

Chapter IV

MUNROEVIAN IMPACT OVER THE NATIVE REFORMATION MOVEMENTS

The purpose this chapter is to see the depth and extent of the impact of the progressive measures enunciated by Col. Munroe in the space of the native state and its impact in the succeeding years of the state's reformation movement. Nine years of the stay of Col. Munroe produced far-reaching impact on the socio-economic and political outlook of this state. Colonialism and Protestantism moved side by side all over the world in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries. The state of Travancore was not an exception to this general paradigm. This missionary service all over the world was not much different from that of Travancore and Cochin. That is why the great son of India Swami Vivekananda acknowledged them through appropriate words; "*we need the missionaries of Christ*"²²⁸. The sincerity, integrity, commitment, etc all are the parameters of the missionary enterprises. That is why Swami

²²⁸ The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. VII, Yogeshwarnanda, Almora, 1948, p 439.

Vivekananda was in search of the ideal role models for the reconstruction of this nation.

The nineteenth century was the crucial century that saw the commencement of the progressive transformation process that brought about an enormous transformation in the socio-religious, politico-economic and cultural spheres. In the cultural scenario the British applied force through the modernization work of the intellectuals, educators and missionaries, Orientalist utilitarian or evangelical. The totality of this influence acted on the life and thoughts of the people in multifarious ways, compelling them to alter their archetype of life to the new state of affairs and thus effecting a range of social changes.

The social scenario of the present day Kerala before the colonial discourse was, according to the contemporary social milieu, too different and this land was well known to the world as a landscape of liberal sex. A large number of women didn't cover their breasts, there was no question of regular conjugal life amongst the Ezhava women and, on the other hand, Nair women

could take as many husbands as they pleased. Similarly the feudatory of Ambalapuzha issued a proclamation by which right was showered over men to exterminate those Nair women who were reluctant to materialize his sexual desires²²⁹. According to eighteenth century Dutch traveller Captain John Nieuhoff [1664 CE],_“*The womenfolk are generally without chastity here, Before the age seventeen or eighteenth, they lose their virginity. Men here are averse to marrying women who are virgins. Only those women, who are adroit in sexual arts, get good husbands or partners*”²³⁰. However a poor state like Travancore with out Messiah or Moses can produce a great paradigm shift in the closing decades of the nineteenth century through the vision of Col. Munroe and the labours of the Missionaries. His attempt to make the natives familiar with the western models through several discursive sites such as education/schools, law court,

²²⁹ P. K. Balakrishnan, *Jati Vyavasthithioun Kerala Charitrawoum*, NBS, Kottayam, 1983, pp 282, 274- 283.

²³⁰ Quoted from the article ‘Sex and the Mallu’, by Vinu Abraham, *The Week*, 28th November 2004, pp 12, 13.

Huzur courts, postal system, economic relations, Allopathic medicine, etc. No doubt all these altogether produced a few men of excellence and social commitments such as Chattambi Swamikal, Ayyan Kali, Sree Narayana Guru, Mannathu Padmanabhan, etc and they were instrumental to the social transition of the twentieth century. It is seen that all these reformers were opting to the European institutional as well as organizational framework along with Protestant rationality and ethical postulates for the attainment of their desired goals. That is why the fragile family relations of the prominent native Hindu *jatis* were made sturdy because of the men [who transformed as social reformers] who internalized western value systems through the new discursive sites brought forth through the sustained Munroeian impact. In short, a licentious Kerala society of the bygone/pre-colonial days was transformed in to the Victorian line moral codes.

Chattambi Swamikal

Chattambi Swami, pioneer amongst the Hindu reform leaders of Kerala had no formal education other than customary. He started his career as a vendor cum scribe. Later he got appointment in the Huzur Court. All through these jobs he was able to interact with western models. Above all the enhanced Christian Missionary activities and the large-scale conversion of lower strata of the Hindus to Christianity in order to enjoy the fruits of social justice and equality considerably transformed his vision and mission. All these western impact either negatively as well as positively enriched or incited his philosophical urge at best²³¹. His reform mentality and its institutionalization are no doubt western in character. Again his pro Hindu attitude and anti conversion mentality got institutional character due to the western influence. Being a Nair by birth he was more concerned about the ongoing degeneration process inherent to his community. Even though Christian missionary activities posed a

²³¹ Chattambi Swamikal, *Kristumatha Chedanam [Mal]*, [first published in 1889], Kurushetra Prakasan, Cochin, 1997, pp 3,4.

threat to the very existence of the Hindu community, the Christian role models considerably influenced him. The new insight acquired by him through the missionary challenge became a blessing in disguise to him. He used this opportunity to introduce reforms in the Nair community, both institutional as well as ideological. For the institutional side he blindly chose western role models. Therefore he wanted the major Hindu communities of Kerala like Nairs and Ezhavas to contribute their rightful responsibility in the social order²³².

He neither started any organization nor any *sanyasin* order. But the succeeding social reformers later institutionalized his social concern. His work was mainly confined to the social fabric of the Nair *jati*, for he understood that a societal initiation among them would serve as an encouragement to the non-*Nambootiri* [Brahmin] *jatis* and set the swiftness for the great social changes in the coming years²³³. The labour of Chattambi Swamikal significantly helped the Nair Service Society [NSS] and

²³² A. Sreedharamenon, Survey, op cit, 1970, pp 381, 382.

²³³ Ibid.

its organizer Mannathu Padmanabhan in their efforts to bring about the ethical rejuvenation of the Nair community by eradicating such social evils as untouchability, sub caste [*upa jati*] barriers and observance of unreasonable social practices like *talikettukalyanam*, *tirandukuli*, etc., that impoverished many middle class Nair households [*taravadus*]²³⁴.

As a Hindu *sanyasin* he revolutionized the existing concepts regarding the *sanyasinhood*. No doubt the Christian priest/missionary models considerably influenced him while he had decided on to the path of *sanyasa*. At a time when *sanyasa* [hermitage] was recognized with a life of total aloofness from worldly relationships and departure to the loneliness of Himalayas for contemplation, Chattambi Swamikal established by his own illustration that *sanyasa* need not unavoidably mean asceticism and the *sanyasin* [hermit] must be capable of doing enormous good by remaining in the centre of his own people and

²³⁴ A. Sreedharamenon, Cultural Heritage of Kerala, S. Viswanathan Pvt Ltd, Madras, 1996, pp 285, 286.

serving them to pick up their ethical and societal well being²³⁵. It was really a paradigm shift. No doubt in this 'U' turn the western missionary enterprises, which discharge social services as well as spiritual enrichment simultaneously to its considerably influenced him. Another remarkable impact on his outlook over the hermitage was the real replica of Protestantism that negated the Catholic concept of celibacy of the priests/hermits. Therefore he articulated the theory of spiritual deliverance achievable to the *grihastas* [wedded life] also²³⁶. No doubt, the Protestantism and the elements of western liberalism were brought to this land and familiarized to its ruling elite by Col. Munroe. Even though Swamikal was against the missionary enterprises of conversion he retaliated the same with the other side of the same coin. That is, for the renaissance of the various Hindu *jatis* he used the colonial/missionary paradigms with a Hindu flavor. He was able

²³⁵ P.Parameswaran, *Disaboodhathinte Darshanam*, Mathrubhoomi Publication, Calicut, 1999, pp 9 -13.

²³⁶ P.K.Gopaalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskariak Charitram*, Kerala Language Institute, Trivandrum 1991, pp 283, 284.

to introduce a new life and dynamism into organization of Hinduism at an instance when it was facing the danger of conversions from within its fold to the more energetic faiths that came from overseas, namely Christianity and Islam. His tricks accomplished a large measure of achievement in stemming the wave of such conversions from Hinduism, later this message charted out through the organization of *Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam* [SNDP] successfully. SNDP, the flagship organization of Ezhavas, who were the chief prey of Christian as well as Muslim conversion, under the influence of Chattambi Swamikal were able, to chalk out anti conversion impulses amongst the Ezhavas, was the indirect impact of Munroeian era through him²³⁷.

In short Chattambi Swamikal, as a product of traditional Hindu society, naturally was not in a position to imbibe the western protestant ideal of equality before god and law. "*Travancore was widely known from the earliest times as a stronghold of Hinduism,*

²³⁷ A. Sreedharamenon, Cultural Heritage, op cit, p 286.

where superstition prevailed to the highest extremity"²³⁸. The inequalities that prevailed in the Hindu society of Travancore were the part and parcel of the true living of its natives. Even though the traditional Hindu society of Travancore and Cochin shouldered the unequal relations that prevailed in the society as a divine appointment, a genuine, naturally born Travancorean cannot distinguish this incongruity without experiencing the fruits of equality and fraternity that was enjoyed by the European of those days. Col. Munroe through his colonial agents [Protestant Missionaries] placed such noble ideals of social justice, love, compassion, etc all the way through the colonial discursive sites. Thus Chattambi Swamikal through his interaction with the new colonial discursive sites, particularly of governmental apparatus²³⁹, received an opportunity to differentiate the two distinctive social systems: Western Protestant and the native Hindu. No doubt, we cannot expect such a revolutionary social ideology from a person

²³⁸ A. Shungoonny Menon, op cit, p 282.

²³⁹ Chattambi Swamikal started his career as a scribe. The profession of scribes emerged here because of the commercialization of land through the enactment of Col. Munroe.

belonging to a place where Hinduism centered on rotten *smriti* laws. That is why the researcher is assuming that the pioneer of social transformation of Kerala, Chattampi Swamikal, to a certain extent subjected to the ideology of colonial modernity²⁴⁰.

Sree Narayana Guru

Another social reformer of the twentieth century Kerala was Sree Narayana Guru. He was known for his organizational mechanism and utilitarian approach. The Hindu community generally lived here as a loose confederation of *jatis*. Above all they were governed with the most discriminative laws, *smritis* that was framed in the primitive/distant past, stands as stumbling stone in their total movement towards modernity. Narayana Guru, the Messiah of native Hindu consciousness particularly of Ezhava community, imbibed the norms of

²⁴⁰ "Colonialism also a psychological state rooted in earlier forms of social consciousness in both the colonizers and colonized. some of the most impressive colonial systems have been built by societies ideologically committed to open political systems, liberalism and intellectual pluralism". See the discussions regarding the diffusion of colonial modernity in Ashis Nandy's *Intimate Enemy*, op cit, pp 2 ff.

modernity and rational living from the Protestant Missionary enterprises²⁴¹. He used the ideological space of Hindu immediately from the Chattambi Swamikal and organizational as well as the [Protestant] ideology of individual freedom from the missionary enterprises of the contemporary Kerala. His ideological space, no doubt, really begins from the *Adi Sankara* [Sree Sankaracharya of Kalady, the propounder of Monism] tradition²⁴². The ideology of individual freedom became the foundation of all western economic as well as social progress of the modern period. That is why great intellectual personality Romain Rolland [1866 – 1944 CE], the Nobel laureate, portrayed his endeavour as, “*He preached if one may say so, a Jnana of action, a great intellectual religion, having a lively sense of the*

²⁴¹ “If the Missionary enterprises were not interfered in the social scenario of this land we the subalterns will never be treated by the elites including the rulers of this land as human beings”, See the discussions in the C. Kesavan’s [Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin State during 1951-52] *Jeevita Samaram*, Autobiography, [Mal], first published 1968, DC Books, Kottayam, 2004, pp 95

²⁴² A. R. Sreenivasan, *Yogeswaranaya Sree Narayana Guru*, [Mal] Kurukshetra Prakashan, Ernakulam, 1997, p 9.

*people and their social needs. It greatly contributed to the uplifting of the oppressed classes in southern India and its activities have in a measure been allied to those of Gandhi*²⁴³. Nevertheless he never forgot to highlight the Hindu preface to his noble enterprise. He called his fellow beings to strengthen themselves through the space of 'education, organization and industries'. No doubt all the above three spaces chosen by him were brought/familiarized to this land and people by Col. Munroe. He also convinced the Hindus, particularly of the Ezhava *jatis* to take Western Education, brought to this land through the instigation of Col. Munroe, and industrial as well as commercial pursuits so that they could obtain material prosperity too and to better their status in the societal surroundings.

His main concern was individual [man] and society. He believed in the noble principle of 'religion is for man and man is not for religion'. His main concern was man, not god or creed. When his disciples had raised some doubts about the rituals

²⁴³ Quoted from A. Sreedharamenon, Cultural, op cit, p 286.

regarding the last rites he got angry and boldly replied that the corpus of the deceased must be used as droppings for the coconut trees²⁴⁴. That is why he advised his disciples that “*One jati [caste], one religion, one God for man: and whatever be one’s religion, it is enough if the individual becomes good*”²⁴⁵. No doubt, it was an Indian reflection of the western worldview brought forth to this land by the Munroeian endeavour. In a nutshell, according to him the essential purpose of all religious conviction was to lift up the ethical temperament of the human being and for this reason no creed or *jati*/caste was substandard to any other. In order to work out his ideological pretext he used or introduced the western popular institution of church into Indian morphology. His flagship organization SNDP was not much different from the hierarchical structure of Christian church system. Instead of parish in the church system he used the

²⁴⁴ Joseph Edamaruku, *Nireeswaranaya Narayana Guru*, [mal.] Indian Atheist Publishers, New Delhi, 1999, pp 76, 77.

²⁴⁵ Famous and popular saying of Sree Narayana Guru. It became the foundation of his teaching as well as his organization, SNDP.

village level fellowship of Ezhava families. Several such fellowships altogether constitutes the body politic of the SNDP. Above all in order to improve the religious as well as *dharmic* standards amongst various Hindu *jatis* he started two institutions similar to that of the Christian seminaries at Varkala [Siva Giri Mut] and Advaita Ashram [at Alwaye]. Similarly he used the Protestant method of sermons from the pulpit for the revitalization of the old Hindu *dharma*. For this end he used/appointed regular preachers like that of the protestant catechist to enrich religious standards of the Hindus. Karuva Krishnanassaan was the first catechist, appointed by Sree Narayana Guru for the fulfillment of the said purpose²⁴⁶.

Even though Narayana Guru opted the path of a Hindu ascetic *sanysin* [hermit] he never overlooked the social significance of the modernity and family life of the individuals.

²⁴⁶ Editorial by Kumaran Assan, the great Malayalam poet and contemporary of Sree Narayana Guru, *Vivekodayam* Monthly, [the mouth piece of the SNDP *Yogam*] 1083 *Tulam* [ME], October/November 1907 CE, Republished by *Kumaranassan Smaraka* Committee, Thonnackal, 1982, pp 288, 289.

“He yet descended to the level of his fellow men in, an attitude of their misery Temples, modern education and Sanskrit culture formed integral parts of Guru’s method of their root and branch reform”²⁴⁷. He started his flagship organization SNDP Yogam on 15th of May 1903 [CE] and before his attainment of *Samadhi* [death] on 20th September 1928 [CE] some educational institutions started by following the line of Protestant Missionaries that Col. Munroe earlier initiated it. The work of the Protestant Missionaries in the education scenario of Kerala for about a hundred years since the days of Col. Munroe [1812 CE] to the emergence of Narayana Guru could produce 11.14 percent literacy only in Travancore and Cochin states till 1901 [CE]. On the other hand, after twenty-five years of Gurus works in the society, the formal education amongst the Ezhava *jati* alone bore a good result and that is why in 1931 [CE] the literacy rate of this region got an additional 10.2 percent increase and reached

²⁴⁷ Swami Ranganathananada, *Eternal Values for A Changing Society*, Vol. II, 4th Edn. Trivandrum, 1985, p 194.

at 21.34 percent²⁴⁸. Above all, the main influential factor in the reform movement of Narayana Guru was Dr. Palppu, the first Allopathic doctor from the Ezhava *jati*. Dr. Palppu, no doubt, was a colonial/Missionary product, because he became lucky of the Munroeian educational policy²⁴⁹.

Narayana Guru functioned much different from the traditional Hindu seers [*sanyasins*]. This functional deviation reflected in him was no doubt due to the impact of the newly formed colonial discourse. That is why he was able to see all walks of life alike. Therefore his influence was not confined to any particular section or *jati* but to all, particularly of other Hindu *jatis*. “*He had many Nairs among his sanyasi disciples*”²⁵⁰. In his wisdom he called attention to the very important need for

²⁴⁸ Census of India – Kerala & K. Jayaprasad, Social Reform Movements and the Integration of the Hindu Society in Kerala, Kerala and Freedom Movement, Bharateeya Vichara Kendram, Trivandrum, 2000, p 173.

²⁴⁹ “No doubt, the reign of Munroe were the golden age of the weaker *jatis*. The education policy that introduced by him helped us to prosper well.” C. Kesavan, op cit, 102.

²⁵⁰ Nairs are superior *jati* to that of Narayana Guru’s *jati*, Ezhava. See, A. Sreedharamenon, Cultural, op cit, p 288.

forbearance and goodwill among the members of all *jatis*. It was no doubt, a native edition of western religious toleration concept that brought forth through Col. Munroe. The traditional social psyche was not sufficiently competent to bear the idea of toleration. Here Narayana Guru's shift from the traditional framework to radiant modernity was no doubt, the impact of 'Munroeianism'. Before concluding let us quote Narayana Guru, "*The greatest knowledge man can learn is the science of living with other men. There is no other things so demanding and requires so much of wisdom, so much practice, as how to live collectively. There is no art that is better than the art of being at peace with one's neighbors*"²⁵¹. Surely this message contains the very practical aspect of western protestant transaction and ethical postulates that were alien to the natives during the period, i.e, "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute*

²⁵¹ A. R. Sreenivasan, op cit, p65

you; and Love one another, just as I love you"²⁵². Thus here Narayana Guru turned as Moses to the sinking Hindu society of Kerala in general and Messiah to particularly of the Ezhava *jatis*.

Ayyankali the Pioneer of the *Dalit* Resurgence

He belongs to Pulaya *jati*, the conventional agricultural labour community of Travancore and Cochin. Ayyankali, with no formal education, who drew inspiration for his historic task of bringing the *dalits*, particularly of Pulayas, into the main stream of socio-economic and political life of the Hindu society, from the path of reform opened in Travancore by Col. Munroe. In the days of Ayyankali the subaltern *jatis* of Kerala in general and particularly in the princely states of Travancore and Cochin were subjected to various kinds of socio-political as well as economic disabilities. Those converted subaltern *jatis* to the Christianity were exempted from certain conventional socio-economic disabilities and enjoyed some rights including formal education,

²⁵² New Testament, Mathew, Chapter 5, Aphorism 44 & John, Chapter 15, Aphorism 12.

the right of using of upper garments, etc²⁵³. In this peculiar obstinate social structure of Kerala the denial of social justice was never properly accounted before the colonial phase. The colonial impact over Ayyankali's movement was very clear from his modus operandi and response to the social questions²⁵⁴. The existing social sanction forbade *dalits* from wearing white clothes, using upper garments, wearing head gears, using gold or silver ornaments, living in permanent houses [only allowed to live in huts], etc. The missionary activities and the conversion of a sizable number of Pulaya *jatis* to Christianity and the enjoyment of 'forbidden fruits' by the converts from his *jati* blossomed a new wisdom in him. That is why he resorted to the path of breaking the social barriers imposed over the primary producing *jatis* by the customary laws of the land and challenging the discriminatory social order of the day. He had received moral and

²⁵³ A. Sreedharamenon, Cultural, op cit, p 288.

²⁵⁴ Velayudhan Panikkassery, *Ayyankali Muthal V. T. Varae*, Current Books, Kottayam, 2003, pp 9-27.

material support from the English educated *savarnaa jatis* [upper castes] and Christian Protestant Missionaries²⁵⁵.

Ayyankali, for his fight against social injustices, opted the western model of agitation, i.e. resorted to the path of organized violence as it was experimented since the days of French Revolution. For this purpose he started an exclusive subaltern [Pulaya] *jati* organization in 1905 [CE] known as *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam*. The organization founded by him was not different from the Protestant Church organizations of the state. It was because of his agitation as well as constructive approach he was able to regain the lost social rights in the deluge of time within a short span of time. The atmosphere cultivated by Col. Munroe much helped him to gain the lost rights without any bloodshed. In 1905 [CE] the number of Pulaya *jati* students [all were Christian converts] in the schools of Travancore was only 2007 and it further enhanced due to the committed work and

²⁵⁵ P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram*, State Language Institute, Trivandrum, 1991, p 512.

social awareness programme of Ayyankali through his flagship organization *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam*, in 1918 [CE] it was further enhanced to 17753²⁵⁶. Out of his agitations/efforts he was able to secure for his *jati* children the right to join in the government run schools or the schools run out of the financial aid of the state exchequer. Even though his attempt to start own schools for the education of his own *jati* children was defeated to a certain extent by the organized *savarna jati/meljati* [upper caste] muscle power, he was able to attain the desired end through the government ordinance/proclamation [*vilambaram*] of 1914 [CE] by which the doors of the government run schools or the schools run out of the financial aid of the government were technically opened. But to reach at the appropriate destination he had “miles to go before sleeping”.

The Pulaya *jatis* of Kerala were the traditional agricultural labours/primary producers of the state. But they were deprived of all civil rights including the use of public places, roads,

²⁵⁶ *Mitavadhi Masika*, Kozhikode, 1919 March, p 109.

educational institutions, etc. As response to historical injustice he decided to fight against this social anomaly through an organized attempt of abstaining from the agricultural activities of the state in total. The proposed agitation caused far reaching economic implications over the state economy. This agricultural labour strike started in June 1913 [CE] and ended in May 1914 [CE]. That was the first labour strike in this state and it happened four years before the outbreak of the historic October Revolution of Russia, indicates its glittering nature also. For a year the entire agriculture activities of the state were frozen. The landholding *savarna jatis/meljatis* were forced to recognize the demands of the primary producers/*dalit jatis*. Agitation turned down as victorious one and the *savarna/meljati* [upper caste] mentality of Kerala came down from its dental towers or vanity and they recognized several social realities that were ushered in to this land by Col. Munroe some hundred-years back²⁵⁷. Before concluding this thumbnail sketch of Ayyankali, the researcher is

²⁵⁷ Velayudhan Panikkassery, *Ayyankali*, op cit, pp 19-21.

desirous to see how it happened and let us quote P. K. Gopalakrishnan, "*Kerala's Renaissance was the product of socio-religious reform movements since the days of Col. Munroe and its only spade work were done by the Protestant Missionaries. If one was the shining of the planet Venus, surely the other was the real dawn*"²⁵⁸. On account of his meritorious social [*jati*] service he was nominated to Sree Moolam Praja Sabha [legislative assembly of Travancore]. This gave him a social acceptability and the respectable position and he had used this opportunity to carry on his fight for social equality and justice with a new dimension that is to move in the path of social reform by utilizing the goodwill and assistance of the leaders of other communities available in the new environment. The remarkable goal for the subalterns that he gained before his death in 1941 was the 'Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936'. "*The Temple Entry*



²⁵⁸ P. K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika*, op cit, p 513.

Proclamation of 1936 thrilled the heart of this gallant fighter
²⁵⁹.

Mannathu Padmanabhan

Mannathu Padmanabhan, who pioneered the Nair *jati* reform movement, was a remarkable hero who differed from the conventional social reformers of the land. Most of the earlier Hindu reformists were seers/*sanyasins*. Usually the chance of a *grihasrami* or a man of wedded life taking over the stewardship of socio-religious reform movements was quite absent or rare in the past. Almost all such earlier Hindu social as well as religious movements functioned under the umbrella of spiritual hierarchical pretext. It was because of the reason that the Hindu mind-set through generations is conditioned by spiritualism and this aspect was well identified by Swami Vivekananda. He believed or realized universal character of each cultural group. He said that each nation has its strange technique of work. Some of them discharge their techniques through politics, some

²⁵⁹ A. Sreedharamenon, Survey, op cit, 1970, p 387

through social reforms, some through other lines. Similarly to the people of India [Hindus], religion is the only ground along which they can move. In short the Hindus can comprehend even politics when it is given through religion and in the same way sociology must come through religion and everything must come through religion²⁶⁰. Mannathu Padmanabhan was an exception to the general Hindu paradigm pointed above. Being a non-seer/ non-*sanyasin* he had under taken the task of Nair *jati* social problems as a challenge²⁶¹. One outstanding and influential Hindu *jati* organization Nair Service Society [NSS] is the result of the social response of Mannathu Padmanabhan towards the Nair *jati* problems and in short one can easily say it was his handiwork also. He received his formal education from the colonial educational models [the formal education system of the state of Travancore was started by Col. Munroe]. Due to this reason the colonial or Protestant Missionary presentations considerably influenced his ideal of social models. That is why

²⁶⁰ Swami Vivekananda, Selections, op cit, p 297.

²⁶¹ P. K. Balakrishnan, *Jati Vyavasthitium*, op cit, p281.

the traditional or conventional Nair social practices were turned indigestive to him. He tried to evaluate Nair socio-economic practices according the western yard sticks or standards and found that the Nair society of the day was on the brim of a collapse; therefore he arrived at a conclusion that Nair *jatis* deserves proper and timely treatment or therapy. Mannathu Padmanabhan was too pragmatic and functioned as a product of western utilitarianism and liberal thoughts²⁶². The treatment that he suggested was not the traditional Hindu model spiritualism but the new one brought forward by the colonial masters in this land some hundred years back [ushered in from the days of Col. Munroe]. His later years' approach towards the state's socio-economic and political problems sufficiently justifies this view. *"The impressive Savarna Jatha which was organized in 1924 from Vaikom to Trivandrum, with a view to creating a sense of solidarity among the Hindus and preparing the climate for*

²⁶² Mannathu Padmanabhan, *Ente Jivita Samarangal* [Autobiography], NSS Press, Changanacherry, 1957, passim.

'temple entry' was led by him. this resulted in the formation of Hindu Mahamandalam with the object of bringing the Nairs, the Ezhavas and other sections of the Hindu community under a common banner"²⁶³.By imbibing or internalizing the western liberal ideologies he was able to bring forth a silent and bloodless revolution in the Hindu society of Kerala in general and the Nair *jati* in particular.

Nair social formation of Kerala, due to multiple groups of *upajatis* [subdivisions inside the *jati* framework] lacked a hierarchical structure. As a result the Nairs remained as a disunited [with multiplicity of *upajatis* or sub castes] section in the society. Above all there was no supreme spiritual or temporal authority to steer or regulate them at a right direction and right

²⁶³ The Hindu *jatis* down from the Ezhava *jati* were not permitted to enter and worship in the temples of Kerala. He fought against this anomaly. As a part of his fight against this social anomaly he conducted the *Savarna Jatha* [procession of upper castes]. As a result through the Proclamation of 12th November 1936 the subaltern *jatis* of Kerala got the right to enter and worship into the temples of the State of Travancore See, A. Sreedharamenon, Cultural, op cit, p 289 and A Sreedharamenon, Survey, op cit, pp 385,386.

manner. The ruling ideologies of each and every Nair households [tharavadus] were the age-old and worn-out social customs and precedence²⁶⁴. On the other hand, quite a lot of other *jatis*/socio-religious groups, much inferior to the Nair *jati* in terms of prevailing social [*jati*] and economic parameters prospered well under their able religious/*jati* leaderships. Lack of proper leaderships and guidance amongst the Nairs caused a general fall to the community in the socio-economic scenario during the colonial phase. Above all, the new colonial formal education became popular in the nineteenth century. Missionaries, who had not kept the *jati* discriminations in their school system, ran the schools. It caused difficulties to the orthodox minded Nairs of this state. So they considerably abstained from the new-fangled colonial model education arrangement. All these developments in the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries accelerated decline of Nair relevance in the newly emerged socio-

²⁶⁴ P. K. Balakrishnan, op cit, passim.

economic order²⁶⁵. In the educational scenario the unorganized upper caste [*savarna*] landed gentries [*janmies*] in general and particularly of the Nair aristocracies were marginalized. The payback of the new official educational system ushered in the state under the Munroeian regime was appropriately utilized by “*the middle class consisted of lower strata of the upper caste Hindus and upper strata of the lower caste Hindus along with the Christian and Muslim communities*”²⁶⁶, in the succeeding years. Even though, the Nairs, one of the major literate communities of Kerala during the pre-modern/pre-colonial period were literarily marginalized in the colonial period particularly due to the state designed formal education system²⁶⁷. In short during the daybreak of the last century the Hindu social formations in general and the Nair social formation in particular was in a circumstance/critical juncture of societal collapse/breakdown.

²⁶⁵ C. I. Issac, The Press as a Site of Colonial Discourse, Journal of South Indian History, Calicut University, Calicut, September 2003, pp 31 – 47.

²⁶⁶ P.K. Michael Tharakan, Socio-Economic Factors in Educational Development, Economic and Political Weekly, 10 November 1984.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

The sub division of Nairs in to a hierarchy of *upajatis* [sub-castes] was based on unequal socio-economic relations that caused repercussive consequences to the community in a broad-spectrum. The intrinsic decomposition of their social mechanism, reflected in their reckless spending/extravagance and the practice of the *marumakkathayam* system of inheritance together, resulted in the progressive turn down/decay of the Nair landed aristocracy [*janmies*].

His first attack was against the age-old and conventional inheritance system based on matrilineal [*marumakkathayam*] form of succession practiced by the Nair *jatis* all over through generations. He found that the ideal form of succession or inheritance system is western or that practiced by the native Christians under the western influence which guarantees sustainability to the household [*tharavadu*] wealth and therefore he stood for the Christian model of patrilineal [*makkathayam*] form of succession/inheritance for the Nair *jati* exclusive. In addition to it several social practices that existed amongst the

Nair *jatis* that were causing drain away of the traditional wealth came to his notice. The Nair mindset of the days everywhere was feudal in character. That is why Nair *jatis* even during the early decades of the last century were reluctant to do any manual work or any trade or business. In short the Nair *jatis* not only let go their traditional wealth and property but also refrain from generating wealth through the new capital producing colonial models of trade or business. At the same time they continued in the pre-colonial practice of extracting the surplus of the primary producers who were destined to remain as serfs as well as untouchables for meeting their day-to-day expenses. Above all the creativity of Nair *jatis* declined on account of their intoxicating habits²⁶⁸. Once, their contribution to the literary development of this land was tremendous. Withering of family relations was the general characteristic of the Nair *jatis* of the day and it continued as a curse through generations²⁶⁹. Due to

²⁶⁸ P. K. Balakrishnan, *op cit*, p 317.

²⁶⁹ Report of The *Marumakkathayam* Committee, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1908, Travancore Enclosure B. p VII and LXIV.

the colonial intervention in this land since days of Col. Munroe the land relations and labour relations were subjected to drastic changes. On account of this change, the socio-economic security of the Nair households [*tharavadus*] was under intimidation. Therefore remodeling of the social relations within the *jati* framework of the Nair *jati* relations became an indispensable condition in the beginning of the last century. So all the socio-economic questions of the Nair *jatis* to be answered were properly responded by Mannathu Padmanabhan, a philanthropist, over and above a lover of his own *jati* fellows, resulted in the historic turn – birth of Nair Service Society [NSS] and sweeping social reforms - ended in the modernization of Nair *jatis*.

Modernity, a colonial construct, gave new insights to the Nair leadership and it impelled socio-religious transformation. Above all, Mannathu Padmanabhan visualized the urge from within the Nair community of the state for modernity and progress through the organizational structure of NSS. The newborn Nair *jati* organization, NSS, at its grassroots level

functioned like a Christian parish as designed by the colonial missionary bands of Kerala. Like Christian missionary enterprises the NSS also started charitable as well as educational activities. Mannathu Padmanabhan identified the importance of the colonial education in his effort of modernizing his *jati* fellows. He and his associates under the banner of NSS were modeling themselves on the lines of missionaries. As a part of it Nair society was restructured under the *karayogams* similar to that of Christian parish and parish relations introduced in the *karayogams* also. They started several educational institutions by following the model of missionaries. These instructive institutions promoted the knowledge of modern faculties of knowledge [western] system and thereby strengthened the process of acquiring social mobility and progress amongst the Nairs²⁷⁰.

²⁷⁰ P. K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika*, op cit, p 519.

Pandit Karuppan and Others

Before concluding this chapter it is better to see other leaders and organizations who laboured for the modernization of the society in general and particularly of their respective *jatis* of Kerala. One of the pioneers was K. P. Karuppan alias Pandit Karuppan of the Princely State of Cochin, who belongs to the Vaala *jati*, an inland fishermen community. The Vaala *jati*'s position in the *jati* hierarchy of Kerala was at the bottom of the society that is why these poor people of the Vaala *jati* were destined to stomach all the curses of the *jati* system of Kerala. He followed the similar steps of Mannathu Padmanabhan, Sree Narayana Guru, etc for attaining his social ends. He was born at Cheranelloor near Cochin on 12th *Edavom* 1060 of Malayalam Era/*Kollavarsham* [1885 CE] He received his basic/formal education as permitted by the social and *jati* precedence and conventions from the nearby Government/*Sirkar* school. By dint of his hard working he acquired basic knowledge in Sanskrit and thereafter he received higher education from the

Kodungalloor Kovilakom, a renowned seat of Sanskrit learning run by *Nambootiri* royal family of Cochin State²⁷¹. Later in 1932 he was appointed as a lecturer in Sanskrit in the Maharajas College Ernakulam.

As social reformer like his predecessors he built organization to fight against the discriminatory practices that prevailed in the social order of the day. He used western parameters to understand the society and suggest alternative models. As a result he took initiation for the formation of the three organizations of the depressed classes/*dalit jatis*. In the year 1912 [CE] under his patronage *Kalyanidaya Sabha* at Anaappuzha, *Vaala Seva Samiti* at Vaikom and *Samudaya Sevini Sabha* at Paravoor came into existence. All these organizations aimed at the upliftment of the subaltern *jatis*. He imbibed the spirit of reform from the path opened by Col. Munroe about a hundred years back²⁷². His modus operandi was a bit different

²⁷¹ S. K. Vasanthan, *Kerala Charitra Nigandu*, NBS, Kottayam, 1983, p 99.

²⁷² Velayudhan Panikkassery, *Ayyankali Muthal*, op cit, p 39.

from that of the other social reformers of the then Kerala. He used his powerful pen in addition to the organizational framework²⁷³.

In short, the researcher can very strongly substantiate that almost all socio-economic and political reform movements of Kerala till the date is too much indebted to the person Col. Munroe. When a state and its people shrouded with discriminatory social practices under the force of religion only a philanthropist mind like Col. Munroe can extend the [helping] hands of modernity and change. Really Munroe represented the East India Company in the princely state. He was supposed to keep the interest of the Company that is to ensure the control and revenue but he turned as the torchbearer of the generations to come²⁷⁴.

²⁷³ Ibid, p, 45.

²⁷⁴ C. Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, op cit, pp 95-102