

Chapter - 5

On Reconstructioning Family Life

Family was another important site into which colonial idea of reform entered and the reconstitution of community identity manifested. In this chapter a detailed discussion on how Namboodiri family form had been discursively objectified and how this new colonial subjects emerged out of this subjectification process began to argue for transforming family structure has been discussed. Colonial ethnography and literature emerged from within constituted that, the basic form of Namboodiri family is *illam*, which follow patrilineal system of inheritance. To keep family property undivided only elder male member of the family got married to Namboodiri women. This marriage is called '*veli*'. All other younger members of the family could have *sambandham*⁵⁰⁶ relations with women of other communities, especially Nayars.

As marked in many of the reform movement in India, the Namboodiri reform movement also showed three levels of structural changes – reformist, transformative and revolutionary. The reformist period brings partial changes in the value system, transformative stage aims at effecting middle-level structural changes and the objective of revolutionary stage is to bring radical changes in the totality of social and cultural systems.⁵⁰⁷ Reformist discourses on family structure was seminal in restructuring Namboodiri identity in the 20th century.

During the first two decades of the 20th century Namboodiri movement projected moderate demand of changes in family relations and educational system. In 1920's

⁵⁰⁶ According to the Madras Namboodiri Act, Act No XXII Sambandham means the relation of husband and wife existing between Namboodiri male and non-Namboodiri female, p.1

⁵⁰⁷ MSA Rao, 'Conceptual Problems in the Study of Social Movements in India', in M.S.A.Rao(ed) *Social Movements in India*, Vol.1, pp.1-15

reform movement began to aim for more changes with discussions on different aspects of their family life. It acquired a radical character and demanded revolutionary changes in the society by 1930's.

By the second half of the 19th century the attitude and way of life of the Namboodiris received intense criticism from different corners with the impact of colonial modernity. It was this criticism that created awareness among them for a self-reform. The reformers targeted their own community to give up their 'out dated' way of life and accept modern ideas.⁵⁰⁸ The reform movement was self-reformatory in character as their social life was in a degenerated condition. '*Sambandham*' and other evils related to marriage, joint family system caused this degeneration. The European travelogues from 16th century to 19th century portrayed the degenerated nature of their life.

The policies and programmes of Yogakshema Sabha played a vital role in the progressive reconstitution of Namboodiri family life. The focus of attention of Yogakshema Sabha was on Sambandham system from the very beginning.⁵⁰⁹ Issue of partition of joint family got prominence in 1920's in the activities of Sabha. Sabha had took up the issues like widow remarriage, reforming of dress, cutting of '*kuduma*' (tuft) and other traditional symbols as a way for modernizing the family life of the Namboodiris in 1930's. By the end of the first phase of Yogakshema Sabha, they understood the importance of labour and family life was reconstituted according to the need of the time.

⁵⁰⁸ Thayatt Sankaran, 'From Suri Namboodirippad to VT Bhattathirippad', in *VT oru Ithihasam* (ed) Palakeezh Narayanan, Cherukad Smaraka Trust, Printhalmana, 2004(reprint), p.56, see also EMS Namboodirippad, '*Kerala Charithrm Marxist Veekshanathil*', Chinta Publishers Thiruvananthapuram, reprint 2008, p.167

⁵⁰⁹ In the early meetings of Sabha resolutions were passed against sambandham. This factor is also supported by the argument that the consciousness for changes in social life resulted in the formation of Yogakshema Sabha in 1908 see G.Arunima, "Writing culture, of Modernity and Malayalam Novel", *Studies in History*, 13,2, n.s, 1997, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p.275

The numerous articles in *Unninamboodiri*, *Yogakshemam*, different Commissions and reports instituted by Yogakshema Sabha viz Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee Report(1925),⁵¹⁰ Namboodiri Female Education Committee Report(1927)⁵¹¹ and the Namboodiri Family Regulation Bills showed the urge of Namboodiris to reconstitute their family according to modern lines. These articles and reports show that there was constant attempt to re-define the meaning of family, concept towards property, ritual status and social status among the Namboodiris.

When attempts to restructure their family life were going on, there was another movement to keep up their traditional character in tact. The Memorandum prepared by the Kottakkal *Upasabha* namely '*Swadharmanushtanam*'⁵¹² (Performance of once own dharma) is the best example in connection with the argument within for the in continuance of traditionalism.

Family life

Colonial discourses stated that the life of Namboodiris was centred on religious observances. They failed to adapt with the changes brought about by the colonial modernity and withdrew to their spiritual world. They failed to get new avenues in the emerging public sphere and more and more they relied upon their traditional space. They had little time to spare for worldly concerns.⁵¹³ Their practices of marriage and inheritance and rights to property were increasingly questioned by the newly emerged

⁵¹⁰ *Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee Report and Draft Regulation*, Mangalodayam, Trissur,1925, the committee was headed by Desamangalathu Guptan Namboodirippad

⁵¹¹ *Namboodiri Female Education Committee Report*(1927), the committee was also headed by Desamangalathu Guptan Namboodirippad and Muthirangodu Bhavatharathan Namboodiri

⁵¹² '*Swadharmanushtanam*' (Performance of once own dharma) passed by Kottakkal upasabha(sub unit) of Yogakshema Sabha on 1916,L.S.Press, Kottakkal,1917

⁵¹³ KPPadmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi,2001,p.130

educated middle class and they also imagined an alternative family structure through different media like novels, dramas, and Reports of the Marriage Commissions.

Natives involved in these discourses asserted that, the reluctance to accept the changes in the society resulted in the lowly state of the Namboodiris. It could be traced back in the writings of early 20th century. Youth Wing in its appeal in 1923 portrayed the nature of the family system like exogamous marriage, life long dependence of the younger people on the other, sorrowful state of unmarried women, and the bickering and strife within the families.⁵¹⁴ Even though well versed in Sanskrit and traditional knowledge they were indifferent towards the wave of change occurring in the 19th century and thus they remained backward.

Namboodiris rejection of tenancy reforms of the late 19th and early 20th century reflects their aversion towards manual labour.⁵¹⁵ Because of their belief in spiritual superiority, though many of them owned large acres of land, they were not ready to work in land. This factor resulted in decline of economic status of the community. Ironically, there was a shift in the interest of the landlords as it projected the interest of the Namboodiri community. Eventually the concerns of the ordinary Namboodiris were being marginalized.⁵¹⁶ They were reluctant to seek new or existing commercial pursuits and solely depended upon the rent received from their tenants. Thus their attitude of dependence on attenders for each and every routine works, made them apathetic, lazy, un-enterprising and exclusiveness from other groups.

⁵¹⁴ 'Appeal of the Yuvajana Sangham', Mathrubhumi, 18-12-1923

⁵¹⁵ In the early sessions of Yogakshema Sabha it expressed anxiety over the growing tenancy agitations and it formed a committee under Kurrur Unninamboodiri to enquire on it. The argument that the Tenancy Legislations of late 19th century influenced the formation of Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha also supports this argument. See P.K.Aryan Namboodiri, *Nalukettil Ninnum Nattilekku*, Mangalodayam Ltd., Trissur, 1969 pp.39-40

⁵¹⁶ Kaplingattu Sankaran Namboodiri, 'Presidential address to the 10th anniversary of Ongallur N.Y.Upasabha, *Unninamboodiri*, 1926(ME.11101 Makaram), Vol.7(4), pp.300-304

Losing of interdependency was another problem of the community by the close of 19th century. The community stood against interdependency by pointing on their caste purity. Knowingly or unknowingly they kept aloof from the changes of the world. When other communities like Nayars and Ezhavas found their space in the new socio-economic political milieu, Namboodiris stood on their traditional milieu. Later reformers during their self-corrective movement argued that ‘the lack modernisation and ignorance were pivotal on the interdependency between the castes by the end of 19th century.’⁵¹⁷ Therefore, Namboodiri youths realized the option for interdependence and the mingling relationship within and with other castes they have to become interdependent with others.⁵¹⁸ They failed to adapt themselves with the requirements of the modern days by sticking on their old ideals and they had not entered into any of the pursuits which were thrown open to them during these days.⁵¹⁹ The community lived in a world of isolation with a false belief of their infallibility and superiority over all beings in this universe. They became simpletons as revealed in the simple jokes, very popular among the Keralites as ‘Namboodiri *phalithangal*’ (Jokes)⁵²⁰ and made them laughing stock for others who were moving with the time. By this isolated life, they became a group of inactive people by the close of 19th century.

Family organization was a major reason for their backwardness. In the family set up, only eldest member of the family was allowed to marry from the community and others engaged in *sambandham* relation with non-Brahmin women. The rights of the junior members were completely neglected. The junior members spent their life without

⁵¹⁷ Mathrubhumi, 20-05-1924

⁵¹⁸ John P Mencher, ‘Namboodiri Brahmins :An analysis of Traditional Elite in Kerala’ in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 1966, p.184

⁵¹⁹ L Anantha Krishna Iyer, *A Short History of Kerala*, Ernakulam, 1966 p.275

⁵²⁰ See for example Kunhunni, *Namboodiri Phalithangal*, Current Books, Kottayam, 1991

any identity. *Aphans* (junior members) had no status in their own home. They were like an ousted group. While women were confined in their home, the *aphans* (junior male members) led a wandering life. These two groups faced persecution- women who spent life inside home and the juniors who were outside the home. These internal proletariats of the community were oppressed and were being exploited.⁵²¹

Sambandham resulted in the steady decline of their population by 19th century.⁵²² One of the dreadful results of *sambandam* was that many Namboodiri women remained chronic spinsters, while Namboodiri elders (Moos) made three or four marriages.⁵²³ Even young girls were married to elders. This resulted in competition among wives⁵²⁴ and early widowhood. Only 1/3 of them had engaged in self-caste marriage.⁵²⁵ Thus marriage system was one of the important reasons for the decline of the Namboodiris.⁵²⁶ This is an image we get while going through the articles in early 20th century on Namboodiris.⁵²⁷

Confinements of women in their homes and their position as chronic spinsters naturally lead to a kind of sexual suppression. Occasions were there for women who had illicit relation with men of other castes. They introduced many mechanisms to control the life of women and also punitary measures. *Smarthavicharam* was one among them. The practice of *smarthavicharam*⁵²⁸ invited vehement criticism during the first decade of the 20th century. It is noted that the number of *smarthavicharam* increased during the later

⁵²¹ K.C.Narayanan, 'Verunangatha Vakku' in *Mathrubhumi weekly*, Vol5(11) January 1997, p.7

⁵²² Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri, Presidential address to the 12th anniversary of Talippally Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha, *Unninamboodiri*, 1928, (ME1103) p.482

⁵²³ Namboodiri polygamy called as *adhivedhanam*

⁵²⁴ competition between wives called as *sapatnimatsaram*

⁵²⁵ Kaplingattu Sankaran Namboodiri, 'Namboodiri Family Regulation', *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1101 Meenam), Vol.7(7), p.398

⁵²⁶ *Ibid*, p.398

⁵²⁷ For more details see second chapter Namboodiris in literature

⁵²⁸ *Smarthavicharam*, the trail conducted to prove the chastity of Namboodiri women

part of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.⁵²⁹ Women were trialed even for minor cases like going to temple without servant.

Being landed aristocracy and ritually dominant, who install political authority (rulers/kings) of pre-colonial period, Namboodiris neither pay much attention to appropriate positions under colonial ruler nor indulged in governmental affairs. On affairs related with politics their attitude was not serious. They were not bothered about the rulers.⁵³⁰ This in turn affected their family structure as well. While other communities began to appropriate new opportunities provided by colonialism and restructured their joint family into nuclear family, for a long period, Namboodiris remained adhered to their pre-colonial form of family life. It is only when they realized that they were losing social and economic dominance, they began to change their family structure, seeing it as an impediment to 'progress'.⁵³¹

In the traditional society identity is inseparable from individual's position in rigid and hierarchical social systems and values. This position is not individual choice but is regarded as something naturally determined and unalterably given by birth.⁵³² Namboodiris believed their identity as something naturally determined and unalterable. In the Namboodiri belief lord is born as lord, commoner as commoner, and there was forcible and immutable identities. But they failed to understand that in the modern world identity is no longer fixed and given by social position.

⁵²⁹ Kanippayyur reported more than 400 smarthavicharam between 1893 and 1913, Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri, *Ente Smaranakal*, Vol.1, Panchangam Books, Kunnankulam, ,p.214

⁵³⁰ They would ask, "what is there in the reign of Rama or Ravana, Editorial, 'Namboodiri Prabhukkanmarku Oru Padam' (A lesson to the Namboodiri Lords), *Unninamboodiri*, 1928,(ME.1103,Medam),Vol.9(7),pp.462-464

⁵³¹ Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri, *Uvajanalum Pravarthiyum* (Youths and Works), in *Unninamboodiri*, 1927(ME 1102 Meenam),Vol.8(7),p.400

⁵³² Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London, Duckwork, 1981, p.240

These facts slowly but strongly influenced the mind of the younger generation, who faced the identity crisis owing to the denial of freedom of marriage and property rights. This situation was aggravated by the movements among the Nayars for ending of sambandham and family regulations. The ideological basis of their movements was individualism, secularism, rationalism, concept of modern civil society, gender equality and above all humanism.

Yogakshema Sabha in praxis – Attempt for reorganizing family life

The policies and attitudes of Yogakshema Sabha from its initiation in 1908 to the end of its first phase of activities in 1947 reflected the demand of modernizing their family life. The discussions within Sabha were the byproduct of the challenges faced by them in the later half of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Yogakshema Sabha during its early phase stood for the protection of the customary concept of family life. During this phase protection of Brahmanism, rights of the *uralers* and spread of *dharmacharam* were the main concern of Sabha. Early leaders of Sabha freely engaged in *sambandham* with other castes.⁵³³ In the beginning it was an association intended to protect the economic interest of the community. The leadership was in the hands of the conservatives who were not taking much interest in the problems of the junior members of the family and the women folk. What the early leaders wanted was to preserve the religious and economic superiority they had enjoyed in the traditional

⁵³³ There is an argument that the rebuke of Tripunithara queens on the lack of education to their Namboodiri husbands forced the Namboodiris to form Yogakshema Sabha, see C.K.Namboodiri, *Yogakshema Sabhayude Munpum Pinpum*, p.9

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society.⁵³⁴ But they understood that without English education the community would be a laughing stock in the society. They were even eager to the rigid and conventional brahmanyam (Brahminhood) in order to embrace English education.⁵³⁵ Though the early leaders were traditional in their outlook they were aware of the degenerated family life.

Yogakshema Sabha in 1920's began to discuss different aspects of family life. Partition of joint family, end of sambandham form of marriage, popularization of self-caste marriage and economic reorganization became major concern of Sabha. Unninamboodiri and Yogakshemam, made serious discussions on the need of restructuring Namboodiri family life.⁵³⁶ Yogakshema Sabha was successful in sending their representatives to the Travancore, Cochin and Madras legislature. Sabha started works for passing Namboodiri Family Regulation Bills. It viewed Family Regulation as great step towards the modernization of family life.⁵³⁷ The appointment of commissions under the initiative of Sabha like Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee in 1925 and Namboodiri Female Education Commission in 1927 were viewed as examples for Sabha's changed attitude towards modernizing family life.

Sabha became more radical by 1930's and it reflected in their family organization. With the influence of the youths, Sabha began to demand stopping of *sambandham*, *adhivedhanam*, promotion of widow remarriage and abandoning of traditional symbols and practices. This radical shift of Sabha could be seen in the speech of Muthirangdu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri in Edakkunni session⁵³⁸, in which he demanded four important changes in attitudes. Rejections of Vedas, destruction of joint

⁵³⁴ KC Narayanan, 'Verunangatha vakku' in *VTyde Sampoorana Krithikal*, DC Books, Kottayam, 1997, p.18

⁵³⁵ E.M.S.Namboodirippad, Presidential address to 34th anniversary of Yogakshema Sabha, 'Namboodiriye Manushyanakkuka' (to make man out of Namboodiri) 24-12-1944, *Desabhimani*, 1945, pp.22-26

⁵³⁶ See Editorial, 'Coming 25th', Unninamboodiri 1925 (ME.1101 Thulam), Vol.7.(2), p.2

⁵³⁷ Ibid, p.2

⁵³⁸ Edakkuni session of Sabha was held in 1929. This session marked the move of Sabha in to radical line

family system, liberating girls from house imprisonment and unity of the different groups within the Namboodiris.⁵³⁹ It was further testified when 25th session of Sabha at Mavelikkara passed resolution for reforming their dressing pattern.

Sabha experimented different method for modernising family life. Theatre proved to be a successful channel for spreading the idea of reforming the family structure. V.T.Bhattathirippad, Mullamangalathu Raman Bhattathirippad, M.P.Bhattathirippad, Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri and Lalithambika Antherjanam fully exploited the potential of literature in their reforming activities. The theatre in 1930's discussed almost everything about the family life. The theatre activities portrayed the need to restructure the community according to the changing times. These dramas were the contributions of *Unninamboodiri* (youth) movement in the 1930's and theatre practice for them was part of the social and political praxis of the period in which they lived.

V.T.Bhattathirippad's play '*Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekku*' (From Kitchen to the Stage) was enacted at Eddakkunni session of Sabha in 1929.⁵⁴⁰ Practices like *sambandham*, marriage of girls to old, *adhivedhanam* (polygamy) and joint family system also came to discussion in the drama. MRB's '*Marakkudaykkullile Mahanarakam*' (The Dirty Hell inside the Protective Umbrella), Premji's (M.P.Bhattathirippad) '*Ritumati*' (Pubertal Girl) and Lalithambika Antherjanam's

⁵³⁹M Bhavathrathan Namboodiri, '*Koottukudumba Jeevitham*',(Joint family life) *Unninamboodiri*, 1927 (ME.1102 Kumbham), Vol.8(6),p.342 Bhavathrathan Namboodiri asked people to throw Vedas into Arabian sea.

⁵⁴⁰ The story is centred on Tethi and Madhavan. Kunju, brother of Tethi and Madhavan were friends. After reading Unni Namboodiri Madhavan decided to go for modern education. Tethi's marriage was proposed with an old man, Karkatankunnath, without her consent. Kunju got an injunction from the Legal Magistrate against the marriage. He later arranges a public meeting and got married to Madhavan. The theme was revolutionary and a bomb shell on orthodoxy. About the condition of Younger brothers in the Namboodiri family the lament of a character that "who is there to love an aphan(junior member)..... I may take birth as a dog, or a cat, or any other despicable being. But I never like to born as an aphan in the Namboodiri community," really manifest the pathetic condition of the youths.(VT, *Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekku*,(1930) DC Books, Kottayam, 1994, pp379-380)

'Savthrikkutty' or Widow Remarriage' portrayed the degenerated family life of the Namboodiris. 'Aphante Makal' of Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri is treated as the best social novel in Malayalam literature after *Indulekha*.⁵⁴¹ 'Aphante Makal' (Paternal Uncles Daughter) is something like a solitary lamp highlighting the social evils of the community that enjoyed priesthood, wealth and social superiority. The mechanical repetition of Vedas by boys, illiteracy of the girls, the rites of repentance, unhappy marriages and attempts for social change had been beautifully portrayed in this social novel.⁵⁴²

Several short stories published by social reformers were having realistic approach to the sufferings of the community. V.T.Bhattathirippad, Mullamangalathu Raman Bhattathirippad and Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri were the pioneers in this field. These short stories portrayed the modern men and women who rejected the ways of orthodoxy and embraced progressivism. They also narrated the stories of the victims of the contemporary social system. *Rajanirangam* (VT), *Valkannadi* (MRB), *Poomkula* (The bunch of flowers) (Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri) etc. utilized the medium of short story to criticize many Namboodiri customs like dowry, Smarthavicharam and gender inequality. Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri's stories like 'Vidavayude Vidhi' and 'Atmahuthi' speak on the degenerated conditions of Namboodiri women and dowry system. Lalithambhika Antharjanam's works like 'Moodupadathil', 'Takarnna Talamura', 'Kilivathililude', 'Prathidwani', Manushyan Mathram, Prathikara Devatha, Vidhibalam, Moodupadam etc. were protests against

⁵⁴¹ Tayyat Sankaran, 'Samuhya Prasthanavum Sahityavum' in AV Sreekumar (ed), *VT Vellithuruthitazhathu Raman Bhattathirippad*, V.T.Centenary Celebration Committee, Mezhatthur, 1997.,p,198

⁵⁴² KKN Kurupp, *Nationalism and Social Change In Malabar The Role of Malayalam Literature*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trissur,199,p.92

social customs and stressed the need of social transformations. All these stories were realistic and were able to catch the spirit younger generation. These stories aimed to convert Namboodiris into 'human beings'. Their purpose was not to entertain the leaders but make them unhappy against existing ritualistic social order and inspire them with the sentiment of nationalism.

The *Yachana Yatra* (hunger march) of 1930 under the leadership of V.T.Bhattathirippad was a strong publicity programme for reforming family life. During *Yachana yatra* leaders focused the need for reforming their dress and manners. The *Yatra* shocked the traditional social setup and the whole Kerala society as well.⁵⁴³

The movement for modernizing family life which got momentum in the 1930's also reflected in the activities of women. The changed attitude of Namboodiri women towards their way of life was demonstrated at Taliparamba session of *Yogakshema Sabha* in 1931, when women (*Antherjanam*'s) appeared without *ghosha* (veil) under the leadership of Parvathi Nenmenimangalam, Aryapallam and Devaki Narikkattari. After having thrown away the *Marakkuda* (cadjan umbrella), Namboodiri women came out to the stage and declared that chastity was not in holding it. They decided to wear saree and other dresses like the other caste women.

Yogakshema Sabha organized direct struggles for achieving marriage reforms in 1930's. Picketing of *sambandham* marriages and *adhivedhanam* (polygamy) were common during this period. *Unninamboodiri* published reports on the picketing of girls marriage with old men and sambhandams marriages under the leadership of *Sabha*.

⁵⁴³ Sastrasarman Karikkad, 'From Namboodiri *Yogakshema Sabha* to *Yogakshema Sabha*', *Yogakshemam*, March 1985, Vol.6(3,4,5),p,3

Youths were in the forefront of these direct struggles against marriage evils.⁵⁴⁴ Sabha also organized massive propaganda for intra-caste marriages.⁵⁴⁵ It was against the growing orthodoxy among a section of Namboodiri society that V.T.Bhattathirippad published the pamphlet 'Let us set fire the temples' (*Eni Namukku Ambalangalkku Tee Kolutham*). Traditionalist reacted sharply against V.T.Bhattathirippad and with their influence Cochin Raja issued an order for expelling V.T. from Cochin State.⁵⁴⁶

Though Sabha worked for unity, the internal hierarchy within the community like Adyan, Asyan, Othan, Mooss and Pottis continued in the 1930's. There was ban on marriage between these groups. The Pottis of Travancore were not considered as equal with Namboodiris of other parts of Kerala.⁵⁴⁷

The training given to Antherjanam in modern domesticity and the promotion of intra-caste marriage was the focal points in connection with modernization of family life in the 1930's. Moreover they were aware of the promotion of remarriage of widows and relief of young women who forced to marry old men.⁵⁴⁸ The movement for widow remarriage was a radical step in the movement for family reorganization. Though two widow remarriages were conducted under the leadership of V.T.Bhattathirippad, the movement was not a complete success.⁵⁴⁹ It was a clear evidence to argue that many of them even in the 1930's were not progressive enough to accept such revolutionary

⁵⁴⁴ P.Narayanan Namboodiri, 'Acharya viplavavum acharyanaya V.Tum-II' (Ritual revolution and the leader V.T), *Yogakshemam*, March 1985, Vol.6(3,4,5),,p,7

⁵⁴⁵ Toshie Awaya, 'Women in the Nambutiri Caste Movement' in T.Mizushima and H. Yanagisawa (ed) *History and Society in South India*, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 1996,p.50

⁵⁴⁶ V.T.Bhattathirippad, *Karmavipakam*, D.C Books, Kottayam, 2007

⁵⁴⁷ As a step for ending this differences one of the leaders of Yogakshema Sabha Madambu Narayanan Namboodiri married from Nambi Pandarathil illam, who were considered low in status to the Namboodiris, P.Narayanan Namboodiri, 'Ritual Revolution and the leader VT', *Yogashemam*, 1985 March. April. May, p,9

⁵⁴⁸ VT, 'Punarvivaham Allenkil Vidhavavivaham', *Karmavipakam*, pp.344-47

⁵⁴⁹ Devaki Nilayankode in her opined though reformers considered widow remarriage as their major contribution there was only two widow remarriage during reform period, pp.40-41

ideas.⁵⁵⁰ The fact was that the argument against dowry was rejected not only by the Namboodiris but by the whole communities.⁵⁵¹ Though V.T.Bhattathirippad tried to popularize widow remarriage through massive campaigns, the orthodox section of the community was not ready to accept it.⁵⁵² One of the reasons for the failure of the programme was that V.T.Bhattathirippad and the progressive youths lacked organizational support because Sabha was under the control of orthodox group. The radical steps taken by the movement had some fundamental results. The Madras Namboodiri Act was passed in 1932 and Travancore Namboodiri Bill was introduced in 1935.

Sabha launched the programme of breaking the '*Poonul*' (sacred thread) and cutting the *kuduma* (tuft) in 1930's. These programmes helped to pace up the demands for reforming the dress code of the Namboodiris. Sabha also showed the courage to make relations with those who were convicted in Thathri case.⁵⁵³ In a meeting in 1937, Sabha decided to remove the untouchability inflicted on VK Narayana Bhattathiri, who was a convict of Thathri's case. The smaller success in removing social evils related with sambandham, adhivedhanam, and partition of joint family resulted in a kind of lethargy that led to inaction within Sabha by 1935.⁵⁵⁴

The attitude of Sabha that the community men should become a labourer and productive force in the 1940's made thorough changes in their life concept. Sabha leaders in the 1940's urged them to collaborate with other communities for ending social

⁵⁵⁰ M.N.K.Nayar, 'Parivarthanathintethaya aranootttandu', (Half century of transformation), *Yogakshemam*, March 1985, Vol.6(3,4,5), p.35

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.36

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, p.36

⁵⁵³ kuriyedathu Tathri was convicted through *Samrthavicharam* in 1905

⁵⁵⁴ N.V.Krishna Warier, 'Adhuneekaranathinte randu mughangal', (two faces of modernization), *Yogakshemam*, September 1979, Vol.1(1), p.19

evils. The slogan of Sabha 'transform Namboodiris human beings, that reached momentum at Ongallur session of Sabha in 1944 under E.M.S.Namboodirippad aimed a complete reorganization of their family life. The beginning of labour centres for training Namboodiris in different professions was a land mark in the process of reconstitution of family life.

Self-Reformist discourses

They conducted serious discourses on various issues related with marriages, caste exclusiveness, rational outlook, concept of modernization and ritual reforms. Discussions on these issues appeared in the pages of Unninamboodiri and Yogakshemam, small pamphlets written by reformist leaders, and discussions on the reports of various commissions. The discussions reflected the self-reformatory character of the Namboodiri reform movement. The significance of the discussions was that it centered on some issues like reforming of marriage, concept of '*Namboodiritham*' (Brahminhood), communal harmony and economic reorganization which reflected their urge to change according to time. These discussions within the community in the 1920 have resulted in the radical movements for family reorganization in the 30's and passing of Namboodiri Bills like Madras Namboodiri Act and Travancore Namboodiri Bill.

Reformers argued that they were facing the threat of decline of population. Namboodiris believing in their purity were not ready to accept any one from outside. But at the same time many were excommunicated from the community by the practices like Smarthavicharam. These rules resulted in the decline of their population. Reformers considered population as the strength of the community. They asked Namboodiris to notice the growth of Christians and Muslims, who came as minority group to Kerala has

now strengthened themselves by incorporating all to their faith.⁵⁵⁵ Reformist argument was that the number of population would result in the progress of the community.⁵⁵⁶ They argued that in modern age no community could survive without a strong backing of population. But orthodox group responded to this argument by pointing that only by maintaining purity that the community could survive.

Reform movement aimed to transform them into human beings by reforming rituals, dress and language. Reformers asked them to abandon their false belief of domination over others. They also requested Namboodiris to non-co-operate with the traditionalist for their opposition in abandoning traditional symbols and dresses.⁵⁵⁷ In reformist opinion right education, clean dress and reformed ornaments could change them into human beings.⁵⁵⁸ Reform movement aimed for reforming the dress of both men and women. Men appeared in public by wearing shirts and *dhoti* and women with saree and blouse. By 1940 the attitude and dress of the Namboodiris totally changed. Reformers also demanded change in food habits and stood for freedom of individuals in accepting food of his choice.⁵⁵⁹

Another testimony of the self-corrective movement was their attack on the domination of priests. Reformers judged that their backwardness was due to the orthodoxy of the priests. Progressives argued that in the modern period there was no place for self-centred landlordism and power mongering. They added that community

⁵⁵⁵ Ramavarma Thampan, 'Unninamboodirimarodu Orulbodhanam', (A Call to Namboodiri youths), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926(ME.1102 Kanni), vol.8 (1),p.38

⁵⁵⁶R..Eswarapilla, 'Namboodirimarum Samudaya Parishkaravum; (Namboodiris and Community Reforms),*Unninamboodiri*, 1925-26(ME.11101 Dhanu), Vol.7(4), p.224

⁵⁵⁷ R.Eswara Pilla, op.cit, p.227

⁵⁵⁸ P.M.Manazhi, 'Antherjanagalum avarude vesha bhushanangalum' (Antherjanams and their dress and ornaments), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1102 Chingam), Vol.7(12),p,716

⁵⁵⁹ M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Namboodiri Yuvakkale'(Namboodiri youths),*Unninamboodiri*, 1927-28 (ME.1103 Dhanu), Vol.9(4),pp.244-254

laws framed by priests were hard to accept. Reformers affirmed that only by freeing themselves from the clutches of orthodox priests that the community could develop.⁵⁶⁰ Namboodiris followed the practice of conferring hereditary rights of handling different aspects of Veda even if the power conferred one were ignorant on it.⁵⁶¹

Reformers expressed the instancy to control the authority of priests. They contented that the dissolutions in matters of rituals were the result of orthodoxy of the priests.⁵⁶² Reformers reminded that the community depends on priestly class seems to be declined and the orthodox priests always moved community to narrow outlook by superstitions, foolish rituals and practices.⁵⁶³ In their deliberations reformers equated Vedic priests with Christian priests of 16th century Europe, who failed to understand the rich and resourceful religious principles, but moved towards religious principles, persecuted and punished those who opposed their dogmas. Reformers compared the sale of indulgences by the European priests with the activities of Vedic priests who received money from their followers for liberating them from their illegal activities. Reformers questioned the practice of continuing the Vedic rites without understanding the true meaning of rituals.⁵⁶⁴ In their rational approach reformers contented that devotion to God is important and in the devotion to god there was no need of a middle man.⁵⁶⁵ Rationalism and free thinking were advocated as a prerequisite for the progress of the

⁵⁶⁰Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri, 'Vaidikadhikara Niyanthranam'(Restricting the power of the priests), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926(ME.1102 Kanni), vol.8(1),p.67

⁵⁶¹ Changan protests were put as an example for this attitude. Even after the death of the man who was an authority on the Changaliyottu Veda, the rights were conferred on his successors who were ignorant on it. *Ibid*,p.69

⁵⁶² A.Bhavadasan Namboodirippad, 'Namboodirithamo Manushyathamo' (Namboodiritham or Humanism), *Unninamboodiri*, 1928(ME.1104 Vrichikam),Vol.10(3),p,178

⁵⁶³M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Speech in Youth Wing' *Unninamboodiri*, 1928-29(ME.1104 Dhanu),Vol.10(4), pp.234-256

⁵⁶⁴Kodanattu Narayanan Namboodirippad, 'Presidential address to the 7th anniversary of Namboodiri Youth wing', *Unninamboodiri*, 1925-26(ME.11101 Dhanu), Vol.7(4), pp.231-246

⁵⁶⁵ M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Samudaya parishkaram'(community Reforms), *Unninamboodiri*, 1928(ME.1103 Karkkidakam), Vol.9(11),pp.637-641

community. Youth of the community were asked to free themselves from the control of priests.⁵⁶⁶ These deliberations illustrate the reformist position that control of priests was essential for democratizing community and bringing the community into the main stream of Kerala society.

The economic disparities existed among them was well noticed by the reformers and they lamented that the community laws were framed accordance with the wishes of these wealthiest groups. Reformers held that the prevailing law codes were interpreted by this group for their own benefit.⁵⁶⁷ In the reformist impression reformulation of caste rules and end of primitive form of punishment like smarthavicharam were essential for ending economic disparity existed among them.⁵⁶⁸ While pointing on their reluctance to work and adapt with modern situations reformers made comparison between Namboodiris and other Brahmin groups like the Tamil Brahmins. Reformers admitted that Tamil Brahmins were ready to adapt with the changed situations and were employed in different fields of colonial Government. Reformers asked their fellow men to take Tamil Brahmins as a model.⁵⁶⁹

They expressed their readiness to accept the call of prominent social reformers of the time like Mannath Padmanabhan to inspire their community for reforming their social life.⁵⁷⁰ In an article written in *Unninamboodiri*, Mannath Padmanabhan reminded

⁵⁶⁶ Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri, 'Vaidikadhikara Niyanthranam' (Controlling the power of Vedic Priests), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1102 Kanni), Vol.8(1) pp.66-72

⁵⁶⁷ Vadakkamkur Raja Raja Varma, 'Mathavum Samuhavum (Religion and Community)', *Unninamboodiri*, 1924 (ME.1100 Vrichikam), Vol.6(3), p.191

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.195

⁵⁶⁹ Thomas Johnson Nopsiiter, *Communism in Kerala A study of Political Adaptation*, University of California Press, 1982, p.27

⁵⁷⁰ Mannathu Padmanabha Pillai, 'Namboodiri Yuvajana Sangham' (Namboodiri Youth Wing), *Unninamboodiri*, 1928 (ME.1104 Thulam), Vol.10(2), p.121, The editorial of *Unninamboodiri* on the eve of the 19th anniversary at Kumaranellur expressed the need of accepting the advice of reformers of other communities for successful implementation of reformist programme among the Namboodiris. Editorial,

the Namboodiris that all the communities of Kerala were actively working for reforming themselves and the Namboodiris who had once enjoyed dominance over Kerala society became stagnant and if the present condition continued they would lose their position.⁵⁷¹ He advised them to reform their customs and practices according to time. He also explained that during the last some years they lacked progressive elements in the community and it resulted in their decline. The internal weaknesses of the Namboodiris were the main hindrance to their progress.⁵⁷² This argument of a reformist leader was received by Namboodiris positively and attempts have been taken to end the internal weakness during 1930's.

Reformist deliberations on '*Namboodiritham*' or Brahmanism shows the intensity of internal contradictions existed within them during the reform period. Even if the traditionalist always stood for the protection of Namboodiritham, they failed to give a concrete meaning to it. At the same time the progressive reformers stood for ending internal hierarchy within the community like that of Pattars, Embranthiris and Pottis.⁵⁷³ They opined that assimilation of customs and practice to one that forms '*Namboodiritham*'. They stood for ending differences within these internal groups in marriage, joint family system, treatment of widow and customs like wearing of purdah. This had direct effect on Namboodiri family structure. To them '*Namboodiritham*' denotes equality among the internal groups.⁵⁷⁴ In the reformist perception '*Namboodiritham*' was acceptable not exclusively to the Namboodiris alone but to all

'19th anniversary of Yogakshema Mahasabha', *Unninamboodiri*, 1926-27 (ME.1102 Dhanu), Vol.8(4), pp.209-215, see '8th anniversary of Youth wing', Editorial, Ibid, pp.215-219

⁵⁷¹ Mannathu Padmanabha Pillai, op.cit, p, 122

⁵⁷² Ibid, p, 123

⁵⁷³ Tamil Brahmins were called by Namboodiris as Pattar, Namboodiris of Northern Kerala were called as Embranthiris and Namboodiris of Travancore area were called as Pattars. Orthodox Namboodiris considered these groups as inferior to them. See for example, Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri, 'Ente Smaranakal' (My Memoirs), Panchangam books, Kunnankulam, p.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, p, 180

human beings. A wider perspective of the community on humanism was evident in this context. In their attempt to give new meaning to ‘*Namboodiritham*’ reformers questioned Sankara Smrithi, which regulated Namboodiri life up to 20th century.⁵⁷⁵ Reformers asserted that ‘*Namboodiritham*’ of ending economic disparity existed among the Namboodiris.⁵⁷⁶

Another important realm that the reformers tried to address was the concept of *dharma*. Reformers disputed that their notion of *dharma* had reached the level of rejecting modern education and marriage reforms.⁵⁷⁷ This traditional apprehension of *dharma* was viewed as an opposition to the changes in the modern world.⁵⁷⁸ Reformers maintained that while other communities moved with time, Namboodiris could not accept this fact and resulted in the fall of the community.⁵⁷⁹ Namboodiri *dharma* according to the reformist feeling allow them to take English education, maintain friendly relations with other communities, freedom to travel all over the world, engage Government employment and involve in different economic pursuits.⁵⁸⁰ This envisages a movement of Namboodiris from within the fold of *illam* to that of public sphere.

Reformers denied any special *dharma* for the Namboodiris. They urged them to bypass their narrow frame of mind and accept general human ideologies.⁵⁸¹ In the reformist feeling only some qualities of Namboodiris were liable to continue like intelligence, sense of humor, innocence, cleanliness, and hospitality.⁵⁸² But the orthodox

⁵⁷⁵ Cherumukku Vaidiakan Cheriya Vallabhan Namboodiri, ‘Presidential address to the 8th anniversary of Namboodiri youth wing’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1926-1927(ME.1102 Dhanu), vol.8(4),p,227

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid*,p,244, Economic disparities existed between the Namboodiris as *Adyans* and *Asyans*

⁵⁷⁷ A.Bhavadasan Bhattathirippad,op.cit,p,178

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*,p181

⁵⁷⁹ M.Ramavarma Thampan, ‘Unninamboodirimarodu Orulbodhanam’ (A call to Unninamboodiris), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926(ME.1102 Kanni), vol.8 (1),pp.37-41

⁵⁸⁰ A.Bhavadasan Bhattathirippad,op.cit,p.182

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid*,p.183

⁵⁸² *Ibid*,p.184

stood on the view that changes in the way of life would destroy Namboodiri *dharma*. Thus abandonment of the false concept on dharma highlighted reformist discourses.

Another aspect that affected that affected the family structure and family life of the Namboodiris was the changing attitude towards labour. Till the early 20th century Namboodiris kept their family structure and life intact by involving in ritual service only. They hardly worked in agricultural fields.⁵⁸³ There were restrictions for them to engage in trade and and turned an aversion towards engaging in industries.⁵⁸⁴ But colonial modernity forced them to change their attitude towards labour. Reformists argued that classification of labour as lower and higher must be done away with. All has its own value. If Namboodiris are not willing to take up opportunities provided by the colonists they will soon lose their existing authority over the society. It is in this context argument for engaging in manual labour emerged. There were also arguments to consider priestly activities as enterprising profession. Reformers suggested them to change their notion on manual labour as public opinion on manual labour changed according to time.⁵⁸⁵

Their economic independence gave strength for them to re-draw family relations, including marriage. '*Namboodirimarude durnadappu*' (misdemeanor of the Namboodiris), a small pamphlet written by Desamangalathu Valiya Narayanan Namboodiri, which was later published in *Unninamboodiri*, denounced Namboodiri practice of *sambandham* for self-caste marriage.⁵⁸⁶ Citing the traditional works like

⁵⁸³ K.Sankaran Namboodiri, 'Yuvajanangalum Pravarthiyum', (Youths and activities), *Unninamboodiri*, 1927 (ME 1102Meenam), Vol.8(7), pp.400-401, See M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Namboodiris and reforms', *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1099 Midhunam), Vol.5(10), pp.455-462, M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Unninamboodirimarodu Orulbodhanam' (A call to Unninamboodiris), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926(ME.1102 Kanni), vol.8 (1), pp.37-41

⁵⁸⁴ M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Speech in Youth Wing' *Unninamboodiri*, 1928-29(ME.1104 Dhanu), Vol.10(4), p.248

⁵⁸⁵ K.Sankaran Namboodiri, op.cit, p.401

⁵⁸⁶ Desamangalam Valiya Narayanan Namboodiri, 'Namboodirimarude Durnadappu' (Misdemeanor of the Namboodiris), *Unninamboodiri*, 1923(ME.1099 Vrichikam), Vol.5(3), p.164

‘Keralolpathi’, ‘Asouchadeepika’ and ‘Smartha Prayaschitham’ he tried to prove Namboodiris marriage with other caste was against the law codes. In such arguments involved the idea of imagining an alternative family form, possibly a nuclear family. But, such a family became a reality only a bit late.

‘Old practices or *Keezh nadappu*’,⁵⁸⁷ published in *Unninamboodiri* by Muthorangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri observed that orthodox never supported the permanency or continuity of human beings and this attitude caused the decline of community. Traditional practices restricted the freedom of travel of Antherjanams (Namboodiri women) and resulted in the primitive life of Antherjanam.⁵⁸⁸ The old practices were viewed as the reason for the primitive dressing style and the way of life.⁵⁸⁹ Changes in the family life were considered as essential for modernising family life.⁵⁹⁰ Bhavathrathan Namboodiri further argued that in the affairs of marriage Namboodiris had reached in the lowest ebb and he expressed the urgency of reforming joint family system for bringing marriage reforms.⁵⁹¹

Bhavathrathan Namboodiri made vehement criticism on the ghosha (veil) system of the women. He argued that nowhere in the world other than Namboodiris Ghosha continued which covered the whole part of the body of women.⁵⁹² Muslim women, some Bengali women and Parsi women wore purdah. Though purdah was a veil for their face it had scarcely hampered their freedom of movement and interaction in socio-political

⁵⁸⁷ Old practices or *Keezh nadappu*’ was published in *Unninamboodiri* as a series by Muthurangodu Bhavathrathanh Namboodiri

⁵⁸⁸ Muthurangodu Bhavathrathanh Namboodiri, ‘Old practices or Keezhnadappu-I’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1101 Midhunam), Vol.7(9),p.574

⁵⁸⁹ Muthurangodu Bhavathrathanh Namboodiri, ‘Old practices or Keezhnadappu-II’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1101 Karkkidakam), Vol.7(11),p.647

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*,p.650

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid*,p.651

⁵⁹² Muthurangodu Bhavathrathanh Namboodiri, ‘Old practices or Keezhnadappu-III’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1102 Chingam), Vol.7(12),p.675

life.⁵⁹³ But to Namboodiri women purdah connotes and defines their way of life. Namboodiri ghosha was different from others. It restricted them inside the houses. Entertainment other than reading of puranas and cooking were not allowed to Namboodiri women. Women were not allowed to engage in any activities that resulted in intellectual development. The routine works of women were same in all days. Caste rules prevented them from interaction with the outer world. Women were completely isolated from the worldly affairs.⁵⁹⁴

Reformers made a self-analysis that though Namboodiris were discussing on self-caste marriage for a long time, no one had come forward to put it into practice.⁵⁹⁵ One of the chief agenda of the Namboodiri reformist discourse was of popularization of self-caste marriage.⁵⁹⁶ Reformers tried to link the issue of self-caste marriage with the problem of decline in Namboodiri population. As an example of this argument, a small pamphlet which was in circulation at Thiruvananthapuram, prepared by the progressive youths, warned Namboodiris that the continuance of sambandham would result in the total extinct of the community.⁵⁹⁷ Very interesting remark of the pamphlet was that if the system of sambandham continued they will extinct from Kerala and for seeing a Namboodiri one should go to Government zoo.⁵⁹⁸

The reformers in the 1920's acknowledged that two types of reforms essential for them - reforming of family property and creation of essential purity in the case of marriage. By reforming family property reformers aimed to end of the misrule of the

⁵⁹³ Ibid,p,676

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid,p,677

⁵⁹⁵ Editorial, 'Kadinakkayyukal' (hard activity), *Unninamboodiri*, 1923-24 (ME.1099 Dhanu), Vol.5(4), p.215

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid,p.216, M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Unninamboodiramarodu Orulbodhanam' (A call to Unninamboodiris), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1102 Kanni), vol.8 (1), pp.37-41

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid,p.218

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid,p.216

karanavers and equal treatment of all members in a family. This equal treatment would result in the self-caste marriage of all members and educational opportunities to all.⁵⁹⁹ Division of joint family property also forced for seeking different professions by the family members. Reformers rejected the argument of the orthodox that division of family property would result in poverty and quarrels. Reformers argued that was that self-caste marriage would be followed by acceptance of modern education, ritual reforms and emancipation of women. Reformers argued these two types of reforms would bring democratic values in families.⁶⁰⁰

Reformers admitted that as far as the marriage affairs were concerned they fell into the last rung of social ladder.⁶⁰¹ The youngsters were not enjoying any freedom in the case of marriages were lived irresponsibly. This problem in connection with the marriage affairs of youngsters had affected the whole community. Reformers characterized it as building of houses out of sand.⁶⁰² Reformers went to the extent of characterizing this practice of *adhivedhanam* as inhuman and anti-natural.⁶⁰³ They stood for the popularization of *parivedhanam* in the place of *adhivedhanam*.⁶⁰⁴ Self-caste marriage was also apprehended as a solution to the problems faced by them in marriage

⁵⁹⁹ Editorial, 'Pradhana Parishkarangal' (Important Reforms), *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1099 Karkkidakam) Vol.4(11),p.570

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid,p.570

⁶⁰¹ Editorial, 'Keralathile Vijatheeya Dambathyam' (Other caste marriages in Kerala), *Unninamboodiri*, 1924 (ME.1099 Karkkidakam), Vol.5(11),pp.507-511

⁶⁰² Mozhikkunnam Brahmadattan Namboodirippad, 'Nammude Innatte Athyavasyam' (Our essentialities of today), in *Unninamboodiri*, 1925(ME.1099Kanni),Vol.7(1),p.10

⁶⁰³ Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri, 'Presidential address to the 9th anniversary of Kavalappara Namboodiri Yogakshema sabah', *Unninamboodiri*, 1925(ME.1101Thulam),Vol.7(2),p.188

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid,pp.188-189, see Editorial, 'Parivedhanam' *Unninamboodiri*, 1927(ME.1102 Midhunam),Vol.(.),pp.549-551

affairs.⁶⁰⁵ Reformers were aware of the fact that Namboodiri marriage, especially sambandham marriage were increasingly criticized by different sections of the society.⁶⁰⁶

The reformist deliberations in certain situations desired for communal solidarity and cooperation. Reformers lamented that all community leaders were working for communal representation and political rights, but nobody was there to speak for unity of communities. The leaders perceived that the real reform aimed for intellectual and mental development and that would led to communal solidarity.⁶⁰⁷ On many occasions reformers expressed their attitude of brotherhood of all human beings without considering caste, religion, language and nationality.⁶⁰⁸ Reformers demanded full freedom for inter-caste marriage and inter-dinning which would work for human brotherhood. They also were of the opinion that every community should enjoy the freedom to cooperate and interact with other communities and pointed at the meaninglessness of untouchability, and unseeability⁶⁰⁹ Moreover they expressed that the essence of relation between men and women was not strictly based on caste or religion but by cherishing love and human values. The crux of Smarthavicharam also underlined the same.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁵ Kesavan Namboodirippad, 'Presidential address to the 5th Anniversary of Youth Wing', *Unninamboodiri*, 1924 (ME.1099 Medam), Vol.5(8),pp.352-358

⁶⁰⁶ Editorial, 'Prasangavum Pravarthiyum' (speech and action), *Unninamboodiri*, 1923 (ME.1099 Karkkidakam), Vol.4(11), pp.571-572

⁶⁰⁷ R.Eswarapillai, 'Namboodirimarum Samudaya Parishkaravum' (Namboodiri and community reforms), *Unninamboodiri*, 1925-26 (ME.1101Dhanu), Vol.(),p.224

⁶⁰⁸ Mahopadhyayan Ravivarma Thampan, 'Samathwavum sahodaryavum' (Equality and Fraternity), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1102 Kanni), vol.8(1),pp.17-21

⁶⁰⁹ M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Achara naveekaranam'(ritual reforms), *Unninamboodiri*, 1924 (ME.1100 Kanni),vol.6(1),pp.30-41

⁶¹⁰ A.Ramavarma Thampan, ' The sudden changes to brought about by the Namboodiris', *Unninamboodiri*

Reformers argued that the rituals had blocked the progress of the community and hence should be eliminated.⁶¹¹ Many of the Namboodiri customs and rituals were not suitable for the modern age.⁶¹² Reformers contested that human beings were not for rituals but rituals for human beings.⁶¹³ Partition of the family property and the removal of the fetters on individual freedom imposed by the joint family set-up were important issues addressed by reformist leaders.⁶¹⁴

Reformers were also bothered on the way by which community could be reformed on modern ways. They analyzed whether reform would start from the upper level to lower level or vice versa. Reformist leaders reviewed and interpreted reformist programmes in different parts of the world like Japan and Turkey. They understood that Japanese King started social and community reforms by asking Samurai lords to marry from untouchable Ayinos. The Japanese Kings became a model by wearing themselves western style of dress and education. The experience from Turkey was that Mustapha Kamal Pasha boycotted Caliph and stopped Purdah system. Changes in Japan and Turkey were achieved of having no bloodshed. But the cases in French and Russian were different. Namboodiri reformers accepted the model of Japan and Turkey were reform was accepted from upper level to lower level. Namboodiri traditional concept of nonviolence also was exhibited in this deliberation.

⁶¹¹ Dr.A.L.Ravivarma, 'Aacharasamskaranam'(Reframing rituals), *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1099 Edavam),Vol.5(9),pp.407-412

⁶¹² for example customs and practices like '*upanayana*' (wearing sacred thread) and '*samavarthana*' restricts Namboodiri youths from taking English education and participating in the worldly affairs

⁶¹³ Cherumukku Vaidiakan Cheriya Vallabhan Namboodiri, 'Presidential address to the 8th anniversary of Namboodiri youth wing', *Unninamboodiri*, 1926-1927(ME.1102 Dhanu), vol.8(4), p,228

⁶¹⁴ Muthirangodu Bhavathrathanh Namboodiri, 'Koottu kudumba jeevitham' (Joint family life), *Unninamboodiri*, 1927 (ME.1102 Kumbham), Vol.8(6),p.342 , Same caste marriage was started at Kidangur Thiruvananthapuram.

While these issues were seriously debated among them, there was a section that stood for the continuance of Namboodiri traditionalism. The arguments in support of traditionalism located Namboodiri craze towards western culture as the main cause for the decadent state of the Namboodiri life. Vedas and Dharmasastras⁶¹⁵ were projected as the two eyes of Namboodiris.⁶¹⁶ Traditionalists asked progressive to withdraw their allegiance towards western officials, religion and rituals. They insisted sudden withdrawal from all modernization movements. They also requested to keep away from all modern samajams (associations) and institutions, which had western influence and asked to follow the laws laid down by religious scriptures.⁶¹⁷ Traditionalists argued that the Namboodiri community had been the part of great cultural tradition and the simplicity in life of the Namboodiris was the part of this tradition. They considered Namboodiris as the only community of Kerala who carry this great cultural tradition.⁶¹⁸ To them the real Brahminhood lied in Namboodiri traditionalism and the way of life instituted by the Smrithis.

The youths conducted massive campaigns against consuming of liquor and tobacco. They expressed their anxiety over the increasing habit of tobacco consumption among the Namboodiri youths.⁶¹⁹ They were aware of the decline of their hold over Brahmaswam and devaswam, which they had been enjoying for centuries.⁶²⁰ Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiris presidential address of the 6th anniversary of

⁶¹⁵ Dharmasastras, ancient law codes of India like *Manu Smrithi*, *Narada Smrithi* and *Sankara Smrithi*

⁶¹⁶ Vadakkamkur Ramavarma Raja, 'NamboodirimarumVedabhyasavum' (Namboodiris and Vedic education), *Unninamboodiri*, 1922(ME.1098 Kanni), Vol.4(1)p.80

⁶¹⁷ Ibid,p.81. For Namboodiris, according to the traditional conception they had to abide the rules Sankara Smrithi.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid,p.83

⁶¹⁹ Editorial, 'YuvajanaSanghamLaghupatrika (Small pamphlet of Yuvajanasangham), *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1100 Thulam),vol.6(2),p.97

⁶²⁰ Editorial, 'Vijatheeya sambandhathinte Vardhanav' (Increase of other caste marriage), *Unninamboodiri*, 1929 (ME.1104 Makaram), Vol.10(5),p.4476

Namboodiri Youth Wing pointed out that Devaswams were captured by the respective Governments of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar and decline in Brahmaswam was due to their attitude towards Government employment and English education.⁶²¹ Aversion towards western education and opportunities created by the western Government resulted in complete disappearance of Namboodiris from public sphere.⁶²²

Reformers also made a self-criticism on customs and practices like *Murajapam*⁶²³ which welcomed criticism on the community from different corners. Newspapers in Travancore criticized it as a sole activity of the Namboodiris.⁶²⁴ They blamed that though Travancore was the centre of different types of popular movements, there was no movement against *Murajapam*. Reformers argued that the major shares of money spent in the name of *Murajapam* were not enjoyed by the Namboodiris participating in *Murajapam*, but went into the pockets of the officers and other supporters of the king.⁶²⁵ Hence the reformers urged Namboodiris to keep away from these types of rituals.⁶²⁶ A different position was taken by some reformist leaders by stating that *Murajapam* was not a luxurious ritual but a ritual which sought God's blessings through chanting of the Vedas.⁶²⁷

Yogakshema sabha defended the criticisms on the community for participating in *Murajapam* by passing a resolution against it in its annual session at Mavelikkara in

⁶²¹ Ibid,p,451

⁶²² Ravivarma Thampan, 'Innathe Nila Maranam' (The present condition should be changed), *Unninamboodiri*, 1925(ME.1100 Edavam), Vol.6(9),p,477

⁶²³ ritual conducted in every six years by the Travancore Raja

⁶²⁴ Editorial, 'Yogakshemam Company', *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1100 Thulam), vol.6(2),p.115

⁶²⁵ Ibid,p,117

⁶²⁶ Editorial, 'Youth Wing', *Unninamboodiri*, 1928-29(ME.1104 Dhanu),Vol.10(4),p215

⁶²⁷ Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri, *Ente Smaranakal*, Vol.1, Panchangam Books, p.91

1928.⁶²⁸ The participant discussed the impropriety of continuing *Murajapam*.⁶²⁹ It passed resolutions requesting Travancore Government to utilize money earmarked for *Murajapam* to the progress of education.⁶³⁰ *Murajapam* made people lazy and unconcerned of family. Therefore, ending *Murajapam* would end laziness and will bring back young and able bodied Namboodiris into family, not the old one, but the newly imagined nuclear family as responsible head.

Self-transformation was the widely acknowledged agenda of the Namboodiri reform. Attempt to self-transformation was found in the reformist speeches, articles, literature and theatre activities. This also had its effect on family. *Swadharmanushtanam* (performance of one own dharma), Memorandum of Kottakkal upasabha, E.T.Divakaran Mooss Response to Family Regulation Committee Report and Namboodiri Female Education Committee Report were example for this. *Swadharmanushtanam* (observing self-duties), was a set of schemes of observing self-duties and rituals by the Namboodiris for the protection of Brahmanism. Fundamental to this protection of Brahmanism was the protection of family structure. The memorial discussed Namboodiri *dharma*, its forms, obstacles in the observance of dharma in the modern world and solutions for overcoming the obstacles.⁶³¹ By discussing of various elements of dharma, the memorial pointed on the need of protecting the values cherished by Namboodiris through ages.

⁶²⁸ Editorial, 'SamudayikaSammelanangal-Yogakshema Sabha' (Community meetings-Yogakshema Sabha), *Unninamboodiri*, 1928-29(ME.1104 Dhanu), Vol.10(4),p.227

⁶²⁹ *Ibid*,p.229

⁶³⁰ *Ibid*,p.229

⁶³¹ *Swadharmanushtanam*, Memorandum prepared by Yogashema Sabha Kottakkal Upasabha. Passed on 1916 (ME.1092),p.3

The memorial tried to justify ashrams of life⁶³² as essential for continuance of world and Hindu society. It compared the four fold caste system in the Namboodiri (Brahmin) concept with the concept of division of labour in the western world. It pointed out that the division of labour accepted by the foreigners came into vogue in India in very ancient times. Ashrams of life were pictured as model life for the Namboodiris. Memorial counseled Namboodiris that the decay of the sacred power would endanger their social status.⁶³³

The Memorial argues that Namboodiris have some special dharmas which include various rituals from birth to death. Observances of these duties make a real Namboodiri and were compulsory to all Brahmins. The memorial warned them on their craze towards western culture and considers the popularization of western culture as the main obstacle in the observance of dharma.⁶³⁴ Memorial looked western culture as physical reforms and argued that spiritual reform (mental reforms) were greater than physical reforms. The Memorandum outlaid that though there were many things to abide by and acknowledge in western culture, blind acceptance of it would ruin indigenous culture. The Memorial suggested them to continue their traditional way of life which would help them to solve their economic unsteadiness.⁶³⁵

The reactionary character of the Memorial was obvious when it declared the continuance of Sambandam neither challenging Namboodiri dharma nor defiling their life of purity. At the same time it also supported the self-marriage of all Namboodiris,

⁶³² ashrams of life, Varnashrama dharma in the traditional concept means the four stages in the life – brahmacharya (studenthood), Garhastya (house hold), Vanaprastha (renunciation of worldly life) and Sanyasa (complete renunciation of worldly life)

⁶³³ Ibid,p.4

⁶³⁴ Ibid,p.5

⁶³⁵ Ibid,p.6

which was argued as good for leading a life of purity.⁶³⁶ Though the Memorial expressed resentment in the changes in the Namboodiri way of life, it supported engagement in different professions for earning money.⁶³⁷

The Memorial reflected their understanding of the rapid spread of the western culture in India. The influence of western literature, arts and science and the politico-economic superiority of Britain over the country were well noticed by the Memorial.⁶³⁸ From this awareness the Memorandum considered western influence as external reforms and as totally different from mental reforms. The Memorandum demanded educated people to make comparison between the two. It also addressed the economic problems emanated from their craze towards western culture. It lamented that with the spread of western culture, belief in the priestly activities was on decline which aggravated the economic problems. Referring to law books like *Parasurama Smrithi*⁶³⁹ Memorandum argued that Namboodiris could be engaged in agriculture, which was accepted as an important economic source at that time. At the same time the Memorandum warned that they should not forget about their spiritual life.⁶⁴⁰

The suggestions of Memorandum in identifying different professions to Namboodiris indicated the influence of changed circumstances on them. Memorandum opined that they could engage in professions like money transactions, individual business enterprises and transactions related with land. It also suggested that in order to engage these professions they had to study different subjects like modern science, Mathematics, machine science, biological science and electricity science. The Memorandum viewed

⁶³⁶ Ibid,p.11

⁶³⁷ Ibid,p.13

⁶³⁸ Ibid,p.14

⁶³⁹ Parasurama Smrithi, one among the ancient law codes

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid,p.14

improving financial position essential to survive in the modern competitive world.⁶⁴¹ The traditional outlook of the Memorandum was also reflected in its attitude towards English education. The Memorandum expressed the readiness to accept English education without affecting rituals.⁶⁴² It supports the establishment of special schools for imparting modern education to the Namboodiris. The reactionary attitude of the Memorandum again reflected in the argument which forbade women from travelling by train.⁶⁴³

The proposals in the mid 1920's like Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee Report (1925) and Female Education Commission Report (1927) held peculiar position regarding reform of the community. In these proposals reformed community was visualized as one which adopted modern forms of family life, property rights, system of inheritance and modern arrangements of social life. There was a firm conviction that unless such modernization was not taken up, survival in the modern society would be impossible. These principles were incorporated in the Family Regulation Committee Report which accepted family as consisting the house holder (the eldest male member), the younger men, the women and the children.⁶⁴⁴ But in the responses of E.T.Divakaran Mooss to Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee Taravad meant not only the immediate family but it also included the adiyar, (the servant class), Veluthedan (washer man), and Velakkathalavan(the oil man) who were seen to have certain distinct right over the Taravad.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴¹ Ibid,p.14

⁶⁴² Ibid,p.13

⁶⁴³ Ibid,p.14

⁶⁴⁴ *Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee Report and Draft Regulation*, Trissur, Mangalodayam Press, 1925, p.2

⁶⁴⁵ Divakaran Mooss, *Responses to the Questionnaire of Namboodiri family Regulation committee*, Mangalodayam, 1100, pp.24-25

E.T.Divakaran Moss's Responses to the Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee Report supported for the continuation of internal hierarchies within the communities without much change. He maintained that only in certain circumstances inter-caste marriage and division of joint family property should be allowed.⁶⁴⁶ These proposals envisaged reform by acceptance of new skills like English education and modernization of family life. Mooss went on by suggesting measures for keeping internal imbalances of the community. Reformed communities in this perception was not marked by increased population or economic advancement but by better internal regulations within the community and acceptance of some changes which were essential for the preservation of specific way of life in the changed modern society.⁶⁴⁷ In all these family was the central focal attention.

The Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee Report and Namboodiri Female Education Committee Report expressed strong desire for the transformation of the Namboodiris and *Antherjanam's* in to modern men and women to accept the value of modern family form. It was regarded as a significant step for reforming the community. The difference existed within the community and among the general public was well evident in the response received to the questionnaire circulated by the Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee and Female Education Commission. While the well-known Sanskrit scholar Punnassery Nambi recommended a scheme that would be helpful in preparing Antherjanam for performance of daily rituals and practices carried out in illam and the essentials of the kitchen management.⁶⁴⁸ The other responses on the contrary, suggest a form of training that would prepare Antherjanams for modern

⁶⁴⁶Ibid, p.14

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid,pp.62-66

⁶⁴⁸ *Namboodiri Female Education committee Report*, Trissur, Mangalodayam, 1927, p.32

domestic life.⁶⁴⁹ The report agreed the latter, laying down a curriculum that included language, music, history, geography, painting, cures for child ailment, sewing and basic mathematics for house management.⁶⁵⁰

A clear cut definition of roles of men and women were also well evident in the Draft Regulation prepared by the Namboodiri Family Regulation Committee. In the Regulation control and management of property in family was entrusted to men. In the traditional concept of family life, there was a strong division of space, with women being assigned the inner-quarters of the illam (house) and men, the outer world. The Reports stood for breaking this traditional concept of men and women for modernizing Namboodiri family life. But at the same time on the question of education of Namboodiri girls there was suggestion to educate them in the Namboodiri houses with the help of lady tutors.⁶⁵¹ Paradoxically the proposal was critical of the seclusion of the Antherjanam's.⁶⁵² When faced with criticism of the apparent assent to the *ghosha* (veil) system in the Report,⁶⁵³ its defenders described it as 'practical, viable, strategy; to spread modern female education.'⁶⁵⁴

The above said proposals aimed gradual changes in the existing family system and rejected any scope of violent confrontation with the traditional order. The draft Family Regulation sought not to uproot the established family structure but to institute effective set of checks and balances that would ensure good management of family by

⁶⁴⁹ Response of Raja of Chirakkal, *Namboodiri Female Education committee Report*, Trissur, Mangalodayam, 1927, pp.29-30

⁶⁵⁰ *Namboodiri Female Education committee Report*, Trissur, Mangalodayam, 1927, pp.13-14

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.16

⁶⁵² *Ibid*, pp.7-8

⁶⁵³ Editorial, 'Parivedhanam' (self-caste marriage), *Unninamboodiri*, 1927 (ME.1102Meenam), Vol.8(10), pp.406-409

⁶⁵⁴ M.Ramavarma Thampan, 'Namboodiri Balika Vidyalayam' *Unninamboodiri*, Vol8(5) 1926, pp.815-816

Karanavar- even when it strongly recommended measures for improving individual initiative of younger men.

The mentioned proposals conceived reformist organization as an initiator of modernization movement. The Family Regulation Committee Report rejected the possibility of the reform organization playing the role of mediator in disputes working to maintain status-quo; it rather preferred to conceive of the reform organization as a platform which would discuss the ways and means through which reform could be attained, and as an agency working to implement measures found necessary.⁶⁵⁵

There were significant changes in Namboodiri discourses on their concept of family in 1930's and 1940's. By this period the reformed community was visualized as one which had no much difference with the larger collectives like nation, 'Keralam' and Hindu. The identity of the Namboodiri in the new concept was completely distanced from the traditional concept. By 1940's again there was change in the concept of Namboodiri identity. As E.M.S.Namboodirippad remarked at the Ongallur meeting, "the only request I make of you is to emulate the model of the early leaders of Yogakshema Sabha. What did they do? They saw that without English education the community would be the laughing stock of the society- they were willing to sacrifice that amount of Brahmanyam in order to spread English education. In the same way, if we do not destroy our lazy life – if each man and woman of the community does not begin to live through labour- we will become the target of not just the ridicule but also the hatred of others.... Destroy Brahmanyam so that each person may be sent to work (destroy it only to the

⁶⁵⁵ Yogakshema Sabha conducted one day fast at Edakkunni in 1930 against the reluctance of Cochin Raja to pass Kochi Namboodiri Bill, '*Tirunal niraharavratam*' (vow of fasting on the birth day of maharaja), Edittorial Malayala Manorama, 15/01/1930

extent)”.⁶⁵⁶ Along with this, the task of Yogakshema Sabha was defined as forging an identity for the Namboodiris which was completely separated from the identity of the Namboodiri given in the old order , preparing them to “live like the ordinary citizens of Keralam” and “cooperating with the progressive forces that were working to build a free, socially just and prosperous united Keralam”. However he clarified that “a Keralam devoid of Jati and community’ need not be accepted as the final aim of Yogakshema Sabha.⁶⁵⁷

By the 1940’s demands emerged from within the community to become a labour force and work for making the Namboodiris capable for playing the role they deserve in that society.⁶⁵⁸ Now the demand became ending the isolation of the Namboodiris.⁶⁵⁹ Call for active efforts to form a common front among the modern community building organisations to end jati hierarchy and mobilise people towards building a united progressive Keralam was also emerged.⁶⁶⁰ While the identity of the Namboodiris was not to be necessarily given up, it was to be transformed in to one that would not clash with the larger identity of being Malayalee.

Practical steps for modernizing Namboodiris can be seen in the argument of ‘*Sarvajanan Kshema Sabha*’ and ‘*Dharmapravachana Sabha*’ at Thiruvananthapuram. These associations worked under Yogakshema Sabha declared that world has been steadily progressing and those moved with changes would develop and those who did not, rarely survive.

⁶⁵⁶ E.M.S.Namboodirippad, Presidential address to 34th annual of Yogakshema Sabha , ‘Namboodiriye Manushyanakkan’(to make Man out of Namboodiri) 24/12/1944, *Desabhimani*,1945,pp.22-26

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid,p.34

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid,p.34

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid,pp.34-35

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid,pp.43-45

In reformist perception it was argued that every individual had the freedom to work and free to accept any labour according to taste, ability, and interest. Reformers advocated for the dignity of labour.⁶⁶¹ Wordily life was not according to dharma and Namboodiris could not live without work. Modernizing the economic life of the community was thus conceived as involving not only modernizing agriculture but also the removal of feudal relations themselves.⁶⁶² The launching of some business enterprises by the Namboodiris testifies this. Desamangalathu Mana,⁶⁶³ an important Namboodiri family which contributed much in the Namboodiri reform movement, started business like tile factory, cotton mill and printing press. Many Namboodiris were employed in these ventures.⁶⁶⁴ In the Namboodiri discourses on family reorganization the need of physical labour was focused by the reformers. Reformers advocated that reform in social life would be accelerated only by economic upliftment of the community.⁶⁶⁵ Even Swadharmanushranam (observance self-duties), which stood on the Namboodiri tradition supported this argument.⁶⁶⁶ Reformers argued that as public opinion changed Namboodiris could not live with their sacerdotal power but only through engaging in different professions and earning money.⁶⁶⁷

It was the habit of the conservatives in the community to glorify the past and to demand its reinstation for the progress of the community. To expose the meaninglessness of this conservative attitude an article written by M.G.Ranade had been reproduced in

⁶⁶¹ A.Ramavarma Thampan, A Word to Malayala Brahmins, *Unninamboodiri*, 1925(ME.1100 Meenam),Vol.6(7),p[.312

⁶⁶² VT, K Kuttan Namboodiri, Unninamboodiri, 1948, *Karmavipakam*,D.C Books, Kottayam, 2007, p.200

⁶⁶³ Desamangalathu mana called as Tata family of Namboodiris

⁶⁶⁴ Editorial, 'VijatheeyasambandhathinteVardhanav' (Increase of other caste marriage), *Unninamboodiri*, 1929 (ME.1104 Makaram), Vol.10(5),p.200, see aslo *Unninamboodiri*, ME.1099,Vol.5(1),pp.12-13

⁶⁶⁵ MNK.Nair, 'Half Centuries of Transformation', *Yogakshemam*, 1985,p.36

⁶⁶⁶ Swadharmanushtanam, Memorandum prepared by Yogashema Sabha Kottakkal Upasabha. Passed on 1916 (ME.1092), p.13

⁶⁶⁷ Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri, Yuvajanagalum Pravarthiyum', *Unninamboodiri*,ME.1102,p.202

one of the issues of Unninamboodiri. To prove the hollowness of the argument, Ranade was recalling the humiliating practices that prevailed among the Brahmans. Ranade was pointing to the inhuman practices of the Brahmans in the name of religion and their ridiculous usages, to drive home the point that the community had nothing to be proud of in the past. The Namboodiri Youth wing reminded the community that the baseless claims about the past would only lead them backward.

Rejecting the past includes rejecting the past form of family structure. Modern individuals envisage not a joint family protected by family property, but responsible individual who lives in his own income generated through physical labour. This was what the reformers were anchoring on through their discourses objectifying Namboodiri family.

Legislative attempts-Namboodiri Regulation Bills

Namboodiri reformers in the 1920's viewed Family regulations as one of the ways for the progressive reconstruction of their life.⁶⁶⁸ The movement and discussions for family regulations could be seen from both inside and outside Yogakshema Sabha. Reformers made massive campaigns for passing of the family regulations through pamphlets, articles and even by organizing direct struggles. The continuous demands from the Namboodiri reformers resulted in the passing of Namboodiri Family Regulation Bills in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The demand for Family Regulation Bill was a solid proof for their eagerness in changing their way of life. Yogakshema Sabha responded to the various legislative attempts of the Government from its inception itself.⁶⁶⁹

Adequate representation in administration, restriction of the power of the *karanavers*, promotion of self-caste marriage, division of joint family property and regulation of succession rights were the changes visualized by the reformist leaders through Family Regulation Bills.⁶⁷⁰ The Regulations also proposed changes on dress, customs and ritual practices for modernizing family life. It also envisaged ending of differences within the different groups of Namboodiris and bringing all of these groups in to single folder. It tried to give new definition to members, their status, seniority and expenditure. The first and foremost attempt of the Bills was to the partition of joint

⁶⁶⁸ Editorial, 'Namboodiri family Regulation', *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1100 Chingam), Vol.5(12), pp.564-566, the editorial argued that Family regulation became necessary by the pathetic condition of the family life of the Namboodiris, See editorial, 'Ittaram Bandukkalil Ninnun rakshikkane' (Save from these types of Relatives), *Unninamboodiri*, 1926(ME.1102 Thulam), Vol.8(2), pp.97-109. This editorial also viewed the need of family regulations on the wake of the degenerated state of affairs of the namboodiris

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid 491, For example when Cochin Jenmi-Kudiyan Regulation was introduced in the Cochin legislature in ME. 1090 Yogakshema Sabha declared its disappointment against the bill.

⁶⁷⁰ Cherumukku Vaidikan Cheriya Vallabhan Namboodiri, 'Presidential address to the 8th anniversary of Namboodiri youth wing', *Unninamboodiri*, 1926-27(ME.1102 Dhanu), Vol.8(4), p.235

family.⁶⁷¹ Regulations demanded that without the permission of the family members no sale or mortgage of family property was possible. Regulations aimed for transferring the right of *karanavers* to the *ananthiravans* whenever it was necessary.⁶⁷² The orthodox newspaper namely '*Sudarsanam*' stood against regulations and presented memorials and memorandums against it.⁶⁷³ The regulations perceived that reform of the community was to begun with the family. A disciplined family life for every member, man or woman, of the community was an urgent requirement and also been included in Namboodiri Family Bills. The Bills suggested equal participation for all members in family matters, right of all members to marry with in the community, equal share for all in family property and income, restrictions in the power of the head of the family and regulation of the law of inheritance to ensure it.⁶⁷⁴

All these were directly address the question of the continuity of the then existing family structure, ending joint-family structure and allowing individual property right will lead to the formation of new family. And in the new family, *karanavars* has no role, but father became the central figure, who earning the bread for the family, and control the whole affairs.

The demand for passing Namboodiri Bills was being emerged in Sabha from the 15th session at Kolakkada onwards. By the end of 1920's Yogakshema Sabha was successful in forcing the Governments of Travancore, Cochin and Madras to introduce

⁶⁷¹ In the Namboodiris family (Illam) set up property was considered public property and all members had right over it. The Karanavar was being treated as the eldest male member of the family where the new female member was added by marriages. Seniority was fixed by the date of the marriage. All members of the family, after the Karanavar called as '*ananthiravan*'. Members below 18 were considered as minor. Daily expenditure of the tharavadu (joint family) included food, dress, education, treatment, rituals and the annual income of a tharavadu(family) was known as '*assal vavu* ', Editorial, '*Cochin Namboodiri Regulation*', Unninamboodiri, 1927(ME.1102 Meenam), Vol.8(7), p.403

⁶⁷² Ibid, p.411

⁶⁷³ Editorial, '*Sudarsanakkar Tekkottu*', (supporters of Sudarsanam to southwards), *Unninamboodiri*, 1927 (ME.1102 Meenam), Vol.8(7), p.492

⁶⁷⁴ *Unni Namboodiri*, editorial, ME 1101, Edavam, No.9, Vol.7, pp.541-548

informal bills in the respective legislatures. Kaplingattu Sankaran Namboodiri, and CN Tuppan Namboodiri worked for the Bill in Cochin and Travancore legislatures respectively.

At the Edakkunni annual session in 1929 Sabha decided to conduct satyagraha for passing the Cochin Namboodiri Bill. Firstly a memorandum was submitted to the King. When there was little progress youths decided to start a strike on the birth day of the king marking black '*pottu*' on their forehead. The King was infuriated with the response of the Namboodiri youths and later vetoed the Bill. Yogakshema Sabha's movement for passing the Namboodiri Bills was headed by Chittur Kunjan Namboodiri, Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri, CK Namboodiri, OMC Narayanan Namboodiri, Kurur Ashtamurthy Namboodiri, N Kesavan Namboodiri and Madambu Narayanan Namboodiri. Sabha launched a march from Cheruthuruthi to Tripunithara in 1930 and called on the King and requested for passing a comprehensive law for the Namboodiris. Though the Government passed the bill it was incomplete and of having many drawbacks. The partition of joint property was not included in the bill.

The Family Regulation Bills was presented separately in three principalities of Kerala- Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The movement for Namboodiri Bill attained much momentum by the end of 1920's in Malabar. *Unninamboodiri* magazine criticized the laziness on the part of O.M.Narayanan Namboodiri, the only Namboodiri member of Madras Legislature in the presentation of Malabar Namboodiri Bill.⁶⁷⁵ In spite of many legislative meetings, the movement for Bill remained in a stagnant state for long years. Sabha complained that Namboodiri members were not showing interest in it and they

⁶⁷⁵ *Unninamboodiri*,ME.1101,Vol.5(3),p.123

were not aware of the fact that Bill was not for a person or his family but to the whole community of Malabar and neighbouring places.⁶⁷⁶

The Malabar Namboodiri Bill aimed four important changes- same caste marriage, controlling '*adhivedhanam*' (Polygamy), division of dowry and banning of '*sambandam*' of Namboodiri youngsters. According to this bill *sambandam* would be ended by the popularization of self-caste marriage. The bill recommended for instituting a fine of rupees 100 to both the husband and wife who engaged in *sambandam*. In the case of partition of dowry, bill recommended for the partition of dowry by giving half to husband and wife and half to family property.⁶⁷⁷

At Travancore, the bill presented by Tuppan Namboodiri.⁶⁷⁸ It was also viewed as a measure to save Namboodiri families of Travancore from their decadent state of affairs.⁶⁷⁹ There was opposition to the Bill from some members of Srimulam assembly, like Kerala Varma Koyi Thampuran, who maintained that there was no need for regulating Namboodiri family life.⁶⁸⁰ The traditionalists under the auspices of '*Sudarsanam*' daily demanded withdrawal of Namboodiri Bills and convened a meeting namely '*Real Malayala Brahmin Meeting*' and demanded the withdrawal of Namboodiri bills and special schools.⁶⁸¹

There were different perceptions on Namboodiri Family Regulations. Family Regulation was observed for the protection of the community from degeneration. It was also intended to check the decline of their family property, regulate family

⁶⁷⁶ Slow development to Malabar Namboodiri Bill, *Unninamboodiri*, 1103 Meenam, p.412

⁶⁷⁷ Editorial, 'Malabar Namboodiri Bill', *Unninamboodiri*, 1927(ME.1102Midhunam), Vol.(), pp.551-554

⁶⁷⁸ Editorial, 'Travancore Namboodiri Bill', *Unninamboodiri*, 1927(ME.1102 Medam), Vol.(), p.436

⁶⁷⁹ Editorial, 'Travancore Namboodiri Bill', *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1102 Thulam), Vol.8(2), pp.11-112

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid*, pp.437-438

⁶⁸¹ Editorial, 'Prathishedha Yogavum Mangala Pathravum' (Protest meeting and awarding praise letter), *Unninamboodiri*, 1927(ME.1102 Karkidakam), Vol.(), pp.603-606

administration, popularize self-caste marriage, and demand a portion of family property for education and daily expenditure. All these were gradually leading to the formation of new family form for the Namboodiris.

Cochin Legislature of 1925 accepted Namboodiri Family Regulation Bill and left it to the subject committee. Namboodiri Family Regulation Bill was prepared by Kaplingottu Sankaran Namboodiri.⁶⁸² It was observed that the Bill was the result of the consciousness among the Namboodiris on their living conditions.⁶⁸³ It had taken in to account the census report which indicated the fall of population.⁶⁸⁴ Like the reformist discourses the Regulation Bill also supported self-caste marriage as the single solution for marriage reforms. It viewed the then living condition of Namboodiris not suitable to the age.⁶⁸⁵ Regulation expressed the awareness that without changing the Namboodiri family life they could not survive in the modern society. Though the Cochin Namboodiri bill was passed by the legislature when the bill reached in front of the Cochin raja, the raja was reluctant to pass the bill.^P

Madras Namboodiri Act

Namboodiri reformers and progressive members of the society in the 1920's and 1930's contented that the social and educational backwardness of the Namboodiris were due to their social customs. They understood that the abolition of these practice was the way to bring community into the public. Namboodiri youths also thought that legislation could remove the obstacles in the way to progress. Under these circumstances the

⁶⁸² Editorial, 'Munnam Vayanakku vannu Chernna Kalavilambaram' (Laxness in the third Reading), *Unninamboodiri*, 1927(ME.1102 Medam),Vol.(.),p.431, see Editorial, 'Mr.Kaplingottu sankaran namboodiriyude Vibramam' *Unninamboodiri*, 1927(ME.1102 Karkkidakam),Vol.(.),pp.608-609

⁶⁸³ *Ibid*,pp.432-434

⁶⁸⁴ According to the census report of 1911 300 illams disappeared. According to the census report the number of Namboodiris were 5520 and there was a steady decline by the last 10 years.

⁶⁸⁵ Kaplingottu Sankaran Namboodiri, Namboodiri Family Regulation Bill, *Unninamboodiri*,p.397

Madras Namboodiri Act was passed in 1932. Its primary objective, was to supported the marriage of junior members within the caste, restriction of the powers of the karavers and facilities for the education of the junior members.

The Act envisaged that partition of family property would lead them to equip themselves in different enterprises and would result in the progress of education on modern lines. The Act also anticipated that legislation on these lines might help the community to tackle its rightful place in the socio-political scenario.⁶⁸⁶ The Act strictly enforced monogamy and same caste marriage. It envisaged that after the passing of this Act no Namboodiri shall, during the life time of his caste wife, marry another wife from his own caste, except in the case of the first wife being afflicted with an incurable disease, or failing to bear a male issue until she attain the age of 40.⁶⁸⁷

A Namboodiri youth who indulged in self-caste marriage could remarry a Namboodiri women only in the following cases; if the wife is affected with an incurable disease for more than five years, unless she gave birth to a baby within 10 years of their marriage, whether the wife has been outcaste.⁶⁸⁸

In short, Namboodiri reform movement in the first half of the 20th century tried to redesign their family life to walk with the changes in the society. Beginning from the moderate demand of changes in the value system, they gradually argued for structural changes in the family set up through passing family Regulation Bills and later insisted on complete reorganization of their family life.

⁶⁸⁶Madras Namboodiri Act. Act No.XXI of 1933, p.7 The Namboodiri bill has been published in the Fort St. George Gazette, dated on 18-08-1931

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid,p.7

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid,p.9

The consciousness for the 'progressive' reconstruction of the Namboodiri family life emanated the discursive realism created by the colonial modernity had its effect on every day life. The attempts for reorganizing their domestic space got momentum in the 1920's and 1930's and it acquired the character of visualizing a nuclear family set up in the 1940's. During these periods efforts can be seen to restructure themselves in attune with the developments in larger society. Eventhough, there was a correspondent movement which stood for remaining traditionalism in Namboodiri family life, it did not got momentum in due course of time.

The community organization Yogakshema Sabha played the role of a initiator in this modernization process. The policies and programmes of Yogakshema Sabha had its repercussions in the Namboodiri family life. Sabha accepted different strategies like theatre activism, mobilization programmes like *Yachana Yatra* and aunching direct struggles to spread the new vision of family that had a crucial role in modernizing Namboodiri family life.

The reformist discourses which centred on the issues like economic reorganization, marriage reforms, and self-transformation were the clear mark of dialectics existed within the community on the question of family reorganization. Reformers became self-critique on the customs existed amongst them and they changed demands according to time. While in the 1920's reforming of family property gained attention, by 1930's it was focused on the problem of widows and co-wives. Argument to become a labour force and need of leading independent life got prominence by 1940's. By the 1920's the community demanded Family Regulations which was viewed as a significant step towards family reorganization. The passing of Family Regulations

and Namboodiri Acts helped for the progressive reconstruction of Namboodiri family life.

In the movement for changes in the family set up, a gradual shift from narrow community interest to the interest of a larger public can be traced later on. The concept of a larger collectivity like united Kerala, Malayalee and nation received attention in the later reformist discourses.