CHAPTER – I

SAHODHARAN AYYAPPAN AND THE SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF KERALA

A study of the socio-political background of Kerala is necessary to assess the role of Sahodharan Ayyappan towards the socio-political resurrection of Kerala. The people in ancient South India were accustomed to the occupational division of the society and were not familiar with the traditional fourfold classification of society or chatur varna system. On the other hand, geography had its decisive impact upon the society. Based on the fertility of the soil and its geographical location, the land was divided into five natural divisions, viz., kurinci (hilly region), palai, (barren region), marutham (cultivable land), mullai (pastoral lands) and neythal (coastal area). The people who inhabited in these regions were Vettuvar (hunters), Maravar (warriors), Ulavar (peasants), Ayar (cowherds), and Paradavar (fishermen) respectively.¹

Within these settlements there were corporate companionships or brotherhoods of elementary families comprising the members of the clans who regarded one another as relative of the common lineage and the kins within the elementary family who were known as okkal, kelir, urror or tamar in the sense that they were affinal relatives.² Free social movement existed among the different groups. The ancient Dravidians were regarded as the direct ancestors of the Tamils, Telugu, Malayalam, Canarese and other tribes who occupied the greater part of South India.³ The earliest Dravidians were not primitive tribals, but settled people who tilled the ground and raised crops of various kinds. They were agriculturists by nature.⁴

It was a harmonious classification for the effective functioning of the society. No distinction was made on the basis of birth and everything was decided on merit, ability and personality. Untouchability, unapproachability, unseeability and similar customs were
unknown to the ancient Tamils. Caste distinctions, disputes and religious dissensions were unheard of.

The Aryans who were familiar with the conventional system of *Varnashrama* dharma in North India found an entirely different social set up during their migration to South India. Upto their migration the people of South India appeared contented with their respective professions. They never thought of their superior or inferior status. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote: "The Brahmins did not succeed in arranging the people of Southern India as members of the four *varnas* as; they did in Northern India. It only led to the confusion of caste and the prevalence of social jealousies that have characterised the life of South India for a thousand five hundred years". It injected the distinctions based on upper and lower status into the body politic of the South Indian society. It might have naturally developed a doubt in the minds of all the professional groups which led to regular confrontations. The Brahmins who formed the microscopic minority emerged as the greatest arbitrators and peace makers and extended their counsel to the reigning kings too. By virtue of their spiritual authority, they commanded considerable influence in the society.

Caste system which became very prominent in North India came to the Dravidian South comparatively later, for the earliest Tamil literature shows a society divided in to tribal groups with little sense of precedence of one over the other. Succeeding centuries saw the gradual hardening of class, until south Indian Brahmins became even stricter in their ritual observances and South Indian untouchables even more debased than those of the North. Early Tamil literature gives no evidence of caste, but the growth of Aryan influence and the development of a more complex political and economic structure produced a system in some ways more rigid than that of the North. There were no unanimous opinions among historians about the origin of caste system in Kerala.
During the Sangam age a change in anybody’s class status could be possible. A Kurava lived in the kurinji region would become an Idaya when he reaches the mullai region and became a Vellala or Uzhava when he went to marudam and accept the occupation of that respective regions. The sharp division of population into castes and communities were conspicuous by its absence. Dignity of labour was recognized everywhere and no person were looked upon as inferior in social status on account of his occupation. Such communities the Panas, the Kuravas, the Parayas, the Vetas, and others held in high esteem by the kings and nobles. The Panas were superior to the Brahmins of the day in their intellectual and cultural accomplishments. The condition, however, changed in the later Sangam age when the division of society into castes on the basis of occupation came into vogue. The four fold division of the Hindu Community was not prevalent in Kerala. The institution of caste is the product of centuries of evolution. Most of the historians are of the opinion that Brahmin migration brought caste system in to Kerala, which began even before the commencement of Christian era. According to William Logan, the celebrated author of Malabar Manual, the beginning of a well established, clear-cut caste system may be traced to the 8th century A.D. when Nambutiri Brahmins finally came to power. The caste system had its origin in Kerala by about the 8th century A.D. when the influx of Brahmin immigrants reached its peak. William Logan also opined that the social and economic changes brought about the Chola-Chera war of the 11th century A.D. strengthened the basis of the caste system. The Nambutiri Brahmins who were at the apex of caste hierarchy attained a position of primacy in social and religious matters. With the overwhelming domination of Brahminical system, Jainism and Buddhism both advocated a casteless society practically disappeared and Hindu society came to be organized on the basis of castes and sub-castes. Keralolpathi also refers that caste system with the principle of treating each group following a particular occupation as a separate caste and prohibiting intermarriages and inter dining between them, was introduced in Kerala by the Aryan immigrants.
Tradition ascribes the creation of caste to Parasurama, the leader of the first Brahmin colony. The scheme attributed to him consists of sixty four divisions evolved by permutations and combinations. T.K.Velu Pillai, in his *Travancore State Manual*, states that, the early Aryan society introduced the four fold division of caste in to Kerala. The immigrants claimed superiority in caste and refused to recognise any class of inhabitants of the land as Brahmins. The ruling families were however, recognised as Kshatriyas, The bulk of the people were stigmatized as Sudras, while a few were recognised as Vaisyas. In course of time, the newcomers of the Nambutiri class adopted many of the customs and usages of the older inhabitants and imposed on them some of their own. Socially, a distinction was maintained between the different sections of population. The Nambutiris being the priestly order wielded great influence over the others. Society was divided into groups according to the nature of the occupation followed by the members.

The consensus of opinion among scholars is that the process of Brahminisation of South India which began about 4th century BC and reached a decisive stage by the later Sangam age, brought caste diversity in to Kerala. We have the evidence of the Sangam works that Aryan influences were at work in Kerala Society in the early centuries of Christian era. Even some of the Sangam poets were Brahmins and were generously patronised by Chera kings. Later Sangam works shows the symbols of highly ritualistic and orthodox Nambudiri domination and caste system in making. The social framework of Kerala began to collapse during this period. In the 8th century AD the Aryanisation of Kerala reached its climax. The caste system was foisted on a casteless society by the Aryan immigrants with extra ordinary missionary zeal in spreading the Aryan ideology based on the primacy of *chaturvarna*. It was impossible for the Brahmin missionaries to achieve their aim completely without destroying Buddhism and Jainism, the most flourishing popular religions at the time. Thus they needed the support of *naduvazhis* and business lords. As a first step they propagated that which ever be the tribe, all the *naduvazhis* belonged to the same caste, and all business men were another
caste, and the rest were the lower castes than the earlier two. There is reference in Tolkappiyam which mentioned arachajaati and vanika jaati – the ruling caste and trading caste respectively. The princely and merchant classes who were thus brought within the sphere of Aryan influence were made to believe that they constituted two superior castes, the former ruling caste (Kshatriyas), and the later the trading caste (Vaisyas). Eventually these castes began to look upon their kinsmen who followed other occupations as inferior to them in the social scale. The Brahmins also succeeded in creating in the minds of these two castes a feeling that the former were superior to the latter and as such deserved the allegiance of all classes of people. Even in the later Sangam age the protection of the Brahmins was seem to have been held up a great virtue of the rulers. At the same time the toiling classes like the Panas, who held higher position than Brahmins, and the Vetas, the Kuravas etc., whom held high status during the early Sangam age came to be looked upon as low castes. The priestly Nambutiriris created a new caste, within the Hindu fold, called Sudras for doing service to the higher castes. They elevated the Nair community to the status of Sudras for their protection. The introduction of caste system brought about a deadlock in Kerala society. The social status of a person came to be determined on the basis of occupation which he followed. Those who were engaged in occupations involving physical exertion were relegated to the lower strata of society and came to be looked down. The Nambutiriris attained supremacy in social and religious matters during the Kulasekhara dynasty which ruled Kerala in the ninth and tenth centuries. According to a myth propagated by the Nambutiriris, it was Parasurama, a legendary Brahmin hero, who created Kerala by reclaiming the land from the Arabian Sea. Then he gave it to the Nambutiri Brahmins whom he brought from outside. By means of this myth, the Nambutiriris could convince the kings and the people that they were the real owners of the land. By composing new legal codes such as Sankara Smriti, they introduced the concept of untouchability, unapproachability, and unseeability among different communities of Kerala. These concepts were implemented by the rulers as the social codes to be followed
by different castes. The Brahmin legislators appeared to have changed the matrimonial laws that in addition to the right of marrying from their own caste, secured the privilege of taking wives from certain other castes such as the Kshatriyas, the Nairs, and the Ambalavasis. The conjugal relation of Brahmin males with females of certain other caste Hindus created new castes. The union of Kshatriya with Nair women gave rise to the caste Samanthar, who by caste were Nairs, differentiated in their social position and observance of hypergamy with the Nambutiris. The caste in Kerala thus grew from racial, marital and functional basis.

With the establishment of the supremacy of the Brahmins, there might have been consequential changes in the social milieu. Some might have moved closer to the victors, and some others, drifted away. Those who got linked up with the victorious Brahmins might have got certain privileges, positions, advantages etc., as concession or compromise. Others might have been subdued, excluded and rigorously kept under. The former appears to be the caste-Hindus and the latter non-caste Hindus and the depressed classes. So from the same stock of people emerged the distinction such as Nairs, Ezhavas, Pulayas and others. The most striking feature of the newly emerged society was that the predominance of the upper castes and the relatively subordinate position occupied by the lower castes. The works of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British writers throw light on the social organization of Kerala during the period from the 16th to the 19th century. It may be seen that the Brahmans stood at the top of the social hierarchy and among them the Nambutiris occupied the highest rank.

The predominance of the Nambutiris created a condition of general degradation. Moral torpor and social malaise bedeviled the Hindu population in Kerala and produced intellectual, cultural and economic stagnation for more than half a millennium before the first quarter of the twentieth century. Hindu society had not registered any change from what it was in the twelfth or thirteenth century. Caste System, in all its severity and rigidity, divided
Hindu Society into innumerable exclusive groups mutually hating and co-operating only to degrade the other. The debasing quality of this institution made the higher classes to despise the lower strata and push them out of the pale of the civilized society. Thirty million people living in the fifteen thousand square miles of territory with their tradition, culture, inheritance, language, hopes and aspirations, problems and possibilities, assets and liabilities constitute the Kerala society, an integral but distinct part of Indian society. The structure of Kerala society of yesterday where caste and landlordism were very relevant and society was rigidly assorted into numerous mutually exclusive castes and communities. Divisive and centripetal forces were more than cohesive forces and were several. Three religions divided among themselves almost entire population—Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. While the Hindus were inextricably mixed up with the feudal structure, Christians and Muslims were not. Hindus did not form a homogeneous group. On the contrary, there were about 773 divisions and subdivisions among them on the basis of caste and sub caste. The influence of caste was all pervasive and did not spare the Christian and Muslim communities from its influence.

For an effective analysis of the caste framework in Kerala Society, which is very much peculiar and highly stigmatized, an understanding about the meaning, origin and growth and spread of Caste System in India is strictly inevitable. A great deal has been written about caste and more or less from this aspect. Caste in its fullest sense is an exclusively Indian phenomenon. No comparable institution to be seen elsewhere has anything like the complexity, elaboration and rigidity of caste in India.

Caste is one of the characteristics of Hindu Social System. The word ‘caste’ has obtained wide currency in the literature of sociology. The word ‘caste’ comes from the Portuguese word ‘casta’ signifying breed, race, or kind. The Indian term is jathi or varna. When the Portuguese entered into relations with the people of Malabar Coast they were quick to observe that the Hindus were divided into a great number of exclusive hereditary groups
distinguished by their special occupations. It was to these sections that the Portuguese gave the name of caste.\textsuperscript{24}

No society in the world is free from the clutches of division. Every Society is caste ridden and in one form or the other caste system exists even among the most advanced societies of the world. Unfortunately in India, Caste system became very close and has degenerated itself and therefore has become a subject of criticism throughout the world. In advanced societies caste system is used for social control and also for determining the status of individual in society. From the available records one can come to the conclusion that caste system existed in ancient Egyptian, Mexican, Persian, and many other societies.

The Brahmin was to be invested with the sacred thread (\textit{Upayananam}) in the seventh year of age, the Kshatriya in the eleventh, and the Vaisya in the twelfth. Restrictions were also placed on the pursuit of professions and callings. The Brahmin was prevented from becoming a shopkeeper as that would trench upon the rights of the Vaisya. He was forbidden to carry arms (which were the privilege of the Kshatriyas) except in self defense. He had to avoid marital relationship with non-Aryan women. The Brahman who usurped any of the functions of the other castes was to be regarded as a Sudra. There was differentiation in the ceremonies to be performed; for instance, the Sudras were forbidden to have the \textit{Upayananam} performed. In course of time the functional basis of caste changed in to a hereditary one.

Below the Sudras were the early representatives of the people who were later called untouchables, outcastes, depressed classes, or scheduled castes. Buddhist literature and the early Dharma sutras show that several centuries before Christ there already existed groups of people, who though serving the Aryans in very menial and dirty tasks, were looked on as quite outside the pale. Some times they were called the ‘Fifth Class’ (\textit{panchama}), but most authorities rejected this term, as it to insist that they were to be excluded from the Aryan social order together.\textsuperscript{25}
Numerous groups of these people are mentioned, by names which are non-Aryan in origin, and were probably those of aboriginal tribes which came under the sway of the advancing Aryans. Chief of these groups was the Chandala, a term which came to be used loosely for many types of untouchables. The Chandala was not allowed to live in an Aryan town or village, but had to dwell in special quarters outside the boundaries. According to the law books the Chandala should be dressed in the garments of the corpses he cremated, should eat his food from broken vessels, and should wear only iron ornaments. No man of higher caste might have any but the most distant relations with a Chandala.26

By the beginning of Christian era the outcastes themselves had developed a caste hierarchy, and had their own outcastes. Untouchability was the most dangerous social result of the Brahminical caste system. The untouchables, the indigenous conquered population, became the most despised section of the Hindu population and became hereditary caste of untouchables. The untouchables were assigned such low functions as those of scavengers or removers of dead cattle. They were socially and legally debarred from any other profession. The low caste people had no right to study Vedas and if anybody attempted he should be punished with the pouring of boiled lead into his ears. He was denied access to the temples and comforts of orthodox caste Hindus. They had to reside in separate area in a village or town and had no freedom to use public wells and tanks which the caste Hindus used. He was punished for a crime by the law of the Hindu state or the village tribunal composed of the caste Hindus. The legal system for the Brahmins and other high caste were entirely distinct from the low castes. For a simple crime, the low caste people were inflicted with rigorous punishments, most commonly death penalty. Brahmins were excluded from death penalty and for a crime even murder, he was only punished with penalty of some amount of money, and in rare cases they were punished with loosing of caste. It is said that even the Sudras has no rights of property. The untouchables find no place in the sacred classified society. Their touch would defile the members of the higher groups and developed a consciousness of
keeping them out of touchability. They were imposed to do all kinds of menial and laborious work.

The disabilities of the low castes were not restricted to the social sphere but extended to the economic sphere also. They did not have the permission to engage in the professions of the higher castes. Their conventional occupations were dirty and soiled and their means for earning their bread and butter well limited. Thus A.R. Desai rightly says, the untouchables were the poverty stricken section of Indian production. They were mostly land labourers, semi serfs or engaged in worst occupations. They suffered from two fold evils - economic and social which are interconnected. The low social position accentuated their economic exploitation and their miserable economic conditions to stabilize their low social status.

Supremacy and selfishness of the priestly class, fantastic and supernatural explanation perpetuated the superiority of the savarnas and the very local position of the avarnas. Merciless exploitation of the labourers, menial workers, the artisans and craftsmen and many others compelled them to lead an infernal life. They had no economic and intellectual progress, since economic and intellectual opportunities were denied to them. The rigidity of the caste system despised them as mlechchas or Chandalas. Sea voyage was forbidden and social contacts with high castes were tabooed. Spirit of fatalism has gripped the lower caste. They were even denied to speak the language spoken by the Brahmins. In a nut shell, According to J.H. Hutton, “Avoidance of pollution through water, food or contact, use of temples, birth and death tabooed, marriage rules, clothing and ornaments, language, house etc are the Chief features of caste system. Every caste began to be governed by its own rules and regulations which became different from other castes. 27

The main caste communal groupings may be summed up as caste Hindus, noncaste Hindus and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes each having innumerable sub-divisions. 28 Caste Hindus formed the upper bloc of the hierarchy. They were the upper caste, the
savarnas, the ruling class. The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs, Ambalavasis and Samantas constituted the caste Hindus, the privileged section of the Hindu population. The non caste Hindus, the avarnas, were the castes from Ezhavas down to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, viz., Pulaya, Paraya, Cheruma, Pana, Kurava, Ulladan, Irulan, Malavedan, Nayadi etc.

**Brahmins**

Brahmins occupied the apex of the caste hierarchy. They were broadly divided in to two classes Nambutiris or Malayala Brahmins, indigenous to the country, and Foreign Brahmins, originally from other parts of India, especially from Canara, Maharatta, Tulu and Tamil countries, but are now settled in Kerala. Malayala Brahmins were subdivided in to six categories, of which Nambutiris stood at the apex. The sub-divisions were so fantastic that among the Nambutiris themselves there were not less than ten sub-divisions. The foreign Brahmins include two classes - Pancha Dravida Brahmins, and Pancha Gauda Brahmins. Though comparatively few in number, they are the only class that are free from all social and religious disabilities and enjoy perfect liberty of action. The whole framework of Hinduism has been adapted to the comfort and exaltation of the Brahmin. His word is law; his smile confers happiness and salvation, his power with heaven is unlimited. He is the professedly the pure and exalted priest, separate from all that is “common or unclean”.

Nambutiris were polluted by the touch of all castes below them and by approach of all lower than Nairs. A man or woman of lower castes was supposed to uncover above the waists as a token of respect when approaching a Nambutiri and was supposed to use special terms of respect when referring to anything belonging to him. A Nair should not go nearer than six paces to the Nambutiri, lest his holiness would be polluted by his proximity; a man of barber caste should not go nearer than twelve paces, a Tiyya thirty six and Pulaya, the lowest caste ninety paces. Pollution was observed even among the different sub-castes within the
Brahmin Community. A Tamil Brahmin by touch caused pollution to Nambutiri. Thus Nambutiri Brahmins considered themselves superior to other Brahmins too.

The Nambutiri Brahmins were regarded as peculiarly sacred, and was exalted far beyond the foreign Brahmins. They claim to be the aboriginal proprietors of the soil, to whom the ancestors of the present rajahs and chiefs were indebted for all that they possessed. Their headquarters are at Alvancheri in the Cochin State, where the Chief Nambutiri resides. The highest class of Nambutiris, with rare exceptions, refuse to reside under the sway of the Sudra king of Travancore, and any of the female going South of Quilon are said to lose caste. Hence the Nambutiris resided within the limits of Travancore was not recognised as the purest class. 

These proud and arrogant Brahmins were not numerous in the South, but chiefly inhabited in the Central and Northern provinces of Travancore, and Cochin and Malabar area. Their manner of life is usually very secluded, and many devote themselves especially to the performance of religious ceremonies in connection with the temples. In all the great religious observances of the Rajah, these priests are the principal celebrants, and are treated with every mark of reverence and respect. They rarely entered the arena of political life, and it was only in 1863 that the first instance occurred of a youth of this caste entering the high school at the capital, for the purpose of learning English. In consequence of their seclusion, caste prejudices, and strict attention to ceremonial purity, these Brahmins were inaccessible to the European missionaries.

The Nambutiri Brahmins were often wealthy, and resided in large comfortable houses. Their women were carefully concealed from the public gaze; and, when venturing out of the house, were enveloped in clothes, or covered by an immense umbrella. The Females were said to be distinguished by their beauty, and they enjoyed the privilege of wearing golden bracelets. The eldest son alone in a family was allowed to marry in regular form with a
female of his own caste. The others, the junior members had such temporary connections, *sambandham* marriage relations, with Nair ladies, who regard it as a high honour to receive the visits of a Nambutiri.  

The low morality that struck Hindu Society in Kerala had its roots in the Brahmin profligacy. Craze for sex among the Nambutiris brought about degeneration in the Kerala Society. They transformed the honoured female servants of Gods, *devadasis*, in to legal prostitutes and the honour and purity of temples became degenerated. *Sambandham* alliance, which granted the junior members of the Brahmin family the freedom to cohabit with any Sudra or Nair Women and the Nairs regarded it as a high honour to receive the visits of a Nambutiri. They took it for granted that women of their community and that of the lower tiers were created for their enjoyment. Absolute freedom in sexual life was the right of every male Brahmin and absolute surrender for female. *Smarthavicharam* was introduced to maintain the purity of this caste. Such *smarthavicharams* for checking the prostitution of Nambutiri women were common in ancient days.  

There was no bar with regard to his debauchedness with Nair women. Brahmins did not hesitate to brand as immoral and immodest those women of the humbler castes who refused to expose, at the approach of the Brahmin, their breasts, ripping open their upper cloth. Till recent times, the custom of the lower caste women, going to the Nambutiri *illoms*, removing the upper garment, was strictly observed throughout Kerala.  

The Nambutiri Brahmins were the real rulers of Kerala from the 11th century to the 16th century. The kings were the servants of the Nambutiris. They were masters in the arts and sciences of war as well as learning and scholarship and this enabled them to establish their supremacy over kings and rulers. They were the law makers and hence they were above the king and outside the orbit of law. They owned allegiance to only their caste chief, *Alvancheri Thamprakkal*, who had the exclusive authority to punish them. The law spared the
Brahmins from the death penalty even for most heinous crimes, while members of untouchable castes who committed such ordinary offences as theft were punished with death penalty. According to sacred laws to kill Brahmin was equivalent to Brahmahatya, the most heinous crime.

The upper caste Brahmins enjoyed several immunities and privileges which were denied to the lower castes. Political power and authority in the land lay concentrated in the hands of the Brahmins. The existence of royal families which had matrimonial connections with Kshatriyas, Nairs, etc., eventually learned heavily from the Brahmin officers, who were imported from outsiders for assistance in the discharge of their duties, helped the upper castes to get themselves entrenched in position of authority. It was the special privilege of the Brahmin Judges, vaidikar as they were called, to pass judgments in all important cases.

From 11th century to 18th century dominance was established by Brahminical Hinduism with its ceremonies, beliefs, witchcraft, practices, traditions, etc. They became the masters of the temple centered society. They were the temple authority and administered the temple lands. Rulers and common peoples were obliged to bow before the Brahmins. They hold large acres of landed property by personal and administered Devaswam lands. When the practice of Brahmadeyam and Devadanam became popular they become more powerful. This management of temples and mismanagement of temple properties made the Brahmins the Janmis during this period. In the medieval period the Brahmins introduced a feudal set-up based on the monopolistic military service of the Nairs. Kerala witnessed worst form of landlordism during the period. As priests and trustees of temples, they became owners of temple lands and assumed the status of Janmi or landlords. Nambutiris became both temporal and spiritual heads and accumulated incalculable wealth which degenerated their status. The domination of degenerated Nambutiris created a degenerated society in medieval Kerala. Till
the establishment of British paramountcy and starting of Indian renaissance this state of affairs continued unabatedly in Kerala.

**Kshatriyas**

The Kshatriyas constituted only a microscopic minority in Kerala. The caste of Kshatriyas in Kerala comprises a few families, some of which were sub-divided in to smaller branches and were closely related to one another. In Cochin State the Kshatriyas were included in the members of the family of His Highness the Raja. The members of the family of the chief of Crangannur and others were called *thambans* and *thirumulpads*. The principal Thamban families were related to the ruling families, and superior in social status to those of the Thirumulpads.

The Kshatriya caste may be described according to the *Sastras*, as a *sankara* or hybrid caste originating from the sexual connection of the Brahmins with Kshatriya women. But in Kerala the fact is that, there were no Kshatriya caste as such. They were created by the Brahmins during the day of their domination. Brahmins were not the rulers of this state. They formed only the minority people residing in their 64 *gramas*. The rulers and ruling class of this native land was the indigenous people. When the Brahmanisation process spread to the Dravidian land the non-Kshatriya ruling classes were transformed into Kshatriya class by the Brahmins. Records dated even after tenth century AD shows that Aay rulers of Vizhinjam, the Venad Rajas, Odanadu Rajas of Kandiyurmuttam, the rulers of Karikkad, the Kizhmala Raja, etc., were Idayas. The Eradis of the Eralnadu also comes under this category. Most of these rulers got Kshatriya status by receiving the *aanayatheettu* from the Brahmins. Alvancheri Thamprakkal, the chief of the Namputiris of Kerala, is the authority to issue this certificate of elevation. For that the rulers had to perform some ceremonial rituals such as *hiranyagarbham, thulapurushadanam, murajapam* etc.
Other than the ruling class, the traditional functions of Kshatriyas were performed by some chieftains and military organizations, especially the Nairs. Nairs with local variations were the fighting class, the ruling class and the managerial class. As military organizations such as *moovayirathuvar, ayyayirathuvar, arunuttuvar, munnuttuvar*, etc., and as protectors and supervisors of the landed property of the temples as well as Brahmans, *kanakkar*, the Nair carried the duty of Kshatriyas in Kerala.

L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, in his *Cochin Tribes and Castes* opined that “the Kshatriya Community is an intermediate caste between the Nambutiris and the Sudras (Nairs). The Nambutiri class (Aryans) had become Dravidianised and Dravidian Nair population has become Aryanised though in a lesser degree. The intermediate caste therefore must be the Aryans more Dravidianised or Dravidians more Aryanised, i.e., the Aryans degraded or Dravidians more elevated, more probably the latter”.45

**Nairs**

As there was no Kshatriya community as such below Brahmans and Nairs became Kshatriyas in caste hierarchy. Nairs were included under the category of caste Hindus. They were not a caste, but a community. Not less than thirty sub-divisions existed among them. At the top were the Samanthans. The distinction between these subdivisions was often whimsical but the more capricious they seem the more persistently they observed. Great feudal nobles in Kerala came from the Nair Community. Traditionally they were the warriors who formed the military. Being the martial class, they were more influential to the kings and priestly class. They acted as protectors of Brahmans, supervisors of landed property, the *kanakkar*, and at some period the supervisors of *Karalar Sabha*. They were the overseers or supervisors of the *nadu*, and they seem to have been employed in this capacity as collectors of the share of produce of the land originally reserved for government purposes. The
remuneration for this service and for their other functions as protectors, another share of the produce of the soil seems to have been reserved especially for them.47

There are divergent views regarding the origin of Nairs. K.P. Padmanabha Menon one among the great historians of Kerala, argued that Nairs were the descendants of Nagas a prominent and dominant tribe in India once upon a time. He pointed he Naga worship and kavu related to ancient Nair tharavad as evidence to prove this view.48 Some others viewed that Nair is said to be derived from the Sanskrit nayaka, a leader, and to be cognate with Nayakas of Vijayanagar. Another argument in favour of the origin of Nairs was that they may be the descendants of the Uzhavar, Paravathar, and Vellala of Sangam age, as there was no reference about Nair in any of the Sangam literature.

With the ascendancy of Brahmins, Nairs become more influential class with their extra ordinary martial skills. A temple centered society emerged as a result of the Brahminical domination and temples became centers of social, economic and cultural activities. Then the economy of the state began to be determined by the temples. Through land grants, temples become the largest owners of landed property. Thalis and thaliyathiris emerged as a result of the temple centered land ownership. At earlier times Brahmins were the thaliyathiris of all thalis. When time passed the Brahmins faced difficulty in the management of the temple property as the land grants to the temples became increasing. Thus they entrusted Nairs as kanakkar (supervisors) to look after these temples as well as Brahmaswam lands. Thus the Nairs, even though were not the real masters of the land, became the supervisors of Brahmin land. With the collapse of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram the Nairs became more powerful. They became Janmis, naduvazhikal and then desavazhis with the help of their martial skill. They were the ‘the eye’ “the hand” and “the order” of the state administration.

The Sudras, the Nairs, were the middle class of Travancore and Cochin states. The greatest portion of land was in their hands and until the prohibition of slavery by the
government; they were also the principal owners of slaves. They form the magistracy and holders of most of the Government offices the military and police, the wealthy farmers, the merchants, and skilled artisans of the country. ⁴⁹

The Nair customs with respect to marriage were most singular and licentious character. In early youth the girl goes through the ceremony of marriage by having the taali, or marriage cord, tied round her neck, but this is not followed by cohabitation. It is a mere formality, and simply sets her at liberty to exercise and follow out her own inclinations in more mature years. When arrived at a marriageable age suitors present themselves and the favoured individuals offers to the young woman a cloth and other presents and resides with her. This is called mundu koduthu parpikka, giving a cloth and residing together, and is the only practical substitute for marriage amongst these people. It differs widely from the marriages of Brahmins and Shanars. The woman is at liberty to dismiss the man or the man to dismiss the woman, on very easy terms. ⁵⁰

The marumakkathayam system of inheritance among Nairs was equally strange. The children of a Sudra woman inherit the property and heritable honours, not of their father, but of their mother’s brother. They are their uncles nearest heirs, and he is their legal guardian. ⁵¹ The monstrous custom was polyandry, or of one woman having several husbands was some times practiced. Nair women enjoyed a position in society since they had connection with the Brahmins. But they had to uncover their upper part of their bodies in the presence of persons of rank and position and the royal family. ⁵²

The Nairs also kept the pollutant caste from approaching them. They kept the Ezhava twelve paces off and the Pulaya at sixty four paces off. But the Nairs could not touch the Brahmin. Brahmins considered the touch of a Nair as polluting. At some areas the Nairs even can’t approach the Brahmins within six feet distance.
Because of their highly reputed position as militia and the influential relation with Brahmin and ruling class they enjoyed numerous privileges and titles. They followed certain rituals and practices of their superiors with slight variations. High born Nairs had the privilege to keep *kudumi* as like the Nambutiri men on his head. They can use umbrellas, chapels, golden ornaments etc. They can wear dress above their waist, except in front of the Brahmins. Historians argued that the *sambandham* relation with the Brahmins was the greatest privilege of the Nairs. The Nambutiris Brahmisn elevated the Nair community to the status of Sudras through this system of liaison marriage. As a consequence of this system, the Nairs became servants of Brahmins and the kings and there with powerful and influential in the society.\(^{53}\)

Their titles varied according to places. Known as Panicker, Unnithan, Valiathan, Kaimal, Kurup, Kartha, Mannadiar and Menon, they exercised local political power based both on feudal holding of land and compulsory military service. The common people among Nairs were cultivators. Some Nairs were managers, rent collectors, clerks, and petty officers of Brahmin landlords, temples and royal courts. Poor Nair families provided domestic servants.\(^{54}\)

*Marumakkathayam* descent and inheritance, impartible joint family, absolute control over the family by the *karanavar*, the eldest male member, children having no right to the properties of their father, husband living in wife’s house, children’s loyalty and love more to their maternal uncle than their father, no responsibility to the husband to look after his wife and children, very loose marriage ties, polygamy and polyandry, in several places, *sambandham* alliance with Brahmins, etc. characterized the Nair family organisation.

**The Ezhavas**

The Ezhavas were not caste Hindus. They were at the top of the non-caste Hindus. They were spread evenly all over Kerala. Basically a cultivating class, traditionally Ezhavas were associated with growing and tapping coconut trees.\(^{55}\) Ezhavas, also called Izhuvans, were a widespread tribal people inhabiting Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore. Known as they
are under different names with more or less variations in their customs and manners, they form one and the same caste. In Travancore they are called ‘Ezhavas’, in Cochin area they are known by the name ‘Chekava’ or ‘Chovans’. In Malabar they are called ‘Tiyyas’, while in present Kasargode and in (South Canara) Tulunadu they known as ‘Billavas’. They are believed to be closely allied to the Tamil speaking Shanars of the Tinneveli District. Numerically, they occupy a high position in the population of the state. There were farmers, cultivators, Ayurvedic and Siddha Physicians, Soldiers, warriors, Kalari Trainers and Traders. Some were also involved in liquor business, textile manufacturing, and toddy tapping. They were the planters of the ancient Hindu constitution, and this character still to a very large extent retain, as they hold to the present day - a practical monopoly of tree climbing and toddy drawing from palm trees. The ‘Chekavar’ a warrior section within the community, were part of the militias of local chieftains and kings. There were also renowned Kalari payattu experts among them. All these three, but the same, categories of people who inhabited all over the length and breadth of the state of Kerala now popularly and unanimously called by the name ‘Ezhava’.

The word ‘Ezhava’ believed to have derived from ‘Ezham’ or ‘Ilam’. The word is of such an antiquity; its etymological origins are difficult to be ascertained. These words believed to have related linguistically or socio-linguistically to group of words Elu/ Hela/ Seehala/ Sinhala/ Salai/ Seiladibe/ Serendib, pointing all to the Island of Sri Lanka. Among this group of words, the usage of ‘seehala’ is the earliest attested by epigraphical evidence. A second or third century inscription found at Nagarjunakonda of Andhra Pradesh refers to a Buddhist monastery as seehala vihara, monastery either built by people from seehala or occupied by people from seehala. The discipline of linguistics and examples found elsewhere may help to understand how not only the Ezham, Ila, Elu, He’la, Seehala and Sinhala but also the greek word ‘Salai’, and ‘Seiladiba’, the Arab ‘Serendib’ and the colonial ‘Ceylone’ are actually cognates. The all primarily stood for the geographical identity of an Island or Sri
Lanka. But the original word, its etymology, its meaning, and how that original word became the name of the Island under discussion are still elusive.  

The word ‘Ezham’ presented today in Malayalam or Tamil books stands for the geographical identification of the entire Island of what is called Sri Lanka today. The earliest use of this word is found in a Tamil Brahmi inscription as well as in the Sangam literature, both datable to the dawn of the Christian era. The Thirupparangunkunram inscription in Tamil, found near Madurai in Tamil Nadu and dated on paleographical grounds to the first century BC, refers to a person as householder from Eezham, Eezha Kudumpikan. The Sangam work Pattinappalai, assigned to the first century AD, mentions Eezhathunavu, the food stuff coming from the Island of Eezham to Kaverippom pattinam, the port of the Cholas.

Ezhavas formed the largest enterprising community of Kerala. In the early days the Ezhavas enjoyed a high status along with Nairs. They, the Nairs and Ezhavas, formed the civilized group of Sangam age. They lived together in fraternity following same customs and social life. With the advent of Brahmins one group, the Nairs supported the Brahmin ascendancy and the second group, the Ezhavas, revolted against them and marched closer to Buddhism. When Hinduism began to regain its past glory under the Perumals of Mahodayapuram and propagation by Nambutiri Brahmins, Buddhism lost its existence and the followers were severely persecuted by the Brahmins and other high caste people. When caste system became a social institution, the Ezhavas, who showed reluctance to support the Brahmins, were suppressed and degraded into low caste and untouchable.

With the establishment of the supremacy of the Brahmins there might have been consequent changes in the social milieu. Some might have moved closer to victors, and some others, drifted away. Those who linked up with victorious Brahmins might have got certain privileges, positions, advantages etc; as concession or compromise. Others might have been subdued, excluded and rigorously kept under. The Ezhavas, who were either the revolters
against Brahmanism or the followers of Buddhism, were kept away from the mainstream and degraded as untouchable.

The Ezhavas and Thiyyas had high status in the ancient past. There are many evidences to show that the Thiyyas, in ancient days, belonged to the ruling class. In Northern Malabar, in ancient days there was a Mannanar\(^\text{62}\) (tiyya) dynasty with five palaces in Yeruvesi to the North west of Thalipparamba. Because of five palaces they were called Anch-Aramanakk\(^\text{ar}\) (five palace rulers). In Kerala only the palace of the Mannanar was called aramana. All the houses of other rulers were called kottaram or kovilakam.\(^\text{63}\) Here is a substance that might be pointing out that all other rulers at the time were vassals to Mannanar, their overlord. And it can be imagined that the Mahabali, who was crushed by the Aryan leader Parasurama was none other than Mannanar of the days.\(^\text{64}\) Last Mannan who had no power died in 1077 ME (1903 AD).

Mannanars belonged to the Thiyya community. It is not known when the Mannanar dynasty arose and when exactly it lost its rule. Since Sangam age does not say anything about Mannanar dynasty, the ruling power of the dynasty might have been lost before the First Century BC itself. There is no reference in Chera’s history also. Anyway the Mannanar’s aramana in destroyed conditions and the descendants of the dynasty are there in Yeruveri. Logan and some other writers also mentioned about Mannanars. There are many other examples to show that the Thiyyas were the ruling class before the ascent of the Nambutiri Brahmins to power. One such example is the use of the title Channar by the Ezhavas. ‘Channan’ was the topmost central position in power among Ezhavas in ancient period. The word channan was derived from the Chantor, meaning ‘head’.\(^\text{65}\) The word chantor also had a meaning “the noble man”. Chantors were the toddy drawing class of the Sangam age who got mixed up with the Ezhava Community. Liquor or toddy making was a ‘noble profession’ in the Tamil country. At royal receptions toddy was a most essential drink. As the people who
gave origin to the toddy or as the toddy drawing class they had a high position at that time. 66
There is no wonder that those who generated toddy, under such circumstances became rich in
the economy and noble class in the community. 67 In later days some kings had conferred the
title Channar to many Ezhavas. This clearly shows that Ezhavas had nobility in the ancient
days.

Some historians link the Ezhava Thiyya community with ancient Chera rulers. P.K.Gopalakrishnan argued that, “Chera Rajas were Villors”. They linked the Villors, Chantors, and Izhavas etc., very much. A poet mentions a Chera king as ‘Chantor Perumakan’, meaning Chantor clan’s prominent son. 68 V. Kanakasabhai, in his the Tamils Eighteen Hundred years ago mentioning that Villors founded the Chera kingdom and the Chera king was addressed as Villavar kon. 69 This also reveals the high status held by the Ezhavas in the ancient times.

It is said that the status of Ezhavas began to degrade after the 8th century when the Brahmins began to dominate every field of life. But records show that even though their condition degraded after 8th century AD, their complete degradation was only after 10th or 11th centuries. Therisappalli copper plate inscription given by Ayyan Atikal Thiruvatikal in 848-49 AD during the reign of Stanu Ravi mentions about Ezhavas. It gives some exception of certain taxes like thalakkanam, enikkanam, menippon, polippon, and tax to that their houses etc to some four Ezhava families. It also gives permission to these Ezhavas entry in to the market, for trade, in their carts. Varakat Thiyyas who belonged to the Mannanar group were allowed by the Nambutiris to move about freely in palanquin. The Tantan, the Mooppan, or Karanavar etc., of the Thiyya community also had freedom to use palanquin. 70 All these shows that the Ezhavas though were unprivileged had nobility.

During 11th and 12th centuries, when the institutions of caste system and feudalism became so rigid and intolerable, Ezhavas lost all its glory and status completely and lost all
their hold on their landed property. Some historians argued that Ezhavas had no right to own landed property since very ancient period. But temple record engravings from 9th to 13th centuries AD, shows that people of all walks of life donated their landed property to temples. This shows that till that period most of the non-Brahmin groups had the right of ownership of land. Most of all rulers collected one sixth or one fifth of gross produce as land tax. The small land owners misruled by the Brahmins donated their land to the temples as Devadanam to get exemption from the payment of land tax. Those who fell in to this Brahmin created order became landless and later deprived of the right to own even a piece of land. In course of time the temples became the largest owners of landed property and finally fell into the hands of Brahmins. Administration of these lands by karalars and uralars brought feudal set up and janmi system into Kerala. When these systems began to tighten its thread, Ezhavas and other low castes fell in to servitude.

Up to 18th century the Ezhavas continued as the most populous landless community. Their lot had been slavery, untouchability and unapproachability. Though they were not agrestic slaves, ascribed to the state of vassalage in which they have been soon long held. They had not only cultivated the land but also rendered uzhiyam services for their masters. This system only harassed the Ezhavas. No one dared to resist or refuse to work. If, however, any one dared to resist or refuse, he would be crushed and humbled so as to serve as an example to others.

The general circumstances of the Ezhava population have long been continued as humiliating and degrading. Their social condition is by no means degraded into deplorable that of the slave castes. They had to keep untouchability rules and pollution distance. They were not allowed to carry umbrella, to wear shoes, or golden ornaments, to carry pots of water on the hip, to build houses above one storey in height, to milk cows, or even to use the
ordinary language of the country. The caste system, feudalism and land system thus made the social and economic life of the Ezhavas a miserable one.

**Disabilities faced by the Ezhavas**

Through the introduction of the Caste System and pollution rules, a three-tiered society was created in medieval Kerala with Nambutiris as the supreme authority of land and law. The second category includes people like kings, feudal chieftains and the Nairs, who ruled the country according to the instructions of the Brahmins. In the third category were the people who belonged to the untouchable groups. The Ezhavas, who were numerically the largest community in Kerala, were at the top of the caste group known as *tindal jaati* or polluting caste. They had faced many socio-religious restrictions and economic disabilities from the upper caste Hindus within the frame work of the caste system as reflected in the principle of purity, pollution and the *janmi* system.

Ezhavas were victims of the exploitation by the caste Hindus. And in their turn, they exploited the classes below them in the hierarchy. They were treated in many places as untouchables. They were denied all freedom and the fundamental dignity of being human members of a civilized society. They were not allowed to walk on public roads. From historical records it appears that even during the first decades of 20th century, people belonging to the Ezhava to Nayadi did not have the freedom to walk on public roads. The only difference in comparison to earlier times was that they were not killed, but only beaten up if they sometimes happened to walk on such roads.

They were Hindus, but they could not enter temples. They were denied the worship in temples and even entry in to temple roads. While their pigs and cattles could frequent to the premises of temples, they were not allowed to go even there. It is a paradox that even though the temples in Kerala originally belonged to the lower communities (like the Sree Padmanabha Swami Temple, Thiruvananthapuram which earlier belonged to Pulayas) when
they were taken over by Brahmins with the help of kings, these untouchables were not allowed even to walk on the temple roads. The Ezhavas had their own temples, but customarily they were not allowed to worship the higher Gods of Hindu Pantheon like Vishnu or Siva. Kesavan Vaidyar writes that Ezhavas and other avarnas used to worship the corrupted forms of God like Chathan, Chamunti, Madan, Marutha, Yakshi, Arathan, etc. Neither their longing to worship the gods of the higher nature in their own temples could be fulfilled nor were they permitted to have a direct darsana of the deity in the temples of the Brahmins or kings. They were only expected to pay taxes and give money as donations and offerings to these temples.  

In 1888 certain caste Hindu inhabitants of Kayamkulam lodged a complaint to the government that a local temple was open to pollution because all classes of people made use of the path running west of the temple. They requested that the avarnas who were not allowed access to savarna temples might be required to use another path in the vicinity not open to objection on religious grounds.

There were other social humiliations as well. An Ezhava should keep himself, at least thirty six feet away from a Nambutiri and twelve feet away from a Nair. To inform the high caste people that they are coming, the Ezhavas had to utter ‘tintale’, ‘tintale’ (pollution, pollution). High caste people used to utter sounds like ‘ho ho’ or ‘po, po’ (go way, go away) to inform the avarnas that they are coming. On hearing this sound people of the lower caste had to remain at the prescribed pollution distance or hide somewhere so that they should not cause pollution by their nearness or visibility. Caste Hindu’s language they should not use. He must address a caste Hindu man, as Thampuran (my lord) and woman as Thampurati (my lady). About him, he must not refer as ‘I’, but only as adiyan. He must stand before a caste Hindu in awe and reverence, assuming a humble posture.
Another locally established custom was that, when the deities of the temples were taken out in procession on ceremonial occasions, the _avarnas_ were kept at some distance so as not to pollute the deity. The _savarnas_ forcibly vacated the _avarnas_ from their houses if they were located on the side of the road through which the procession passed. According to the _savarnas_, the sick or old or a newly born infant of the _avarna_ community may pollute their sacred deity. “It is a long standing custom in the state that when deities of temples of high caste Hindus are taken out on ceremonial occasions in procession through public roads etc. the Ezhavas and other polluting castes are not generally allowed to approach the procession but are kept at some distance so as not to pollute the deity. It is all regulated by local usage and established custom”.\(^86\)

There was also caste restriction in dressing. Only women of the upper castes like the Nairs were allowed to wear a waist cloth (_muntu_) which came below the knees. This _muntu_ was usually woven by the Ezhavas, but women of this community and other lower communities were not allowed to wear it.\(^87\) The low caste Ezhavas, males as well as females, should never dress himself like a caste Hindu. About the women folk of the community they were required, young and old, to appear before caste Hinds, always ‘topless’.\(^88\) They were not allowed to cover their breasts even with a simple towel (_thorthu_). If anybody wears an upper cloth, she has to remove and expose her breast before the high caste men in order to show her reverence. Samuel Mateer observed that the proper salute from a female to person of high rank was to uncover or expose her bosom.\(^89\) Covering up of the breasts of Ezhava women was regarded as an infringement or encroachment on the rights of high caste men. This prohibition was enforced throughout Malabar, until about the commencement of 20\(^{th}\) century and in Travancore until 1959. While in Cochin it has strictly observed up to the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Even in British territory where they can dress as they please, they manifest no desire to change their style of clothing.\(^90\)
Caste based discrimination existed even in the construction of houses also. The Ezhavas and other low castes should never construct a house on the upper caste model.\textsuperscript{91} However, Thurston refers to old houses of the Ezhavas which had some resemblance to those of the Nairs. But all these buildings were found only in the houses of rich Ezhavas, the poor satisfying themselves with one roomed thatched huts.\textsuperscript{92} Before 1861, as like other lower castes, Ezhavas were not allowed to construct tiled roofs. If any one wanted to build a two-storeyed or tiled house, special permission had to be obtained from the king or chieftains by paying a fee and giving presents.\textsuperscript{93}

In 1895, the Ezhavas complained that “public service, which must be admitted as the strongest incentive to education in this country, is entirely denied to them in Travancore, and to this day, the government has not shown any encouragement worth the name to an educated Tiyya, whatever, his qualification may be. Even low places, such as those of office peons, police constables, public work maistries and hospital and Jail wardens, are denied to them on the score of their caste, eventhough they possess more than the necessary qualifications.\textsuperscript{94} At the same time, the Government was of the view that “the Ezhavas as a community were slow to take advantage of the available opportunities”.\textsuperscript{95}

In the matter of hair style too there was clear caste discrimination. Only women of the higher castes had the right to tie their hair into knot leaning towards the left side of head. Ezhavas and other low caste women had to tie the hair into a knot next to the temple and above the right ear.\textsuperscript{96}

Women of the Ezhava caste were not allowed to wear ornaments worn by women of upper castes. They were allowed to wear only beads or ornaments made of metals other than gold. Thurston reports that in the olden days, a Thiyya Woman could wear an ornament appropriate to Nairs by paying a fee.\textsuperscript{97}
Use of shoes and umbrellas were also denied to the Ezhavas and other low castes. It was the sole monopoly of the Nambutiris. People of lower castes not to use banana leaves or *pala*, the bark film of an areca palm leaf.\(^98\) Bhaskaran Unni writes that the Ezhavas could use umbrellas at the beginning of 20\(^{th}\) century. But weather it was raining or sunshine, they were not permitted to hold the umbrellas straight up but only in a slanting position, with the result that they got wet. When travelling with an umbrella they had to say ‘*vazhiye, vazhiye*’ (a polluting fellow is walking on the way’) so that savarnas could recognize them and avoid becoming polluted. Otherwise they were beaten up.\(^99\)

In the native state they were allowed only to feed the cattle, but not allowed to milk even their own cows. They were prohibited from possessing calves with red horns; with a white mark on the forehead; or twins: these ought to be sent to the nearest pagoda or to the house of a high caste man.\(^100\) Even during the first decades of the 20\(^{th}\) century, Ezhavas were barred from milking the cows for fear of them polluting the milk, which was either offered to God or consumed by people of higher castes. However, the cow could be fed and reared by an Ezhava, but as soon as it delivered a calf, it was to be sent to the nearest Nair chief. When the cow stopped giving milk, the Nairs would inform the owner and took it back. The owner got only one meal as remuneration. They were permitted to extract oil from their coconuts eventhough the Syrians and Romo-Syrians claimed the monopoly of this trade. If somebody opposed this practice, he was tied up in a tree and beaten.\(^101\)

Not only men and temples, but objects like roads, tanks, wells and foodstuffs belonging to the *savarnas* were polluted by the *avarna* approach. Cases of pollution of pagodas were decided by the Huzur and if the *avarnas* were unable to pay the sum required for ‘*Sudhikalasam*’ (purificatory ceremony) some other punishments followed.\(^102\) Even courts of justice upheld as valid the irrational practice of pollution and favoured the *savarnas*.\(^103\)
Right to enter court of justice was denied to the Ezhavas. Even during the first decades of the 20th century Ezhavas were not permitted to enter a native court of justice because they might pollute the judges, who were members of the high castes. They couldn’t produce even their evidences and witness directly to the court. They had to produce it to the Nairs, who were the paid advocates of Ezhavas in these courts of justice.\textsuperscript{104}

Since the children of the Ezhava community were forbidden to mingle with the children of the upper castes, their right to education was totally denied. According to Kesavan Vaidyar the Ezhavas and all other untouchable communities were kept as slaves for centuries, mainly by denying them the right to education.\textsuperscript{105} Except a few families of the Ezhavas who had a tradition of Ayurvedic knowledge and Sanskrit learning, they had no right to or facility for education. Modern education and western type schools were started in different parts of Kerala during the later half of the 19th century. But Ezhavas were not permitted in these schools.\textsuperscript{106} In Government owned schools, admission was denied to them on grounds of untouchability. Even after the legal removal of that impediment, there were cases of teachers and students of upper classes, raising protests because of the polluting presence of Ezhava students. Further, even if some how some Ezhavas got educated, either in private schools or schools outside Kerala, they could not get entry in Government service which was practically the monopoly of the caste Hindus. According to the ‘Malayali memorial’ of 1891 and the ‘Ezhava memorial’ of 1896, there was not a single Ezhava holding any government appointment on a monthly salary of Rs. 5 or above, though intelligent and educated men were not lacking among them.\textsuperscript{107}

All these disabilities curtailed the civic rights as well as the birth rights of the Ezhavas. They became only the tools of the caste Hindus of pomp and pleasure and enjoying a happy life. Under the existing socio-economic practices and disabilities most of the Ezhavas were reduced to utter poverty and semi servitude conditions. The impurity attached to them
imposed much social disability upon them. In this particular social set up, caste exploitation of the lower castes by the superior castes existed in the society.

Economically the community was very poor. Only a nominal fraction had good economic condition. The bulk was comprised of poor, landless, agricultural labourers; some of them were serfs, if not slaves. There was no occupation for the community as a whole, as in the case of barbers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths etc. They were denied the right to acquire property and gather their earning from that till the proclamation of 1818.\textsuperscript{108} Ezhavas the most populous and the privileged among the underprivileged society were the main body of agricultural labourers in Travancore up to the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Due to the denial of land ownership rights, they diversified their economic activities by engaging non-agricultural labours.

The Ezhavas who engaged in agricultural labour not only cultivated the land, but also rendered Uzhiyam services to their masters as well as to the Sircar. They did not get time to earn money for their livelihood because due to the Uzhiyam services they were not able to attend even their daily occupation. Nevertheless under the existing socio-economic practices and restrictions most of the Ezhavas were also reduced to utter poverty and semi servile condition.\textsuperscript{109} All their income was subjected to heavy taxation. Under the vicious caste oppression the Ezhavas suffered from many economic disabilities like innumerable professional and poll taxes. They had to pay professional taxes for climbing up trees, like Thalakkanam (foot rope tax) and Enikkanam (ladder tax) and drawing toddy from coconut palms and poll taxes like Thalavari, or Thalayara (head load tax), Thalappanam, etc.

Later along with the Nairs, Ezhavas got the opportunity to act as karalars. These people enjoyed certain pattam rights over the temple land and had to pay taxes to the Nambutiri janmi.\textsuperscript{110} But they were, to a large extent the sub-tenents of the Nair overlords. Ward and Corner states that “the Ezhavas constitute the principal portion of the under tenancy
paying a rent that allows little profit”\textsuperscript{111} This sub-tenancy to some privileged Ezhavas gave them the opportunity to acquire money and more landed property. These land owners considered themselves superior than the other people of their own caste. But the striking feature is that among the Ezhavas majority were land less\textsuperscript{112} Even in 1918, the Ezhavas of Cochin were not permitted to use public highways in the name of pollution\textsuperscript{113}

Besides the imposed social inferiority, economic disadvantages and political neglect, the Ezhava community had certain in-built handicaps-divisions and sub-divisions – which prevented unity, and the system of inheritance and succession, which curbed individual initiative. The family organisation and the system of inheritance were replicas of those of Nairs.

The Ezhava community was in the process of extra-ordinary transformation the shackles all round, to be educated, to attain economic prosperity to source social equality, to be politically heard, the Ezhava middle class formed the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam. Now they were the largest Hindu community in Kerala having social economic and political strength and now they were the greatest determining factor in all fields of Kerala society.

At the bottom of the Hindu Social hierarchy, below the backward communities including Ezhavas, was what are now called the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Curiously enough, they were untouchables and unapproachable even to those who suffered the same indignity from the caste Hindus\textsuperscript{114} Their very sight would pollute a caste Hindu, especially the Nambutiri, it was believed. These sons of the soil, the aborigines of Kerala, who were leading a sort of primitive life, were also not spared from the influence of caste. Among the scheduled castes there were nearly seventy five categories. Tribes in the forests were also divided into nearly forty categories. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes together constitute nearly ten percent of the population. Most of these depressed classes were
landless people, under the category, tenants at will. Even at the beginning of the 20th century many of them were like cattles, and slaves.\textsuperscript{115}

**Pulayar**

The Pulayas are one of the important communities among the scheduled castes. They are also known as Cheramar and Cherumar. The very name expressed the idea of impurity and was derived from the word ‘Pula’, that is funeral pollution.\textsuperscript{116} According to modern Kerala historians the word ‘Pulayan’ did not mean a caste but it means cultivator. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai explains that the word *pulam* means field, place or country. They are supposed to be the descendants of the aborigines who preferred slavery in the plains to freedom and starvation in jungles.

It is interesting to note that during the early periods of history this polluting community enjoyed a very high status in the Kerala society. The Pulayas are said to have been owners and rulers of the land in olden times. Sangam literature mentioned about the Pulayas as land owners as well as holders of high status in the society. Quoting L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, Edgar Thurston reports that once upon a time the Pulayas had dominion over several parts of the country According to this report, a persons called *Ayikkara Yajaman* or *Ayikkara Tamara* (king), whose ancestors were Pulaya kings, was still held in considerable respect by the Pulayas of North Travancore, and acknowledged as their chieftain and Lord. The existence of Ayikkaranad (Ayikkara country) in the Kunnathunadu Taluk near Cherthala is still a remainder of this historical fact.\textsuperscript{117} He was the head of the Pulaya community and had a lace cap, believed to have been presented by the Cheraman Perumal. In Trivandrum, on the banks of the Lake Veli, there is a hill called Pulayanar Kotta, where a Pulaya king is believed to have been once ruled. In the course of history the Pulayas were defeated by other castes who gained power. The land of the Pulayas was encroached upon and they began to be treated as slave labourers.\textsuperscript{118}
The Pulayas were divided into *Thanta Pulayans* (Vettu Pulayans), *Kana Pulayans*, *Padinjaran* Pulayas (Western Pulayas), *Kizhakkan* Pulayas (Eastern Pulayas), *Thekkan* Pulayas (Southern Pulayas) and Valluva Pulayas. The *Padinjaran* Pulayas were considered to be superior to the *Kizhakkan* Pulayas. According to the legend, the *Kizhakkan* Pulayas were the slaves of Duryodhana while the *Padinjaran* Pulayas were the slaves of Pandavas. The defeat of Duryodhana caused degradation of the *Kizhakkan* Pulayan. The *Padinjaran* Pulayans were divided into a number of *illoms* (Clans). Children assume the *illum* of mother. Endogamy at community level and exogamy at *illum* level is practiced by the Pulayas. In the Palakkad area, they had an assembly known as the *Kannati Kutti Vattal*, which had jurisdiction over the caste matters and minor offences of the community members.

But the influx of people from other parts completely changed the life style of the Pulayas. In course of time the Pulayas occupied a very low position in society and were subjected to all kinds of social disabilities. The only dress of the degraded Pulayan is a piece of coarse cloth fastened round the loins, and a small piece tied around the head as head-dress. To women as well as men it was forbidden to wear any clothing whatever above the waist. The ornaments must be no more valuable than brass or beads; umbrellas must not be used to shelter the body from the scorching heat of the sun, nor shoes to protect the feet from the thorns and sharp stones.

The Pulayas had no education. The language which he was compelled to use was disgraceful, humiliating and degrading. He never dared to say ‘I’ but *adiyan*, “your slave”; he dared not to call his rice ‘choru’, but *karikkadi* – dirty gruel. His house is called *madam*, a hut, and his children he speaks of as ‘monkeys’ or ‘calves’; and while speaking he must place the hand over the mouth, lest the breath should go forth and pollute the person when he is addressing.
The Pulayas were prohibited from entering the markets and bazaars. In 1931, Poikayil Yohannan, an *avarna* member of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly of Travancore complained that “men and women belonging to the depressed classes had no convenient place in Trivandrum, the capital city, to sell their wares in the shape of bundles of grass, straw, baskets, mats etc. They spread them for sale on the borders of roads, necessarily subjecting themselves to be beckoned away by the police at any time. They had to run about the town and often failed to realise the due price”.  

All castes, Brahmins, Sudras, Ezhavas, and Shannars possessed Pulaya slaves. While some masters treated their slaves with consideration, others greatly oppressed them. For faults or crimes they were cruelly confined in stocks or cages, and beaten. For not attending work very early in the morning, they were beaten up and flogged severely. Awful cruelties were sometimes perpetrated. Cases are known in which slaves had been blinded by lime cast into their eyes. Slaves were not only bought and sold outright, but also mortgaged like lands. Female slaves were valued at double price; on account of the ‘produce’ the children – half of which went to the seller and half to the purchaser.

A Cheruma or Pulaya could not approach a Brahmin Village or temple or tank. Even while using the public road, if he happened to see his lord and master, he had to leave the ordinary way, it may be in the mud, to avoid his displeasure by accidentally polluting him.

**Parayas**

Parayas were low caste basket makers and agricultural labourers. They were generally known as slaves or serfs. They were the outcastes of the society. They are also known as Sambavar. They have three sub-divisions, namely param, pullani and chakkali, and do not intermarry with the Pulayas. Probably they were the ‘Classic’ Scheduled Caste of South India. They were treated as even below the Pulayar; though they would not accept cooked food from them. Only the Nayadi and the Ulladan were perceived to be below or at par with
them. Their presence carried pollution within about a furlong. They used to live far away from other communities, in huts thatched with palmyra leaves, in the most in hospitable portion of the terrain.

The facts seem to show that the Parayans priests (Valluvans), and the Parayans as a race were very ancient, and ten centuries ago they were a respectable community, and many were weavers. The privileges they enjoyed were relics of an exceedingly long association with the land. The institution of the paracheri points to original independence, and even to possession of much of the land. With the colonization of South India by the Brahmins the Parayans lost the land and that their degradation as a race began.

Among the Parayan, social division existed at kulam level, which is an exogamous unit. Community endogamy, like the Pulayar, and kulam exogamy is the marriage rule among the Parayas. The Parayas are non vegetarians and eat beef and because of which they were considered by high caste Hindus as unapproachable and unseeable.

Though the Government issued orders of throwing open to all government schools to all classes, the admission continued to be denied to the non-caste students. In 1904, Arthur T.Foster, a missionary send eight boys who were converts from the Paraya caste and finished their course in the village school to the Middle School at Neyyattinkara, with a letter to the Head Master. But they were denied admission.

The Parayas were very inferior race that their proximity or contact would entail the most alarming contamination. ‘Their very look is contamination.’ They have to stand away at a great distance of 72 feet. They were not allowed to walk along the public roads, approach the vicinity of the houses of the higher caste etc. Orthodox Caste Hindus had to take bath five times and let blood flow in order to be purified from contamination caused by the touch of the Parayas.
When Indian of any other caste permits a Paraya to speak to him, this unfortunate being was obliged to hold his hand before his mouth, lest the Indian might be contaminated with his breath; and, if he was met on the highway, he must turn on one side to let the other pass. On the sight of the high castes, Parayas run away in to jungles deserting their huts.\textsuperscript{131}

The flesh of cattle left dead by the road-side and it is their partaking of this food that excited the abhorrence of ordinary Hindus, who venerate the cow. The Parayas were employed chiefly in field labour. They were zealous devil-worshippers and dancers. They made great pretensions to sorcery and magical powers. They were employed by Sudras and Shanars for casting out devils and counteracting enchantments. In North Travancore, their condition seems to be at the lowest, as they enter in to the Malayalam Country, and had fewer opportunities of escape from their caste degradation and bitter servitude.\textsuperscript{132} Later many of them were converted to Christianity, mainly to escape from the cruelties of their masters.

The most rigorous and utmost defiled caste system polluted the Kerala society till the first half of 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The migrated Nambutiris made the society suitable for their enjoyment and pleasure. They transformed the casteless society into caste ridden society with their sharp and crooked intellectual and selfish nature. They subordinated all other natives of Kerala under them and manipulated several codes of laws to restrict the other people from interfering in their matters, and to maintain their status quo as superiors as in North India. But unlikely in North India, the Brahmins and their subordinates fabricated more strict rules and thus the Hindu society of Kerala became more polluted and degenerated to the status of a lunatic asylum. Innumerable castes and sub castes together hastened the process of degradation of Hindu Society of Kerala.

The caste rules operated with the utmost rigour. The Upper Castes like the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Nairs observed them strictly as otherwise they would have been treated
as outcasts and sold to Christians or Muslims under royal orders. The evils of untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability were observed in the most irrational manner. Since pollution might be incurred by contact through food or drink it is not surprising that it should be carried by mere bodily contact. Thus contact with a woman during her monthly period a women within the tabooed period after child birth, a man who had lit a funeral pyre, and is therefore stained by death pollution till purified, or persons in a similar state of ceremonial impurity or taboo, cause pollution and make it incumbent on a Hindu of caste to bathe and wash his clothes before eating or before undertaking any act requiring ceremonial purity. Similar purification is strictly speaking necessary as a result of contact with certain low castes whose traditional occupation, weather actually followed or not, or whose mode of life places them outside the pale of Hindu Society. Such castes were those commonly spoke of as out castes or untouchables.

Castes lower than a Brahmin was generally speaking less easily defiled, but the principle was the same. Thus if a Cheruman, or Pulayan, be touched by a Parayan, ‘he is defiled and must wash his head and pray.’ According to Barbosa, a Nair woman touched by a Pulayan was an outcaste for life and had to leave her home for fear of polluting her family.

The conditions of the low castes were heartbreaking. They were treated worser than wild beasts. In keeping up ceremonial observances and caste distinctions, South India, particularly Travancore and Cochin took the sin of pride in the matter of extending the limits of caste pollution to unapproachability and even unseeability. The caste Hindus believed that not only the touch but even the approach of certain classes of people would cause pollution to them.

The Caste-Hindu preserved the scale of distance within which they would be polluted if the lower caste approached them. Many castes regarded as polluting by proximity, and were not allowed to approach within certain distances of Hindu temples; so much is this the
case that common expressions of special measurement are, or were, \textit{Tiyapad, Cherumapad}, etc., indicating a distance equivalent to that within which a Tiyan or a Cheruman, as the case may be of course, must not approach a man of high caste. At the same time this spatial measurement must be anything by exact, as not only was the polluting distance less for a Nair, for instance, than for a Brahmin, but different standards were mentioned by different authorities.\footnote{136}

Logan in his \textit{Malabar Manual} mentioned the prescribed distance at which the low caste kept away from the Brahmin; The Nayadi (dog-eaters) 72 feet, the Pulayan (agricultural slaves) 64 feet, The Tiyya (toddy tapers) 36 feet, the Mukkuvan (fishermen) 24 feet.\footnote{137} Jonathan Duncan, in his \textit{Remarks on the Coast of Malabar}, says that a Nair may approach a Nambutiri Brahmin, but must not touch him; a Tiyyan must remain 36 paces off; a Malayan (ie, Panan) must remain three or four paces farther; a Pulayan must keep 96 paces from a Brahmin. A Tiyyan must not come within 12 paces of a Nair; a Malayan must keep three or four paces farther off, and Pulayan kept 96 feet from a Nair as well as a Brahmin. A Panan may approach but not touch a Tiyyan but a Pulayan must not even approach a Panan. If any low caste people wish to address a man of higher caste, he must stand off and ‘cry aloud’.

Mateer, in 1861, give 36 paces of distance within which a shaman must not approach a Brahmin, and 96 as the distance for a Pulayan; from a Nair, a Shanan must keep a distance of 12 paces and a Pulaya 66 paces.\footnote{138} Francis Day, writing in 1863, says that an Ilavan (Ezhavan) must keep 36 paces from a Brahmin and 12 from a Nair, while a Kaniyan (astrologer) pollutes Nambutiri Brahmin at 24 feet, and a Nair by touch.\footnote{139}

Wilson, writing some seventy years after Duncan, says that a Nair must not come within 3 feet of a Nambutiri Brahmin, an Ilavan or Shanan within 24 paces and a Pulayan and other untouchable communities within 36 paces, while C.A. Innes, in the Malabar Gazetteer of 1908, says that artisans must keep about 24 feet from a Brahmin, while a Nayadi must keep
74 feet away. There may naturally, of course, have been some changes during the hundred years covered by these reports.

Pollution however acquired by the near approach of a low caste men or by touch, can only be washed out by complete immersion in water. Even to use hot water seems to be against the canon. The water must be in a natural tank or stream; even Ganges water if confined in a tub would perhaps fail to wash away pollution. The strictly orthodox were some times driven to emptying bid bottles of boiling water in to the stream above the place of bathing in order that the health of the bather may not suffer when a journey in a cool climate. The orthodox fashion was to hold the nose with finger and dip completely under the surface. The bath was necessary before food can be taken, or a sacred place entered, or several other acts performed. If a Pulayan touch a Brahmin, the Brahmin must at once bathe, read much of the divine books’, and change his Brahminical thread called poonool. A Nair, on the other hand, or any other caste polluted by a Pulayan’s touch, need only bathe to purity himself.

Unseeability is the most peculiar and most heinous caste pollution in Kerala. According to this, even the sight of certain castes of people will pollute the high caste Nambutiris. Thus they were secluded and isolated in to certain areas by naming them as unseeables. A. Ayyappan (in his Anthropology of Nayadis) recorded that the Nayadis were the most pollutant caste in Kerala. Ayyappan again noticed that the Nayadis when traveling has to avoid not only people of other castes, but dwellings, tanks, temples, and even certain streams when people were bathing in them. If a Nayadi touches the water in which men of higher castes were bathing, the water loses its purifactory qualities so long as the Nayadi is in contact with it within the sight of the bathers. At Vilayur there is a tindal para or pollution rock, which marks the limit within which the Nayadi may not approach the villager. It is three furlongs from there to the nearest Hindu house.
The low caste people’s movement in certain areas was prohibited. The rules did not allow the low castes to use public ways and roads. Thus James Forbes wrote; “The Pulayas are not permitted to breathe the same air with the other castes nor to travel in the public road, if by accident they should be there and perceive a Brahmin or Nair at a distance, they must instantly make a loud howling, to warn him from approaching until they have retired or climbed up the nearest tree.”\textsuperscript{141} According to Francis Pyrad, the Nairs were in the habit of warding off the untouchables by crying ‘\textit{po.po}’ that is they should get out of the way, otherwise, they should chance to touch them, they would resent it and would strike them. Victims of this social injustice were the school children belonging to the low castes, had to walk for hours to cover a short distance from home to school and vice-versa. High caste Hindus frequently harassed the low castes. The government did not interfere with the matter of the untouchables. The caste Hindus believed that it was their right to preserve their superiority. Even a slight variation of the caste rules was disallowed by the caste-Hindus and it was invariably followed by punitive punishments.\textsuperscript{142} 

Therefore the unfortunate low caste men were made to trample along the marshes in a deep mud often went up their hips to avoid polluting their caste superiors. The failure on the part of the members of the lower castes to make way for those of the higher order would invite even death penalty. A Nair was by custom, not expected to take pity on an \textit{avarna} who broke the pollution rule. If a Nair pardoned such a law breaker, and the same came to the notice of the king, the Nair was put to death. It may be noticed that this two kinds of pollution “by people whose very approach within certain distances caused atmospheric pollution, and by people whose very sight caused pollution to those of the higher caste, distinguished the \textit{malayali} system of caste pollution from the Indian system as a whole.”\textsuperscript{143} 

There were also manifold restrictions in regard to their language, dress, ornaments, mode of conveyance, use of domestic vessels, manner of construction of houses etc. The
language and expressions of the caste Hindus could not be used by the *avarnas*. An *avarna* must address a caste-Hindu male as *Thampuran* (my Lord) and female as *Thampuratti* (My lady). He should not refer himself as ‘I’ but only as *adiyan* (your slave). They can’t use the common language and were compelled to use the most object and degrading language. When speaking he must place the hand over the mouth, lest the breath should go forth and polluted person whom he is addressing. The downtrodden people were denied the Sanskrit names as Rama, Krishna, and Ganesa except in their crude form.

With regard to their personal comfort and deportment, the only dress of the degraded class of people was a piece of coarse cloth fastened round the lions. The men as well as women of the lower castes were forbidden to wear any clothing whatever above the waist. They should not wear gold or silver ornaments like the high caste people. The ornaments must be no more valuable than brass or beads. They couldn’t use umbrellas to shelter the body from the scorching heat of the sun. They must not have the right to wear shoes to protect the feet from the horns and sharp stones. They denied the right to build houses like the upper caste Hindus. The *avarnas* could not ride on horse back or to travel on palanquin. The poor *avarnas* could not attend schools, visit open markets, touch and draw water from public tanks and wells etc. Individuals among them who wanted to enjoy privileges in these matters had to make payments to the *sarkar* or to the *naduvazhi* and obtain licenses. *Menippon, mulaivila* (the payments to get the privilege to wear gold ornaments and to cover the breast of the low caste women respectively) etc., were the examples of such payments. This arrangement led to a series of inequitable imposts which imposed an intolerable burden on the members of the backward communities.

The social scene of Kerala, in fact presented many paradoxes. Having seen the extreme rigidity of caste rules and their harsh enforcement in Kerala Swami Vivekananda called it "is a veritable lunatic asylum of India". Gandhiji expressed the view that "in a place so beautiful,
so lovely, there should be unloveliness in man against man was and is a matter of deepest
grief to me. The world outside has a right to measure Hinduism by its manifestation in this
State. Unfortunately for Hinduism, unfortunately for the State, and unfortunately even for all
India there is not much credit to the State in the matter of untouchability”.

In such a socio-political background Sahodharan Ayyappan was born on 22 August
1889 as the last of the nine children of Kochavu and Unnooli at Cherai in the Ernakulam
district of Kerala. Kochavu was a physician, practising indigenous system of medicine.
During that period this system of medicine provided free treatment and came to be known as
Dharma Chikilsa and its physicians as ‘Vaidyar’. Kochavu Vaidyar had a good practice and
therefore was able to support his family well. Unfortunately Kochavu Vaidyar died when
Sahodharan Ayyappan was just two years old. Achuthan, the eldest brother of Sahodharan
Ayyappan who was also a physician like his father, took up the responsibility to look after the
family. He preferred a saintly life and resided in the out house. He was a profound scholar
and very affectionate to Sahodharan Ayyappan. Chattampi Swamikal, Sree Narayana Guru
and Kumaran Asan used to visit their house and stayed as a friend of Achuthan Vaidyar”.

Sahodharan Ayyappan was introduced to the world of education by Kannu Asan in a
kudippallikudam (old village school). Later, he studied in the kalari (grammar school) of
Kochu Pillai Asan and afterwards in the Cherai English School. When Sahodharan Ayyappan
was ten years old, his eldest brother died. In 1904, he joined the Paravoor English High
School. Rama Varma Tampan, the Headmaster of the school and a man of progressive ideas,
was instrumental in motivating him to read books on rationalism and free thinking.

Sahodharan Ayyappan also studied in the B.E.M. College at Calicut for his intermediate
course. During that period he used to attend the cultural gatherings addressed by noted
progressive thinkers like Brahmananda Swami Siva Yogi and Vaghatananda. The thought
provoking speeches against caste system and idol worship stirred the mind of young
Ayyappan. Here took place some fundamental changes in his mindset. He renounced
even though he joined the Madras Christian College and later the Presidency College for B.A. Course, he could not complete due to financial difficulties. Fortunately for Sahodharan Ayyappan, Sree Narayana Guru came to know about his financial difficulties.

Guru was very happy to help this promising youth who was the younger brother of his friend. There upon the Guru gave a letter to Ayyappan addressed to Kumaran Asan, Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam. In the letter Sree Narayana Guru asked Kumaran Asan to give Rs.100/- to Ayyappan for meeting the initial expenses of his studies at Trivandrum. Shortly after receiving the amount, Ayyappan joined the B.A. Degree Course at Maharaja’s College, Trivandrum. While Ayyappan was in Trivandrum, he got ample opportunities to meet the leaders of S.N.D.P. Yogam. In due course, he developed friendly relations with men of progressive socio-political outlook like Kumaran Asan, C.V.Kunjuraman, C.Kesavan and T.K.Madhavan. The first step of Sahodharan Ayyappan in public life was made in Trivandrum through the S.N.D.P. Yogam and its activities. After B.A. examination, he visited the Guru at Alwaye. During the course of discussion, Sree Narayana Guru expressed concern over the caste system and its associated evils and longed for its eradication. This prompted Sahodharan Ayyappan to undertake different strategies for the eradication of caste. When the strategies were put into action, Sahodharan Ayyappan had to face many hardships and sufferings.

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76 It was of two kinds-forced Manual labour and supply of vegetables and provisions. Manual labour was extended to the requirements of the palace and other institutions.
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The Nambudiris and Nairs lived in houses called *Nalukettu*. This traditional housing complex consisted of a central courtyard surrounded by four houses known as *vatakkini* ‘the northern house’, *thekkini* ‘the Southern house’, *Kizhakkini* ‘the Eastern house’, and *Patinjatti* ‘the Western house’ and a Veranda.

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