century the PRDS remained beyond the pale of the dominant Churches but within the symbolic world of Christianity.\textsuperscript{95} Thus, the influence of Christian life-world remained in Yohannan, together with his antagonism against the Churches.
In his endeavour to search the identity and thereby to lift the status of dalits, Yohannan strived to construct a history of polluted castes in Kerala. In one of his verses, he lamented the level of alienation faced by dalits by describing the plight of their existence beyond the reach of historical narratives:

‘I behold the histories of many races
Every history in Kerala was searched for the story of my race
But there was none on the earth to write the story of my race’.

A people who lacked a sound knowledge of their past, he believed, could not imagine a better future. In order to have a programme for the present, one needed both to have recourse to a conceptualized past, and be oriented towards the future. Thus, he tried to build a history of oppressed castes in his effort to construct a new self for them. It was also a way to bring together the divided categories of polluted castes to the new religion preached by Yohannan.

Moreover, a detailed description of slave narratives formed an important part of the discourses of Yohannan. The problem of dalit slavery in Travancore occupied much of the thoughts of Yohannan and featured extensively in his discourses. He used to narrate mythical slave stories so passionately as to arouse the subjugated minds of the downtrodden and to motivate them with a new vision of life. One of the themes that dominated in the conventions of the PRDS right from the very beginning was the ‘subject of the descendants of slaves’, and the movement projected itself as a vehicle to bring together those who had been separated by the harsh practices of slavery.
Considering his remarkable efforts in mobilizing and empowering the untouchable castes, Yohannan was nominated to the Sri Mulam Praja Assembly, the popular legislative assembly of Travancore in 1921 and 1931 respectively. A notable feature of the interventions of Yohannan during the debates and discussions of the Assembly was that he constantly referred to different problems faced by dalits as a community. For example, in the Travancore legislature the representatives of various dalit communities could air only the grievances of their respective communities. But when Yohannan raised the issues of the lower castes it was observed that he spoke for all the lower castes order rather than for a particular caste. One of the reasons could have been that his movement included people from various lower castes who were slowly but surely being transformed into a ‘community’ through intermarriage and the bonding effects of PRDS membership. He was a strong advocate of entire dalit community and raised their various demands in the Assembly such as the right to land, free education and provision for noon-meals for their children. As a section of society who are mainly engaged in agricultural work, he wanted the extension on generous terms of agricultural credit for them. Thus he was keen to raise the varied concerns of lower castes in the legislature as the strong voice of the lowest strata of society.

Yohannan was the president of PRDS till his death in 1939. After his demise, his wife Janamma led PRDS for the next 46 years. During this period, the 1950’s witnessed a crucial change in the history of the organization. It was marked by the reformulation of the ideology and functioning of the movement. The advent in 1950 of an Indian state committed to positive discrimination led to a sudden change in the ideas and practices of the movement, which by then had come under the control
of Yohannan’s wife. Instead of Christian themes, Hindu mythology came to be adopted as the subject of discourse. Similarly, the name Yohannan disappeared and in its place Kumara Gurudevan came into being. This transformation ‘from Yohannan to Kumara Gurudevan’ created a divine and mythical image for him. This was followed by the deification of his mother and a similar saintly halo was subsequently accorded to his wife and sons. Consequently a total reconstitution of the rituals, sermons, prayers and dress codes of the movement was effected which culminated in the pronouncement of the movement as a sect of Hinduism.

To conclude, Yohannan’s movement highlighted the socio-religious foundation of the dalit emancipation process and it played a crucial role in the empowerment of the polluted castes. In fact, he fought against the problem of caste oppression in the religious realm, an important area of confrontation between the dalits and upper castes. In this struggle, he acted as a crusader of dalit unity and worked for the mobilisation of dalits as a single community and as an organized group. He was a visionary in constructing a dalit identity and infused a spirit of self esteem and dignity among the untouchable castes. As such, the contribution of Yohannan was remarkable in awakening the consciousness and identity of dalits during the first half of the twentieth century.

3.4.3 Pampady John Joseph and Travancore Cheramar Mahajana Sabha (TCMS) (1921)

Pampady John Jospeh (1887-1940) was born in a Pulaya family at Manjoor, north of Kottayam. When the family settled down at Pampady (near Kottayam), they were converted to Christianity under the influence of the activists of the Church Missionary Society there. He was fortunate to receive a fair deal of education at the mission school. He had a varied life
as a teacher in the mission school at Pampady, a military man during the first world war who travelled widely to different nations of the world as part of military service and a zealous missionary engaged in evangelical and other medical mission service. The turning point in the life of John Joseph was his association with Gnana Joshua—the Chief Accounts Officer of Travancore. Joshua had in his custody a rich collection of government records and from these Joseph learned that the Pulaya lineage was linked with the ancient Chera Dynasty of Kerala. The ancient name of Kerala was Cheranad and its first inhabitants were a tribe called Cheramar who were also known as Cherumar, Cherumakkal or Cherar. They were the rulers, landlords, agriculturalists, poets and educated people of the land. He even located a family called Aykara Yajmanans, then living in a village called Kunnathunadu in central Travancore, belonging to this lineage. Thus, the original inhabitants of the soil were the Cheram and the foreign invaders captured their country by conquering and making them slaves. The enslaved people began to be known as Pulayas. On this basis he even changed his caste’s name from Pulaya to Cheramar so that his people could be filled with pride about their ancient heritage.

John Joseph was very much aware of the need of an organization to mobilise his community in tune with its newly discovered identity and established the Travancore Cheramar Mahajana Sabha in 1921 in which both Hindu and Christian dalits enrolled as members. He and Parady Abraham Issac were elected as the general secretary and president of the Sabha respectively. His slogan was ‘to organize through lineage and not through religion’. A section of Pulayas joined the Cheramar Sabha attracted by this slogan. The movement established by John Joseph flourished in Thiruvalla and spread to other places like Changanacherry and Kottayam.
A good number of Pulayas of these places who were organized under SJPS also joined the new organization. It was a time when the internal feud between Ayyankali and Kesava Sastri had weakened the functioning of SJPS and this created a favourable atmosphere for the growth of Cheramar Sabha. It was the sign of an innovative organizational endeavour of the Sabha that it started a biweekly news magazine ‘Cheramar Doothan’ in 1923 published from Kottayam. In recognition of the meritorious and dedicated services rendered by John Joseph for the emancipation of the untouchable castes, he was nominated by the government to Sree Mulam Praja Sabha in 1931.

Meanwhile, dissension surfaced within the ranks of Cheramar Mahajana Sabha. John Joseph was anguished at the discriminatory behaviour of the savarna Christians towards the converts of the Christian Churches. He exhorted Christian converts to desist from joining Christian Churches and wanted to form a separate new Church for Cheramar Christians. Consequently, Cheramar Christian Sabha was formed in 1923 under the leadership of Asirvadam Asan. Subsequently, such Christian Churches were established in certain other places also. Solomon Markose, an old activist of the Church Missionary Society formed a Church known as Cheramar Daiva Sabha at Othara near Thiruvalla. Soon the Church established parishes at nearby places like Kumbanad, Adoor, Kollakkadavu, Mepral, Preyar etc. Thus the Christian and Hindu Cheramar were divided into two sects. Yet John Joseph was not anguished at this division as he counted the ‘blood bond’ of dalits as more important than the religious differences and was optimistic about their reunion in future.107

John Joseph tried to construct a history for the polluted castes based on their ancient heritage and glorious memories of their past. This was a
new attempt in constructing a dalit identity and in instilling self confidence and pride among the subaltern sections. He also reacted against the problem of caste oppression within the Christian Churches where the Christian converts were not treated equally. But in his endeavour to address this problem, the formation of independent Churches for Christian converts resulted in the separation of Christian sect from their Hindu counterparts. But he was optimistic in forging unity among the dalits and he viewed them always as a single community beyond its varied caste loyalties.

To conclude, the protest struggles of dalits in pre-independent Travancore initiated an era of great socio-political awakening among the dalits of the region and state. It was the result of the influence of different circumstances of the period. Of course, the motive behind the intervention of colonial power in Travancore was guided by colonial interest. At the same time, the colonial presence together with the benevolent phase of the Christian missionary involvement in Travancore, brought about signs of cracks on its casteist fortress. The emergence of social reform movements accelerated the pace of social change and created a conducive climate for the protest struggles of untouchable castes. They began to assert their identity and articulate their demands, raising the consciousness and self-pride of the downtrodden.

At the same time, it should be remembered that the protest struggles of dalits could not bring about any crucial or lasting changes among dalits or in the socio-political terrain of the region. Yohannan and John Joseph made brave attempts in establishing an identity and history for dalits, but failed to produce concrete results. Ayyankali’s interventions were brave and dynamic. However, his movement lost its momentum after his time. The early phase of dalit movement in Kerala just as the current phase,
neither did address the economic deprivations of the marginalized nor did act in a fitting manner to guarantee economic deliverance for them.

In spite of these limitations, the dalit struggles produced considerable positive results as far as the destiny of dalits was concerned. It asserted the long overdue social and political rights and provided the catalyst for future agitations. They were granted many rights like free access in public places, decent dressing, educational facilities, representation in structures of power etc. However, dalits as marginalized groups have to confront several challenges in enjoying these rights in their totality. They have to be further organized and mobilized for sustaining and enhancing these legitimate rights. It is a great task of the dalit social and political organisations that they should become the spearhead of the continuous mobilization and empowerment of the dalit community. In the present context, it calls for the revitalization of the functioning of these organisations as to become the herald of social integration and the vanguard of political mobilization of dalits which form the focus of study of dalit articulation, movements and politics during the post-independent period of the state.
Notes and References


29. Considering the geographical extent of this study, though the discussion is centred around the social reform movements in Travancore, it should be stated that Cochin and Malabar regions also witnessed many reform movements. A brief sketch is attempted about these movements.

**Christian Missionaries in Malabar in the 19th Century**: Basel German Evangelical Mission played an important role in Malabar by imparting western education to the people. Herman Gundert - the Basel missionary established a primary school at Kallayi in Calicut in 1848 and an English school at Tellicherry in 1856. The mission schools admitted all students without any caste distinctions and the Tiya community utilized the opportunities for education to a great extent.

**Yoga Kshema Sabha (1908)**: The Sabha was established at Aluva with social reform of the Namboothiris as its main objective. They adopted the famous slogan ‘make Namboothiriri a human being’. The main leaders of the organization were Kuroor Unni Namboothirippad, EMS Namboothirippad and V.T. Bhattachirippad.

**Krishnadiyasan (1877-1937)**: He is a social reformer belonging to the Pulaya community at Cochin. Since the right to education was denied to dalit castes, he learned Sanskrit and Music secretly. In his endeavour to teach Sanskrit to his own castemen, he came to be called Krishnadiyasan. It was in a unique way that he founded the Pulaya Mahajana Sabha at Cochin in 1913 on a ferry made up of small boats being tied together at Cochin lake, as public space was denied to them due to pollution rules. He denounced Hindu religion to show his animosity against it and converted to Christianity in 1918 accepting a new name as C.K. John.

**Pandit K.P. Karuppan (1885-1938)**: He was a great poet and social reformer who emerged from the downtrodden castes. Born at Cheranallor in Ernakulam district, he availed all the opportunities to become a learned man. As a poet, he used his writings for social reform. His poems like
‘Jathikkummi’ and ‘Udyana Virunnu’ denounced casteism and depicted its evils. He was associated with the mobilization of his own people, the Araya (Vala) community and established such organizations as ‘Vala Samudaya Parishkaran Sabha (1910) at Thevara in Ernakulam, ‘Kalyanadayini Sabha (1912) at Anappuzha and ‘Valaseva Samiti’ (1912) at Vaikom. At the same time, he also organized the Pulaya community at Cochin and was closely associated with Krishnadiyasan in establishing the Cochin Pulaya Mahajana Sabha in 1913.

**Sahodara Sangam (1917):** Sahodaran Ayyappan (1889-1968) established the Sahodara Sangam as a movement to challenge the evils of casteism. He was born at Cherai near Cochin, as a member of the Ezhava community and fought against the irrational social practices and superstitions among them. He encouraged ‘inter marriage’ and ‘inter dining’ between Ezhavas and Pulayas as a means to mitigate the evils of casteism. Both the philosophy of Narayana Guru and rationalist ideas influenced him.

**Atma Vidya Sangham (1920):** It was established as a social reform movement in Malabar particularly among the Tiyas under the leadership of Swami Vagbhathananda (1885-1939). He was born in a Tiya family near Tellicherry and proved himself to be a charismatic leader, a visionary and a man with exceptional oratorical skills. In his early days he was influenced by Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s Brahma Samaj. Vagbhathananda fought against the evils of casteism and other caste based social inequalities and played an important role in the social reform of North Malabar.

**Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931-1932):** The eradication of untouchability has been a programme of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee. Guruvayur Satyagraha was a struggle organized along this line. The agitators demanded the famous Guruvayur temple to get opened for all Hindus irrespective of caste distinctions. The main leaders of the satyagraha were K. Kelapan, A.K. Gopalan, Mannathu Padmanabhan and so on. Though the long-agitated
satyagraha failed to achieve its goal, the programme of eradication of untouchability got wider public attention and support.

**Paliyam Satyagraha (1947):** Paliyam satyagraha was organized as a struggle against untouchability at Paliyam in Chennamangalam. Paliath Achan was the minister of the Maharaja of Cochin and the avarna castes were denied entry along the road in front of his residence and temple. The hundred day long struggle was organized by the Communist party and other community organizations like SNDP Yogam, Pulaya Maha Sabha etc. Meantime, the temple entry proclamation of the Maharaja of Cochin was made on 20th December 1947 and thereby free access along the Paliyam road was established for all Hindus irrespective of any caste distinction.


42. The magazine was published in honour of Swamy Vivekananda. It was under the guidance of Swamy Vivekananda that Dr. Palpu decided to work with Sree Narayana Guru. (For details see Swapna H. Samel, *op.cit.*, pp.357-58).


44. For details see, P.K.Balakrishnan (ed.), *Narayana Guru (Mal)*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2000, p.166.


47. C.R Kesavan Vaidyar, *Sree Narayana Chinthakal*, NBS, Kottayam, 1972, p.73


51. Radhika C. Nair, *op.cit.*, p 34.


63. Joseph Mathew, *op.cit.* p.101. Ayyankali established a school at Vengannoor in 1905 which was the first educational institution founded in Kerala by downtrodden castes (for details, also see C. Abhimanyu *op.cit.* p.62.).

64. K. Saradamoni, *op.cit.*, p.149.


68. *Ibid*, p.153, This struggle which came to be known as the famous Kallumala (bead necklace) agitation took place in central Travancore around 1915-16. In fact, an agreement to settle the agitation was reached when Ayyankali and
other Pulaya leaders met Mannathu Krishnan Nair—the then Dewan of Travancore. The Dewan along with the support of certain enlightened leaders of Nair community, like Changanacherry Parameswaran Pillai, mediated for a compromise between the two parties as Nairs and Pulayas, (for details, also see Swapna H. Samel, *op.cit*, pp.395-396).


70. J. Prabhash, *op.cit.*, p.49.


74. K. Saradamoni, *op.cit.*, p.151. Thrikodithanam Kali Chothi Kurup was the editor of this monthly which was printed at Sudarsan Press, Changanacherry. The regular writers for the periodical were Chempumthara C. Pappan, M. Gopalan Nair and so on. (for details, also see Joseph Mathew, *op.cit.*, p.125).

75. J. Prabhash, *op.cit.*, p.51. Govinda Pillai though belonged to the savarna caste, was a journalist who understood the disabilities of the polluted castes. Hence he was nominated to Sree Mulam Praja Sabha as the representative of SJPS. Later he requested the government to nominate somebody else from the Pulaya community itself as its representative to the Praja Sabha and Ayyankali was nominated on 5th December 1911. (for details, also see, C. Abhimanyu, *op.cit.*, pp.95-100).

76. Ayyankali’s speeches in the Assembly on 27 February 1912 and on 11 and 18 March 1932 and the Dewan’s reply to them are given as Appendix V.


81. Among them, Charakan Solomon (Dalit Christian, 1913), Vallikkara Chothi (Pulaya, 1914), Kandan Kumaran (Paraya, 1915), Paradi Abraham Issac (Dalit Christian, 1916), Kurumban Daivathan (Pulaya, 1917), M.M. Ratna Swamy (Sambava, 1921), Poikayil Yohannan (Dalit Christian, 1921) and Pamady John Joseph (Dalit Christian, 1922) were a few notables who adorned the House. (For details see S. Girjadmajan, ‘Sree Ayyankali’, *Sree Ayyankali Smaranika* (Mal.), Sree Ayyankali Trust, Trivandrum, 1982, p. 12, quoted in J. Prabhash, *op.cit.*, p.51.


87. In Christian churches, ‘Upadeshi’ is a person who assists the pastor in his ministry and acts as catechist among the believers by teaching the Bible and imparting spiritual guidance to them.


90. J. Prabhash, *op.cit.*, pp.43-44.


94. Ibid, p.47.

95. Ibid, p.60.


100. Ibid, p.60.


