Chapter-7

Re-inventing Community- Recent phase

This chapter addresses how Namboodiri community reconstituted themselves during two historical conjunctures. The first one is the period of Land Reforms in the post-independent Keralam. The second is the contemporary phase of neo-liberalism, wherein Namboodiris began to appropriate the facilities of new space like the cyber world to create a new image of the community. The central focus of the discussion is to prove that the Namboodiri community does not have an essential being, rather it is always already a becoming.

The dominant position enjoyed by the Namboodiris in Kerala society during the pre-colonial and colonial period underwent far-reaching changes in the post-independence period, especially after social reforms and the introduction of land reforms. The newly emerged socio-economic political setup in the post-independence period had its affect on the social status of the Namboodiris.

Namboodiris began to imagine new caste identity for re-asserting their space in the new socio-economic political order. The reconstitution of identity through imagining new caste identity gradually turned to a consciousness of a larger community that would accommodate all the subdivisions within the Brahmins of Kerala. This gradual move from caste to community was also reflected in the Namboodiri intervention in various social networking sites in the internet. They began to express the consciousness that this change was necessary for the existence of the community in the contemporary society and this change they perceived as essential for emerging as a pressure group in social sphere. Namboodiris now, withdrew their caste elitism which pointed out only on the
position of twice born alone, instead of evolving as a caste group, exclusively of elite Namboodiris, it is projected of a community incorporating various subdivisions within them.

Reformist discourses were mainly confined to social and cultural milieu or it addressed the superstructure and not the base. Post-independence period, when the new political authorities tried to implement economic changes through land reforms, they (Namboodiris) showed resistance to accept these changes. Though these economic reforms were unacceptable, they were forced to abide by these reforms. Namboodiris were unable to stand against these reforms because state has become powerful enough to enforce the reforms. Land reforms forced Namboodiris to reconstitute themselves and rethink on their concept towards labour. Namboodiris began to enter into different economic fields. The community adopted new strategies to reconstitute themselves attune with the changed economic scenario. While during the reformist period Namboodiris fought against the restrictions imposed by their own caste orthodoxy and tradition, in the post-independence period they fought for getting economic equality, opportunities in Government employment, civil rights and recognition from the Government.

First, we will analyses how Namboodiri community reconstituted themselves when Kerala economy was reconstructed with the introduction of the Land Reforms and how they reconstituted the community from within. The community had invented new

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873 As a result of the hectic reformist activities Namboodiris got humanized and began to engage in different social issues. But the process of structuring and the restructuring of the community continued even after humanising themselves. Post-reform period they faced many challenges. Peasant uprisings demanded land reforms and the land reform and new globalization trends forced them to reformulate according to the changing needs.

strategies and reformulated themselves to switch over to the new situation. These attempts within the community show that the structures of the community are getting restructured at every moment. Then we will move to a discussion on how Namboodiri community responded to the cultural shifts that Kerala experienced in post-1980’s.

Situating Namboodiris during Land Reforms

During the reformist period Namboodiris worked against their own caste superstitions and traditions and the issues related with economy were not addressed. But changes in the economic system through land reforms made changes in the whole systems of the society. The introduction of land reforms resulted in ending powers of the Namboodiris as land owners and they were forced to adopt new strategies to overcome this problem. The discussions within the community for and against the land reforms indicate that the Namboodiris were greatly affected by it. Changes in land relations are viewed not only in terms of its economic implications but with reference to their impact on the social structure.

Kerala is among the few Indian states which successfully implemented the land reforms. Political leadership combined with the people’s movement has been the main factors for the successful implementation of land reforms in Kerala. The left front Governments with their radical ideologies in Kerala also worked as a positive factor in implementing the land reforms. The peasant movement, which gained momentum by the 1940’s should be viewed as a factor for the implementation of land reforms. Two principles worked behind the land reforms. Firstly it was viewed as an attempt to destroy

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the existing feudal relations in the society and secondly it aimed for the egalitarian
distribution of land to all.

The land tenurial system in Kerala during the colonial and pre-colonial period
was based on a three tier system associated with ‘Jathi, Jenmi-Naduvazhi’ system. The
top layer in land relations was occupied by Jenmis (landlord), followed by ‘Kanamdars’
(intermediaries or superior tenants) and ‘Verumpattomdar’ (simple Lease holders).\textsuperscript{878}
The Namboodiris were located in the top layer as landlords.

The land ownership in ancient Kerala were not governed by any written laws but
were subjected to customary law. ‘Kreralolpathi’, which speaks on these customary
laws, bestowed superior tenure on the Brahmins.\textsuperscript{879} By spreading this myth Brahmins
were able to acquire lands for their temples and later by themselves.\textsuperscript{880} The Brahmin
migration to Kerala was followed by the growth of temple oriented Brahmin settlements.
Temples became the nerve center of socio-economic activities. The \textit{Uraler Karaler}
relationship showed the emergence of tenurial relations in Kerala and most of the land
became Brahmaswam or Devaswam properties.\textsuperscript{881} During this period hereditary right
over land was given to different group of the temple functionaries.

Brahmin centred land system was strengthened by the decline of the Perumals
(Second Chera Empire) by 12\textsuperscript{th} century AD. The emergence of local chieftains
(Naduvazhis) after the fall of Perumals helped for Brahmin ascendancy over land.

\textsuperscript{878} K.M.George, \textit{Land reforms in Kerala: Socio-Economic Contribution-A Critique}, p.187
\textsuperscript{879} T.V.S.Rao, \textit{Land Legislation in Kerala state} (1800-1960), p.75, Keralolpathi highlighted the
Parasurama Legend, which argued that Parasurama brought Brahmins to Kerala and settled them in 32
villages.
\textsuperscript{880} T.C.Varghese, \textit{Agrarian change and Economic Consequence Land tenures in Kerala 1850-1960}, Allied
\textsuperscript{881} Brahmaswam means territory under the custody of Brahmins and Devaswam means territory under the
custody of the temples
Brahmins together with temples and Naduvazhis held majority of the available land in permanent hereditary rights (janmam) and such lands were classified as Devaswam, Brahmaswam and Cherikkal/Pandaravaka/Circar lands. The right of Jenmi over the land was expressed by ‘Kiliyakkani’. (Traditionally accepted norms of the region) and the obligations of the tenants were determined by the custom local Maryadai. The concept of absolute private property on land was absent in the traditional agrarian system. Changes in Kerala agrarian system began to emerge by the growth of foreign trade. Europeans extended cultivation to forest areas. With the increased flow of money, land mortgages started and created new group of intermediaries. Though the jenmam (hereditary rights) of Namboodiris continued, new group of intermediaries appeared with controlling power over land.

The attack of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan of Mysore in the second half of the 18th century resulted in changes in the land relations of Kerala, especially in Malabar. The Mysorean interlude resulted in two important changes in Northern Kerala. The first was the escape of the large majority of the Namboodiri landlords to south Kerala (though many of them returned later) and secondly, it threatened (at least temporarily) the social and economic position of the more affluent members of the other communities (such as Nayars), who hitherto ranked high in the social hierarchy. Several kanakkars became Janmi on the plea that the Namboodiri landlords who had fled away had given them the sole proprietary rights. During this period in certain parts, the Muslims had also acquired land ownership. Thus a new class of Janmis emerged in the Malabar area along with the

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882 M.T.Narayanan, Agrarian Relations in Late Medieval Malabar, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 2003, p.121.
883 It is said that in the fear of onslaught of Mysoreans, the majority of the Brahmins, owners of temple and land, fled to Travancore which was relatively safer from invasion. Before their escape, the Namboodiris transferred their land rights to powerful local chiefs, see Prof. S. Achutha Warier, Kerala Samskaram, Kerala Institute for Languages, 2006, p.109.
Still another result of the Muslim invasion was the introduction of direct taxation which did not exist in Kerala until then. The tax was 6/20 to the state, 11/20 to the cultivators, and 3/20 to the land lords. But a far more effect of the Mysorean conquest was the society functioning within the customary frame work was shaken up badly, resulting chaos and confusion. This made possible to the British to interpret, according to their convenience, the rights and interests connected with land when they conquered Malabar in 1792 AD.884

When the British established power in Malabar, they reinstated the rights of the land lords. But the earlier position of Jenmmies changed from customary to statutory land owners and they acquired new privileges including the right to enhance the rent and legal evictions. Because of the political importance of Malabar coast the British administrators accepted the Brahmin tradition that they alone enjoyed the proprietary right of the land.885 The Joint Commissioners, appointed by the British to supervise revenue collection raised questions related with land tenure, supported the restoration of Brahmins to their estates.886 Some sort of a ‘diarchichal’ land lordship was introduced by the British in Malabar.887 Thus Brahmin right over the land was recognized by the British administrators.

Land relations of Malabar got slight changes in the post-1850 period. With the emergence of a new group of English educated middleclass there was a rethinking on the existing land relations. The Namboodiri practice of patrilineal joint family system and

884 Baden Powell, Land System in British India, General books, New Delhi, 2009, p.159
887 T.C.Varghese, op.cit,p.27
the practice of primogeniture, however, maintained intact the special position enjoyed by them with regard to the land ownership. Their power over land was further strengthened by the continued existence of their large family temples for which extensive properties were kept apart. The argument that in the countries where primogeniture as a custom, big land concentrated in the hands of a few was true in the context of 19th century Kerala.\textsuperscript{888} The word ‘Jenmam’ denoted hereditary right over the land and was used widely by the end of the 18th century. Gradually, not only Brahmins but powerful Nayar families also started asserting the Jenmam title or ‘birth right’ claim with regard to their family properties.\textsuperscript{889}

There were intra-regional differences in the tenurial relations of Kerala. In the case of Malabar, the caste wise distribution of the landlords suggested that 80% of the landlords belonged to upper caste groups and institutions like Namboodiris and Hindu temples. In south Malabar the Namboodiris settled most extensively and formed the biggest land owning class. The Muslims also appeared to be an important land group in Malabar but occupied a position lower to the Nayars and Namboodiris. The distribution of the leases according to the caste of the landlord indicated that 89% of the leases contracted by the Lessee, households were from the ‘superior caste, 1/3 of them were from the Nayars and Nambiar, \( \frac{1}{4} \) from Namboodiris, \( \frac{1}{10} \) from the Hindu Temples and another \( \frac{1}{10} \) from the sithanam properties of Malabar rajas. Namboodiris also claimed a considerable proportion of the leases although their share was smaller than of Nayars and Christians. Though there were different sub castes among the Namboodiris with varying

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rank and occupation, most of them had an interest on land. Pre-British customs and social assurance protected the cultivator from the tyranny of the feudal chieftains. The complex system of land tenure, the different form of joint family organization- these were not common to the rest of India.

The influence of Namboodiris and large chieftain families was less in Travancore when compared to Malabar. At Travancore more favourable attitude was existed towards peasants and the Pattom Proclamation of 1865 was called as ‘Magna Carta of the Travancore Peasants’. The Kudiyan Regulation Act of 1896 granted security of tenure to the peasants in private lands and the Nayar Regulation of 1915 permitted sanction to the partition of joint property.

The caste wise distribution of the landlords in Cochin revealed that the Namboodiris were constituted the chief landlord group, while the Nayars, and Christians occupied a place much lower than the Namboodiris. The ownership of land by Devaswams still continued as a dominant feature of agrarian relations. The Cochin rulers adopted the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the Jenmies. The Royal Edict of 1863 prevented arbitrary eviction. The tenancy laws like Cochin Tenancy Act of 1914, and 1938, The Cochin Verumpattomdar Act of 1943, and the Devaswam Verumpattom Proclamation of 1943 were not successful in ending absentee landlordism in Cochin.

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890 Ibid, p.15
891 Adriyan. C. Mayor, Land and Society in Malabar, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1974, p.3, The major portion of janmam lands in Malabar was concentrated in the hands of a few families, notably, the Zamorins of Calicut, the Raja of Nilambur, Kavalappara Nair, Kottakkal Kizhakke Kovilakam, the Raja of Kollengode and Poomalli Nambudiri. Out of a total cultivated area of 1,229,216.88 acres in 1920-21 6,28,921.30 acres were held by 32 janmis, see C A Innes : "Notes on Tenancy Legislation in Malabar", 1915, p.41
892 Survey of Land Reform in Kerala, p.75
In the case of Malabar the first major pro-tenant law was the Malabar Compensation for Tenant Improvement Act of 1897 which introduced some sort of restrictions in arbitrary eviction. The tenancy laws in the first half of the 20th century challenged the power enjoyed by the land lords. Arguments in connection with the formation of Yogakshema Sabha\(^{893}\) also pointed on the anxiety of Namboodiris on the growing tenancy movement. Travancore promulgated the Nayar Regulation Act of 1925, which permitted partition of joint families into different sub families called 'thaivazhees'. This was followed by a number of acts, in permitting the Ezhavas, Vellalas and Malayalam Brahmins to partition the property of their joint families. The Raghavayya Committee enquired the condition of tenants and resulted in the passing of the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1929. This Act was in force till 1960 that is up to the passing of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act. The chief beneficiaries of the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1929 were the kanam tenants but it did not provide security of tenure to inferior tenants. The Nayar Regulation Act of 1930 and The Madras Namboodiri Act of 1932 resulted in the breaking of joint family system.

The Madras Namboodiri Act of 1932 stood for the partition of joint property of the Namboodiri Brahmins.\(^{894}\) It resulted in the fragmentation of the big land owned by the Namboodiris. Junior Namboodiris claim over the family property was recognized by the Act.\(^{895}\) The demand for changes in the existing land relations from within the Namboodiri community was well attested in the passing of various Family Regulation Bills by the Governments of Travancore Cochin and Madras. These Regulations resulted

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\(^{893}\) Argument that Yogakshema Sabha founded in 1908 from the anxiety over Tenancy laws passed in the three principalities of Kerala- Travancore, Cochin and Malabar and the attention of Sabha on Tenancy laws in its early activities.

\(^{894}\) *The Madras Namboodiri Act*, p.4

\(^{895}\) Ibid, p.5
in granting land rights to the Namboodiri juniors and partition of joint family properties.\textsuperscript{896}

The growth of peasant movements in the 1940’s strengthened the demand for changes in the traditional land relations. It resulted in the growth of pro-tenant attitude among general public and among the administrators. Peasant movements stressed the urgency of land reforms. Discussions in the 1940’s and 1950’s have shown how community viewed the changes in the land relations. The Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee on land relations of Malabar in 1940 was a true specimen to the intense debate that took place in Kerala society during 1940’s. The committee stood for changes in the existing land relations.\textsuperscript{897}

After independence, the successive Governments in Kerala introduced a series of reforms in agrarian structure. The first ministry of Kerala under the leadership of E.M. Sankaran Namboodirippad was greatly influenced by the peasant movement and the Communist Party was firm in its decision to implement land reforms in Kerala. The Agrarian Relations Bill was introduced in the Kerala legislature in December, 1957 and finally passed in 1959.\textsuperscript{898} The Act provided for fixity of tenure to all tenants.\textsuperscript{899} The Kerala Land Reform Act of 1963 laid provision for setting up of a Land Tribunal to deal with the question of compensation to the landlords and subsequently Land Tribunals

\textsuperscript{896} Travancore Family Regulation Bil,p.141
\textsuperscript{897} Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee, Vol.1, Madras, Madras, 1940, pp.3-4
\textsuperscript{898} The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill, L.S.Bill No.51 of 1957, Thiruvananthapuram Government Central Press, 1957
\textsuperscript{899} JJ. Nossiter, Communism in Kerala, New Delhi, Oxford, 1982, p.149
were set up in Trichur, Vadakkanchery, Irlingalakkuda, Ponnani, Tirur, Payyoli, Badagara, Tellichery, Canannore and Taliparamba.\textsuperscript{900}

The Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1969, which came into force on 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1970 ending landlordism in Kerala was the most radical land reform legislation passed by any state legislature in India.\textsuperscript{901} The Act provided permanency of tenure and gave actual ownership right to the tenants. The tenants were declared as the virtual owners of land.\textsuperscript{902} The most important consequence of the land reforms is the fragmentation. The Landlords were forced to surrender their vast areas of land for nominal compensation.\textsuperscript{903} This marked the end of land lordism in Kerala.\textsuperscript{904}

The introduction of the land reforms in the 1950’s and 1960’s brought some significant changes in the land relations. The Namboodiris failed to continue their land possessions. The increase of the sale of lands by Namboodiris and its purchase by others resulted in changes in the land relations. In course of time Nayars Ezhavas and others acquired land and they became powerful in the agrarian structure. Land reforms gave both permanency of tenure and ownership rights to the former tenants. As a result of these reforms, many of the former Nayar, Namboodiri landlords became quite poor, possessing only those portions of their land which they have kept to cultivate with hired labour, or those portions which had not cultivated at all. (eg. house compound). Namboodiris who were trained in other professions did not face setbacks but

\textsuperscript{900} The Kerala Land Reform Act,1963.p.9  
\textsuperscript{902} M.O.Ommen, A study of Land Reforms in Kerala, Oxford, Delhi,IBH publishing Company,1975,p.82  
\textsuperscript{903} E.Chandrasekharan Nayar, ‘Revisiting land reforms in Kerala’ in Prof.,K.Raman Pillai (ed), Land Reforms, APH Publishing Corporation New Delhi,2010,p.92  
Namboodiris who depended solely on land suffered much though they had been residing in large palatial houses. Distribution of surplus land among the landless, the core of the land reform programme was a sad failure in Kerala.  

The discourses within the Namboodiri community for and against Land Reforms in the post-1970 showed that the community was trying to reconstitute themselves from the effects of land reforms. There was a common argument that land reforms resulted in a change in the status enjoyed by the Namboodiris for centuries. After the introduction of the land reforms discussions among the Namboodiris centred on issues on the victims of land reforms, on compensation’s and framing of new community out of it. Namboodiris began to imagine new community which would be active and ready to engage in any jobs. These discourses exhibited the emergence of new concepts like planning of economy, self-sufficient, enterprising etc. which was totally absent in the reformist period.

It is argued that the setbacks of the Namboodiris in land reforms paved the way for revival of Yogakshema Sabha in 1976. In the absence of a strong centralized organization Namboodiris were not powerful enough to resist land reforms. The regional organisations worked between 1947-1976 failed to make a common resistance against the land reforms. The socio-economic fall out of the Namboodiris in land

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905 Ibid, p.181, Liberal exemption that the law allowed were generously interpreted and taken advantage of to thwart the spirit of legislation. So also the exemption given to the plantation crops, like tea, coffee, cardamom and rubber was taken full advantage of by many land owners and hastily converted their lands into cash crops particularly rubber to circumvent the ceiling provision. Some land owners evaded the ceiling by dividing their land among their relative, in connivance with the village officers, they also tampered with land records. Some of them sold out their land at the time of the implementation of the act. Members of the Land Tribunal issued biased judgment by receiving bribes from the land owners. But it was limited by mass mobilization and consciousness. Through the land reforms lost land under ceiling provisions and lost lands to tenants.


reforms according to this argument was due to the absence of a strong community organization.\textsuperscript{908} This argument was supported by divergent economic recovery programmes adopted by the Sabha after its revival in 1976. One of the aims of new Yogakshema Sabha, which had included in its preamble in 1976, was to get adequate compensation to the families ruined by the land reforms.\textsuperscript{909} Economic revival of the community became an issue that got prime attention in the discussions of Sabha.\textsuperscript{910} The argument is that during land reforms there was the absence of an organisation to raise the opinions of Namboodiris.\textsuperscript{911}

The community lamented that the land reforms resulted in reducing Namboodiris to poor and oppressive group. Many of the cultivable lands of the Namboodiris were captured and given to the peasants. The community faced acute economic problems and they started thinking about economic planning and development.\textsuperscript{912} There is a counter argument that when the Brahmins lost their ownership rights, they entered into service

\textsuperscript{908} A.K.Antony while inaugurating the Kumaranellur anniversary opined that there was no strong reaction from the Namboodiri community against the land reforms and it showed that in 1970’s Namboodiris was not an organized group like other communities to raise protest.\textsuperscript{908} After the introduction of Land reform Act, a land lord namely Krishnan Namboodiri conducted fast in front of the secretariat against the land reforms, but the authorities did not pay attention to it. See Mathrubhumi, 17/07/2003

\textsuperscript{909} Kadalayil Parameswaran, ‘Yogakshema Sabha Entu Cheyyunnu, Entu Cheyyanam’(Yogakshema Sabha, what is doing, what is to be done), \textit{Yogakshema Dwani}, June 1989, Vol.2(8),p.10

\textsuperscript{910} The minutes of Sabha drafted in 1976 clearly shows this attitude of Sabha.


Many of the big Namboodiri land lords lost their lands. Parameswaran Namboodiri, at Panniyoor village near Taliparamba, lost 98 acres of land under and 20 acres of land were still under litigation\textsuperscript{912}. After reforms he owned only 12 acres of dry land. Kesavan Namboodiri, at Kankol village near Payyanur, Kannur, lost 12 acres of land in 1970.\textsuperscript{912} R.Sankara Narayana Iyer, at Tiruvillamala, whose father owns 120 acres of land and leased all lands to the tenants, lost the entire land. Only 1.10 acres of land remained in his control. Damodaran Namboodiri lost 15 acres of land and had only 80 cents. He earned his livelihood by running a small shop in the village. Many land lords lost lands under tenancy or ceiling provisions of the land reform act.
sector and controlled the new land owners officially.\textsuperscript{913} The official power vested in the hands of the Brahmins who entered in service sector utilized against the other castes.\textsuperscript{914}

There has been an ongoing discussion within the community on land reforms since 1950’s. Chittur Kunjan Namboodiri, one of the foremost leaders of Yogakshema Sabha, through a pamphlet titled, ‘The need of thorough transformation of the land rights of Kerala’, put forward some suggestions to alter Agrarian Relations Bill of 1957. This suggestions is known as ‘\textit{Chittur Plan}’.\textsuperscript{915} ‘\textit{Chittur Plan}’ suggested for ending the lease system. But the plan did not received recognition from the public and from the administrative authorities. Some of the aspects of the Plan was considered by P.T.Chaco while presenting the Land Reform Act.\textsuperscript{916}

Economic planning and development became the chief programme of Yogakshema Sabha after its revival in 1976.\textsuperscript{917} Yogakshema Sabha initiated discussions for finding out different economic possibilities to Namboodiris and for regaining their lost power. The debates on reconstructing the economy materialized in the preparation of a ‘Draft of Economic Planning of Yogakshema Sabha’ in 1979. The draft stressed on the need of economic planning to overcome the difficulties faced by the community from

\textsuperscript{913} Abraham Vijayan, Caste, Class and agrarian relations in Kerala, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1998, p.65
\textsuperscript{914} P. Radhakrishnan, ‘Land Reforms in Theory and Practice: The Kerala Experience’, \textit{Economic and Political Weekly}, Vol. 16, No. 52 (Dec. 26, 1981),p.131,There was also argument that even after the passing of the land reforms, the ritual power of the Brahmins remained the same. They practiced purity and pollution to a greater extent. The lower castes also accepted the ritual status of the Brahmins and their priesthood. Thus Brahmins could easily be able to control the other castes both socially and economically, even though they lost their ownership rights. The traditional sort of relationship between the higher and lower castes was reflected in all dealings between them. But there was also argument that the changes in the tenurial relations resulted in clashes between the land lords and the tenants in different parts of Kerala. The tenants not only questioned the economic power of the land lords but also their socio-cultural power in the society
\textsuperscript{915} PK Arayan Namboodiri, \textit{Nalukettill Ninna Nattilekku} (A survey of Social Reforms), Mangalodayam Ltd., Trissur,1969,p.184
\textsuperscript{916} Ibid,p.184
\textsuperscript{917} M.N.K.Nayar, ‘Namboodiri Yuvajanagalodu Oru Vakku’(One word to Namboodiri youths), \textit{Yogakshema Dwani}, July 1989, Vol.2(9),pp.85-87
land reforms. The draft made it clear that the first and the foremost problem faced by the members of the Sabha were due to the land reforms. It opined that not only community members, but also temples were ruined by land reforms. Later Sabha formed an Economic Condition Bureau and conducted a survey on the economic condition. The survey proved that 19.4% of land was in the hands of Jenmis which was owned by individuals (79%), Devaswam (20%) and other institutions (1%). The study revealed that major share of these land controlled by jenmis was under the hands of the members of Namboodiri community. The survey roughly estimated loss of around 125 cores by land reforms. Additionally, the survey reported that major share of surplus land (micha bhumi) was under the control of Namboodiris and they failed to do anything to conserve it.

Yogakshema Sabha’s concern over economic restructure of the community was further testified by the meeting on industry and agriculture. It proved their eagerness to reconstitute themselves according to the changes in the public sphere. The meeting opined that majority of the Namboodiris had lost lands by land reforms. It urged the members to move towards agriculture and industries to recover from the economic loss. The community and Sabha strated demanding economic reservation in government employments. This was viewed as a way for protecting the victims of land reforms. This attitude marked a complete shift from their earlier position towards Government employment and educational opportunities. This position also exhibited the urge of community to become a pressure group for reinstating their rights in the modern

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918 K.Krishnan Namboodiri, op.cit, p.15
919 Ibid,p.27
920 The meeting on industry and agriculture was convened in the annual session of Yogakshema Sabha at Kottayam in 1979
921 Ibid,p.21
competitive world. Then economic advancement was accepted as an important factor for modernization.

The ‘Slogans of 1980’s’ formulated by Sabha exhibited the readiness of the community to reconstitute themselves from the effects of land reforms. These slogans stressed the Namboodiris claim for compensation to the losses. The delay in the release of compensation was characterized as denial of justice. Thus compensation to the losses became a crucial item of discussion within the community in the 1980’s. They also demanded of returning half portion of land taken from the Namboodiris through land reforms. The argument that land reform resulted in the fragmentation of land and decline of agriculture firstly appeared in these discussions. Sabha submitted many petitions in 1980’s to Government to end their grievances related with land reforms.

Yogakshema Sabha, at one point of time, declared that they were not against land reforms but were against the way by which it was introduced. Sabha lamented that when Namboodiris suffered much due to land reforms and requested for help and assistance, the Government neglected these requests. Sabha held the position that there was a separate section in Land Reforms Act that created problems to Namboodiris. The families or members who got land by partition after December 27, 1957 were not considered as small land owners. It was only after the Kerala Namboodiri Act of 1958 that in the old Travancore-Cochin areas compulsory partition came in to effect among the Namboodiris. So by the land reforms people who got lands through partition were not

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922 It was published in Yogashemam of January 1980 by KK Sankaran Namboodiri, one of the prominent leader of the Sabha with the title ‘Slogans of 1980’
considered as small land owners. Namboodiris were not given the rights given to the small land owners. They argued that the rights given to the small land owners in the land reforms should be granted to the Namboodiris since the Namboodiri Bill was passed or put in to effect.

The community demanded solutions to three type of financial losses in their deliberations on the land reforms - financial loss to individuals, financial loss to temples and charitable institutions (and people totally depended on it) and the lastly problem related with compensation. There was also another interesting argument that Namboodiris were totally ignorant in judicial matters and that resulted in their losses in land reforms. Here a proposal for forming judicial cell was raised out for availing judicial advice to Namboodiris in all matters related with land reforms and compensation.

Almost all the discussions within the community concluded that Namboodiris were the victims of the land reforms and they have the urgency to get compensation for the loss. Sabha also demanded the rehabilitation of Namboodiris who had suffered by land reforms. It resulted in the inactivity and laziness among the Namboodiris. Community went to the extent that loss in land reforms and later negligence from

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  \item[926] Ibid.pp.32-33
  \item[927] K.Vasudevan, ‘Vyavasayeekarich Muktharavuka, (Free by industrailisation), Yogakshemam, March 1985,Vol.6(3,4,5),p.71. There was suggestion of investing the due amount, more than six lakh rupees of compensation, in the hands of Land Tribunal to industries for starting new economic enterprises under the leadership of Yogakshema Sabha. The proposal suggested starting of industries in every Taluks and provide employment opportunities for the Namboodiris by utilizing the money in the hands of land tribunal. Sabha sought positive approach from Government in this matter. By starting new industrial firms Sabha envisaged employment opportunities to at least one person from the families affected by land reforms. The argument further stated that if compensation was giving in the form of long term bonds it could be issued in the form of shares in new industries.
  \item[928] Ibid.p.71
\end{itemize}
Government in sanctioning compensation were treated as denial of justice to the community and this was because of the ignorance and inability of the Namboodiris.\footnote{K.Raghavan Tirumulppad, ‘Yogakshema Sabha’, *Yogakshemam*, September 1979, Vol.1(3),pp.32-33}

From 1970 to the present day availing of adequate compensation was highlighted the discussions of Yogakshema Sabha meetings. Sabha continuously lamented that lack of compensation resulted in the economic decline of the Namboodiris. There were also discussions that majority of the Namboodiris of Kerala were not landlords and many of them were poor. There were evictions in Namboodiri illams (houses) because of economic difficulties from the early times.\footnote{Prof.Kakkad parameswaran Namboodiri, ‘Land reforms and Suicide of Peasants’, *Panchaksharam*, January 2012,Vol.1(1),p.10} The lands reforms aggravated their problems and they became poor and helpless.\footnote{NV Krishna Varier, op.cit,p.20}

At the same time land reforms is also taken as a positive step towards the progress of the community. This argument judged that Land Reforms have not completely destroyed the Namboodiri community and instead of blaming it and social systems Namboodiris should come forward and accept the new avenues of the modern world. This conviction judged land reforms as a testing shock to the laziness of the Namboodiris. It took them to new areas of livelihood and education and entered into different branches of Governmental service.\footnote{T.C. Namboodiri, ‘Yogakshema Sabha Today’, in *Pranavam*’ Yogakshema Sabha 36th anniversary Souvenir, p.28} Land reforms resulted in ending the inactivity within the Namboodiris. As a result of land reforms Namboodiris understood the dignity and importance of labour and entered into different field of occupation. Another important positive element of land reforms was the ending of the economic disparities within the Namboodiris which had existed for centuries and it resulted in the
emergence of socio-economic equality among the Namboodiris.\textsuperscript{934} Namboodiris understood the reality and admitted the importance of labour.\textsuperscript{935} Brahmin hold over land for centuries destroyed their instinct to work.\textsuperscript{936}

On many occasions Yogakshema Sabha characterized land reforms as against all spirit of constitution and democracy and arbitrarily restricted the possession of land by individual/institutions beyond a certain area limit. Sabha lamented that even after the introduction of land reforms Namboodiris were projected as land lords. Sabha expressed the view that by the introduction of land reforms on 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1970 lands were captured from the land lords were not given to the real cultivators. This resulted in the ruin of agriculture.\textsuperscript{937}

When Changanpuzha’s ‘Vazhakkula’s’ picturisation was conducted at Trissur Town Hall, the illustration of Namboodiris were of fatty, luxurious and unimpressive. Yogakshema Sabha Trissur district committee protested against this exhibition.\textsuperscript{938} Sabha declared it as an insult to the Namboodiris\textsuperscript{939} and the protestants argued that it was an

\textsuperscript{935}Ibid, p.2
\textsuperscript{936} Prof. Kakkad Parameswaran Namboodiri, ‘Sidhila Chintakal Nireekshanangal, Souvenier YKS State Conference, Guruvayur, 2007, p.40
\textsuperscript{938} Changanpuzha’s ‘Vazhakkula’ (bunch of Bananas) is a small poetic gem, the poet narrates the story of an untouchable tenant who nurtures a plantain tree in his backyard, their fathers enable the children to dream about the sweet nourishment the tree will render them when the fruit is ripe. But the land lord arrives; he claims the fruit. The fruit of the poor man’s labour is snatched away because the rich land lord claimed ownership on the patch of the land.
example that even after the abolition of land lordism from Kerala through the land reforms Namboodiris were projected as land lords.\footnote{Prof.Kakkad Parameswaran Namboodiri, ‘Vazhakkulayude silpam innathe prasakthi’, in Mughadarsanam, July 2013,p.16}

**Cultural shifts and re-invention**

The socio-economic changes in the post-independence period paved the way for the revival of community consciousness, formation of identity based on caste, community and religion. This revival used a large number of symbols and practices that was constituted as traditional during the reformist movement. This can be viewed as the attempt of the community to reformulate them to switch to the new situation.

Reviving of caste elitism and internal differences within the Namboodiris could be seen in the various networks of regional organisations that began to function with the end of the first phase of Yogakshema Sabha in 1940’s and lasted till the revival of Sabha in 1976. In the intervening period there was the absence of centralized activities to Namboodiri caste organisation. These regional organizations were having separate identities and were functioning under different banners viz; ‘Kerala Namboodiri Samajam’ (northern Kerala), ‘Yogakshema Mahasabha’ (Southern Kerala), Kerala Namboodiri Federation (South Kerala) ‘Venmani Grama Seva Samithi’, ‘Kadamuri Namboodiri Yuvajana Sangham’, ‘Peringara Malayala Brahmana Samajam’, ‘Kerala Bhuvuda Sangham’, ‘Kerala Urampa Devaswam Board’, ‘Sree Sankara Trust’, and ‘Yogakshemam Finance Cooperation’. Local/ village level organisations also could also be seen during this period like Brahmana Samajam of Kadamuri, Peringara Malayala Brahmana Samajam, Chengannur Brahmana samajam, Tiruvalla Chakrashalananapuram Brahmaswam Sabhayogam, SreeVallabha Vilasini Sabha, Devivilasam Nambnodiri
Among these caste organisations ‘Kerala Namboodiri Samajam’ and Namboodiri Federation were very popular. The regional as well as village organisations of Namboodiris were very narrow in outlook and they admitted only specific families and groups to their fold.

Like the Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha formed in 1908, there were many arguments on the circumstances for the revival of modern Sabha in 1976. The problems faced by the Namboodiris in relation to marriage, education and employment forced Namboodiris to revive Sabha. There was a strong group who held the opinion that absence of a unified platform resulted in their loss in land reforms and failure to raise protest against the land reforms. As a result of this socio-economic fall out, the community once again felt the need for an organization to address issues and safeguard interests in a democratic society. It was also argued that neglect from the administrative authorities and the inactivity among the community members also favoured a united organization which was well attested in the demands raised by Sabha after 1976.

For reconstituting the community from the socio economic fallout of the post-independence period, the need of organized action through a community organization was recognized and this resulted in merging of Namboodiri Federation and Namboodiri

941 Ibid,p.22
942 These regional associations indicated that the caste elitism existed among the Namboodiris. Their names reflected its caste elitism. The attempt to include different groups of Brahmins within the banner of Namboodiris was not shown by these organisations. The problems within the community to adjust with the new socio-economic condition were also reflected in these regional organisations
944 Kadalayil Parameswaran, ‘Yogakshema Sabha Entu Cheyyunnu, Entu cheyyanam’(Yogakshema Sabha, what is doing, what is to be done), Yogakshema Dwani, June 1989, Vol.2(8),pp.9-18
Samajam in Yogakshema Sabha on 7th April 1976.\textsuperscript{946} From its beginning Sabha planned different ways for regaining lost social position of Namboodiris.\textsuperscript{947} In contrast to the old Yogakshema Sabha, new Sabha urged Namboodiris for active participation in agriculture, commerce, industries, employment and public service like other communities.\textsuperscript{948} The caste elitism giving way to community consciousness was reflected in the formation of modern Yogakshema Sabha. While regional organisations exhibited its caste elitism, Yogakshema Sabha admitted different groups of Namboodiris to its fold.\textsuperscript{949}

In the recent past Namboodiris were trying to invent a separate identity through reviving many of the rituals which once they rejected as obsolete and orthodox. The contemporary discourses focuses on to keep them as Namboodiris instead of changing them into human beings.\textsuperscript{950} Their attempt is not on changing rituals but to revive and constitute it so as to practice in its old form.\textsuperscript{951} The constitution of the new Yogakshema Sabha stood for reviving ‘good’ customs and practices.\textsuperscript{952} Rituals and ceremonies were viewed as measures for regaining their social status and achieving separate identity to

\textsuperscript{946} Yogakshema Sabha was revived with register No.83, Pumulli Neelakandan Namboodiri was its first President and Parakkunnam Narayanan Namboodiri was its first secretary
\textsuperscript{947} VN Krishnan Namboodiri, ‘Yogashema Sabha- a Plan to the institutional work’, Yogashemam, October 1979,Vo.1(4),p,10, The modern Sabha stood for the continuation of the cultural tradition of Namboodiris and to work in social, economic and educational fields
\textsuperscript{948} O.M.C.Narayanan Bhattachirippad, op.cit,p.29
\textsuperscript{949} The membership of modern Yogakshema Sabha is based on the Kerala Namboodiri Act of 1958 (Act 27 of 1958) and as per the Act Namboodiris include the communities namely Pottis, Adigal, Elayad, Moosad and Embranthiri who follow customs and manners and usages similar to those of the Namboodiris and who are not Marumakkathayees (Matrilineal).
\textsuperscript{950} Namboodiri reformers stood for abandoning traditional symbols and practices. But in the modern period attempt is for continuing the rituals that make one as Namboodiris (giving separate identity to the Namboodiris). The community claimed that it is because of the continuance of the cultural tradition that Namboodiris became a model to others. In the light of this perception Namboodiris does not want to frame a new culture but only to nurture and develop the existing. Now the argument within the community is for continuance of Namboodiri as Namboodiri instead of changing man in to Namboodiris or vice versa. Kaliyathu Parameswara Bharathikal, ‘speech in the 12th anniversary of Yogakshema Sabha- ‘Namboodiri Swayam Namboodiriyavuka’(Namboodiris to become Namboodiris)’, Yogakshema Dwani, August 1989, Vol.2(10,p.6
\textsuperscript{951} Yogashemadwani,1989,June,p.1
\textsuperscript{952} Kadalayil Parameswaran,op.cit,p.10
them. This change is well attested when modern Sabha adopted the practice of convening ‘Veda-Vaidika conference’ along with their annual conferences.

The contemporary Namboodiris viewed that ritualistic and religious domination determined their social status in the past. Yogakshema Sabha showed the courage to convene a ‘Veda Vaidika Bhattathiri conference’ in the presence of V.T.Bhattathirippad, who had headed the movement against orthodoxy during reformist movement. The demands to protect Namboodiri tradition were justified by the argument that every cultural tradition has social and geographical background and one must accept modern ideas without rejecting cultural tradition. Contemporary Namboodiri community and Yogakshema Sabha stand for continuing of cultural tradition with modern ideas. Interestingly in some instances, demand for protecting Indian and Kerlaite cultural tradition along with acquiring modern techniques, knowledge and achieving economic progress could be seen.

The ‘Slogans of 1980’, framed by Yogakshema Sabha, reflected the attempt to revive tradition with modernity. One of the slogans emphasised the need for continuing Vedic education along with modern English education, science and technology. The slogans outlaid that for half a century Namboodiris were facing a socio, economic and cultural revolution and that resulted in the ruin of many ritual practices of Namboodiris. Further it demanded for the establishment of Vedic education centres for the popularisation of Sanskrit education and the introduction of philosophy of

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953 Veda Vaidika conference—meeting of priests and Vedic scholars, the meeting became regular in all the Yogakshema Sabha annual sessions.
954 The meeting was held at Kottayam in 1980 inaugurated by V.T.Bhattathirippad. A famous Rig Vedic scholar Edakkara Raman Namboodiri was honoured in the meeting.
955 D Sreeman Namboodiri, ‘One word to Namboodiri’, Yogashemam, January, 1980, p.18
957 Ibid, p.42
Sankaracharya in the curriculum of schools and colleges. Moreover it also demanded instituting monthly pension or stipend to Vedic scholars having 50 years old.  

Imagination of new identity by the Namboodiris has been shaped in reviving festivals and ceremonies in the recent years. Attempt for reviving Thiruvathira festival and Kadavallur Anyonyam, should be viewed in this context. The annual meetings of Yogakshema Sabha were now held with massive performance of Thiruvathira which were attended by more than hundred women. Members of the community have been searching for their own space by taking memberships in Kathakali clubs, conducting Vedic classes, luxurious celebration of customs like ‘upanayana’ (sacred thread) and marriage(veli). While breaking of ‘Poonul’ (sacred thread) and traditional symbols were chief agenda of reform movement, Namboodiris of contemporary period are eager to embrace ‘symbols’ of Brahmanism like ‘Poonul’. Attaching the suffix Namboodiri after their name became a trend and treated as a mark of identity in the modern age. Yogakshema Sabha through speeches and articles has been trying to popularize the values to be practiced in life by the Namboodiris for preservation of Brahmanism. There is an idea of establishing some institutions for the protection of Brahmanism like ‘Arsha Paithrikam Trust’ which is a form of Namboodiri collectivity. Even matrimonial bureaus exclusively for Namboodiri castes like VT Matrimonial Bureau, Parinayam are getting popularized.

Study classes on rituals and priestly activities (Pooja Padana Sibirams) under the initiative of modern Sabha also could be seen as an attempt to establish a separate

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958 Ibid,p.43
959 Thirvathira Maholstavam was organized by Payyannur Grama Samajam, organization of Namboodiris at payyannur on 8th and 9th January 2012. It was held at Tazhekkattu Mana, Trikkarippur, one among the 18 original Brahmin families of Payyannur. Programmes like ‘Ramayanam quiz’ were used by Sabha for creating awareness on epics and other sacred texts among the youths.
960 Ibid,p.12
961 Panchaksharam, August 2013, Vol.2(18),p.43
962 Panchaksharam, August 2013, Vol.2(18),p.33
identity to the Namboodiris in the contemporary society. Sabha viewed these study classes as an attempt to protect Brahmanism and to preserve Namboodiri culture.\textsuperscript{963} The argument like the rituals and practices as the base of Brahmin culture could also be seen in the modern period.\textsuperscript{964} Namboodiris expressed the self-awareness that reviving of their tradition and culture is essential for the community to attain a good social status to them and for ending their backwardness. The community reminded their followers that when every caste is trying to revive their identity Namboodiris should also work for a separate identity. They argued that Namboodiris had separate identity in every field and for the survival of the community mingling of tradition with modernity is highly required. Like that of reformist period, the Namboodiris were asked to follow Tamil Brahmins as model. During the reformist period Tamil Brahmins were represented as a model in modernisation process, where as in the contemporary period they were the exponents of continuing tradition with westernization.

In the recent period a new interpretation of ‘Namboodiritham’ (Brahminhood) has been conceived. This has significant contrast to the one that had during the reformist period. According to the contemporary definition ‘Namboodiritham’, is the result of the cultural tradition of the Namboodiris and there is no need to make alterations in it. There are some attempts within the Sabha for uniting different groups of Brahmins. The counseling system under Sabha namely ‘Praneetam’ made attempts to unite different groups like Tamil Brahmins, Tulu Brahmins etc. with Malayala Brahmins. Similar attempts of giving a secular image to Sabha can be seen when the Thiruvananthapuram District committee of Yogakshema Sabha have passed a resolution to change the name of

\textsuperscript{963} Mughadsaranam, February, 2013
\textsuperscript{964} Vellur Parameswaran Namboodiri, ‘Rituals and Practices’ in September 2008 Vol. 8(9), pp. 24-26 Yogakshema Sabha and its leaders declared protection of all rituals and tradition as their duty.
Sabha into ‘Malayala Brahma Yoga Khema Sabha’. But this attempt did not get much support from the leadership of Sabha.

Though Yogakshema Sabha was silent on Kuriyedathu Tathri earlier, the contemporary Sabha showed the readiness to discuss the trial of Thatri. In argument to protect traditionalism there is a call for imbibing inspiration from the traditional institutions like ‘padippura’ and ‘nalukettu’. Contemporary Namboodiri began to appropriate different caste marks and symbols as the marks of their identity. Ironically we could see that during reform period Namboodiris fought against all these marks and symbols.

Namboodiris were trying to develop a new concept of life in the changing modern world. Modern enterprises like Event Management groups and self-help groups are established and popularized by new Sabha for organizing traditional rituals and customs. Sabha initiated discussions for establishing pre-marriage counseling programme like the one existing among the Muslims and Christian. Tripunithara ‘Anyonyam Nalukettu’ provided common platform for the Namboodiris to conduct their ancestral rituals and customs in its original form. Sabha called for establishing these types of institutions all over Kerala. It was pictured as a model institution for preserving the Namboodiri heritage. Even at Brahma Swamy madam, the place where Namboodiri youths were trained in traditional Vedic practices, a new event management

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965 Similar attempt of changing of name of Yogakshema Sabha to ‘Kaeraaleeya Brahma Samajam’ and include different groups of Brahmins in to it can be seen during the early phase of Yogakshema Sabha.
967 Story on Kuriyedathu Thathri, ‘Ekalochanam’ was also exhibited.
968 padippura and nalukettu- part of Namboodiri traditional houses
969 Yajnopaveetham, August 2007. Vol.7(8),p.10
group under the name ‘Brahmaswam Event Management Group’ have been set up for organizing all traditional rituals related with Brahmins.970

Saha provided opportunities for gathering of spinsters and bachelors. Notable trend among the Namboodiris is the way they began to solve the problems faced by the community by organizing meetings. The true specimen of this type of assembly is ‘Parinaya Fest’, an assembly of widows and unmarried youths.971 The gathering recognized the fact that the marriage affairs of the Namboodiri men especially those engaged in priestly activities are pathetic like that of the women during the reformist period. Priests not are getting brides. The 70% of participants of ‘Parinaya fest’ are unmarried men and majority of them reached the age of 40. Surprisingly the men who had attended the meeting were educated only up to 10th Standard or Plus Two, meanwhile, almost all the girls were highly qualified. So there has been a high tendency among girls to get married to men of other castes.972 So the members of the meeting expressed their anxiety over this condition and sought an urgent intervention of Sabha on this issue.

The attempt to have separate identity for Namboodiris in the contemporary world has been reflected in the policies and approaches of Yogakshema Sabha on various issues. Preservation of cultural values and there by strengthen the identity of the Namboodiris in and out the society became the declared aims to the contemporary

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970 www.facebook.com accessed on 14-08-2012
971 Parinaya Fest, an assembly of widows and those who thinking on widow remarriage was organized by Yogakshema Sabha Malappuram District committee and ‘Parinaya Event Management Group’on 22-04-2013
Traditionalism and modernism were combined in annual meetings of modern Yogakshema Sabha. Ideas of Sabha were popularized through all modern media. Sabha’s attitude towards traditionalism is reflected in the performance of Thiruvathira and rituals like ‘Maha ganapathihomam’. Performance of traditional rituals, Vedic recitations and the meeting of Vedic scholars were projected by contemporary Sabha as the signifiers of Namboodiri identity. The agenda of discussions of the annual meetings of Sabha also shows their eagerness for separate identity. Problems faced by the Namboodiri youths in the contemporary period, industrial entrepreneurs meeting and meeting of the different professional classes among Namboodiris are common in the Sabha meeting. Circulation of small pamphlets directed to the different groups like priests, tantris, youths and women points to their anxiety to protect Brahmanism.

In search for new identity, the community and Sabha appealed all professional groups within the Namboodiri community like the Santhikkaran (priests) Tantris, and Vaidikans (Vedic scholars) to perform their duties with atmost devotion and sincerity. They were advised to master all rituals and customs connected with religion. In their eagerness to keep their individuality, the community is anxious over their youths and is reflected in the small pamphlets circulated during the annual sessions of modern Sabha. One such pamphlet asked youths to take an oath that they (both boys and girls) would marry only from the Namboodiri community. The pamphlet also invoked them to respect

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974 News on the 36th annual conference of Yogakshema Sabha at Payyannur in September 2013 in all leading Malayalam newspapers and social networking sites like Facebook, Google+, and the official website of Yogakshema Sabha
975 Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi. The Payyannur meeting was started with the Thiruvathira performance of 128 women which had got much popular attention.
parents, teachers, and thereby protecting Brahmanism save the society.\textsuperscript{976} The pamphlet in the name of ‘\textit{Kerala Vaidika Parishad}’ makes call for the revival of Brahmanical culture by keeping the Namboodiri identity. The pamphlet declares that there are only ritualistic differences within the Brahmins and it is not caste differences. It supports ritualistic reform according to the time.\textsuperscript{977}

‘\textit{Santhikkarkulla Nirdesangal}’ (directions to the priests), a small pamphlet pictures the temple priests as the messengers of Brahmanism and requests them to work for the protection of \textit{Brahmanyam}. Like other pamphlets it also urged the Namboodiri priests to be a model in the society by doing all their works in utmost sincerity and devotion.\textsuperscript{978} Another circular entitled ‘\textit{Directions to the Namboodiri Youths between the ages of 16 to 25}’ reminds the Namboodiri youths on the urgency to protect \textit{Brahmanism}.\textsuperscript{979} It warns Namboodiri youths against other caste marriage and asking them to refrain from making friendship with girls of other castes. It calls the youths to protect the values of the community. Like other pamphlets it also urged the youths to be model to others by avoiding consumption of liquor and tobacco. It also urged Namboodiri youths to study any one of the Indian art, culture, history and update current affairs. The changing face of the Namboodiris can be seen in all these pamphlets which constantly demand protection of Brahmanism. ‘\textit{Request to the Namboodiris}’, a small pamphlet prepared by Kunnamkulam Upasabha of Yogakshema Sabha Trissur district, considers Brahmanyam as the result of great cultural tradition. It calls Namboodiris to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[976] ‘Oath of Namboodiri Youths’ notice printed and published by Kunnamkulam Upasabha at Panchangam Books, printed on 14-09-2012
\item[977] Kerala Vaidiaka parishad
\item[978] Published by Cultural Department Kanippayyur sankaran Namboodiri Memorial reading room for Yogakshema Sabha, Trissur District Committee on 10-10-2011
\item[979] Published by Cultural Department Kanippayyur sankaran Namboodiri Memorial reading room for Yogakshema Sabha, Trissur District Committee, 7\textsuperscript{th} edition 10-05-2011
\end{footnotes}
acquire Vedic rituals and continue Brahmanism with modernism. Pamphlet for popularizing the ideas of ‘Shanthi Kshema Sabha’, association of Namboodiri priests, also projects on the need of protecting Brahmanism.

The contemporary Sabha lamented that it is not only the rights of Namboodiris has been rejected but also their traditional occupation of priestlyhood is also under threat. Sabha made constant call for strengthening the organization. In contemporary Yogakshema Sabha meetings criticisms were raised on the works of the radical reformers that the over enthusiasm shown by the Namboodiri revolutionary movement like cutting of ‘Kuduma’ and breaking of ‘Poonul’ (sacred thread) in 1930’s and 1940’s resulted in the decline of Yogakshema Sabha. Modern Sabha is trying to mobilise different occupational groups within the Namboodiri community by conceptualizing an organizational set up to them. ‘Shantkishema Sabha’ (Yogakshema Sabha Santi Vibagham) works for the protection of the interest of the Brahmin priests. Under the auspices of Sabha Sreemath Bhagavatha Seva Samithi was formed in November 2012.

Popularization of Sanskrit education is also used as a domain for inventing new identity by the Namboodiris. Sabha since its rebirth in 1976 has been demanding the inclusion of Sanskrit education in school curriculum. During the reformist period there were crucial discussions for abandoning Vedic education (Sanskrit) and for the acceptance of modern English education. Currently Namboodiris demands for acceptance of Sanskrit with modern education. During the reformist period it was influenced by the trends in the general public, in the contemporary period demand for

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980 Published by Cultural Department Kanippayyur sankaran Namboodiri Memorial reading room for Yogakshema Sabha, Trissur District Committee on 10-06-2011
981 Mughadarsanam, July2013, p.32
Sanskrit education is to claim their separate individuality. Popularising Vedic knowledge among the Namboodiris is accepted as a method for inventing separate identity for the Namboodiris. The community is arguing that the importance given to other minority language should be given to Sanskrit by including Sanskrit in school curriculum. The earlier Namboodiris mixed Vedic culture and temple culture since their identity lied in Vedic culture. Modern Namboodiris also used Vedic education as a signifier for building their contemporary identity.

Economic reorganization is another strategy adopted by the Namboodiri community for re-inventing their identity in the contemporary public sphere. The community is trying to introduce plans for improving the pathetic economic status of the Namboodiris. Sabha has planned different ways for regaining lost economic power of the Namboodiris through land reforms. The aims declared by Sabha since its formation in 1976 has been included plans for economic revival. After land reforms, the community declared that the major problem faced by Sabha was that of money. There were suggestions to Namboodiris to start small scale business like Brahmin ghee, pickle, powders etc., because even the word Namboodiris guarantees a market value in the modern world.

During the reformist period financial status was not a problem and hence economic upliftment was not a programme of early Sabha. Sabha expressed its awareness that in the competitive world the socio, economic, cultural field has been

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983 Prof. Kakkad Parameswaran Namboodiri, ‘Sidhila Chintakal Nireekshanangal, Souvenir YKS State Conference,Guruvayur,2007,p.41-The meeting of Yogakshema Central Committee held at Trissur on 15-07-1979 by a resolution presented by Perumbilli Krishnan Namboodiri demanded that the importance given to Arabic language in the schools of Kerala should be given to Sanskrit.

984 Malayala Manorama, 11-09-2012 Yogakshema Sabha welcomed the Government decision to include Sanskrit in the school curriculum

changed. Now economic advancement has been taken up by Sabha as the urgent agenda. While demanding economic advancement, Sabha demands that, there is no need of suppressing the ‘great’ cultural tradition of the Namboodiris. Suggestions like forming an agricultural and industrial bureau for promoting economic interests of the Namboodiris is active in Yogakshema Sabha meeting.

Namboodiris lamented that the basis of Namboodiri life from ancient period was landed property but in the contemporary period the relation between land and community members has been changed and it created financial crisis to the members of the community. In modern Sabha, there is a strong argument for industrialization which is viewed, as the only solution to overcome financial problems. Sabha argued that Namboodiris aversion to enter into industry is because of their ignorance. Opinions supporting agrarian development are also in the lime light of discussions for economic improvement of the Namboodiris. Reason for the decline of their role in agriculture was identified as their lack of capital and laziness.986 The argument favoured utilization of the large amount of money investing in agriculture by Government to their favour.

In their search for new identity, there is argument to accept priesthood as a profitable job as there is the danger of caste reservation and caste preference in Government employment which blocks Namboodiris from getting it. From its inception in 1976 Yogakshema Sabha strongly opposed caste based reservation system in Government employments and demanded economic reservation.987 When the Mandal Commission was declared in 1989 Sabha called for rejecting it. Sabha characterized that

987 Ibid.p.32
Narendran Committee report\(^{988}\) may end the possibility of achieving social equality.\(^{989}\)

Under the leadership of Sabha, protest meetings were organized all over Kerala. Sabha viewed those report as unjust and against social equality.\(^{990}\)

Community consciousness induces them to take initiative for larger solidarity among the similar elite castes. This is apparent in the formation of *Munnokka Samudaya Samrakshana Samithi*’ (Forward Caste Protection Committee). The working committee report of Sabha published in the Yogashemam of September 1979 raised the demand of minorities and also warned the necessity to make unity with related communities.\(^{991}\) Yogakshema Sabha expressed its readiness to work for Hindu unity and to cooperate with forward castes in all subjects identified by the Forward Caste Protection Committee.\(^{992}\) Yogakshema Sabha assumed a pan-Indian character when it got affiliation to All India Brahmin Federation. Sabha expressed its solidarity in the demands of the Federation like economic reservation, end of caste reservation, protection of Kashmir Pandits, and introduction of constitution based on spirituality.\(^{993}\)

Yogakshema Sabha and the community always lamented that as a microscopic minority they were always neglected by the government. Since they are not powerful enough to make significant influence on political affairs, Sabha adopted indirect politics in their programmes.\(^{994}\). It argued that due to the pressure of the major community

\(^{988}\) Commission aimed reservation to backward groups in the Government employment. It was by the political pressure that more than 48.23% of reservation recommended by the Narendran commission. The commission was appointed in 2000 and submitted its report in 2001.


\(^{991}\) Appeal of President Pumulli Namboodiri, Yogashemam, September, 1979, p. 34

\(^{992}\) YKS Report presented at 36th anniversary Payannur, p. 14

\(^{993}\) The rally of Federation at Delhi in November 2006 was attended by Yogakshema Sabha activists from Kerala.

\(^{994}\) K Raghavan Thirumulpad, ‘Yogashema Sabha’, *Yogashemam*, November 1979, p. 33
organisations government is neglecting Yogakshema Sabha. Sabha opined that there was an organized attempt to insult the Namboodiri community and argued that Namboodiris have lost much as an effect of land reforms and in the name of caste status. The administrators in the name of democracy were trying to capture even the priesthood of the Brahmins. Namboodiris was facing the challenge of losing their traditional occupation.

Modern Sabha in the changed atmosphere accepted direct struggles for gaining its rights. They introduced the slogan of ‘dharma samrakshanam marchilude’ (Protection of dharma by March). The direct struggles of Sabha aimed to end caste reservation, government appeasing policy towards the minorities, controlling the land mafias, introduction of Sanskrit education in the school curriculum and immediate sanctioning of compensation to those who lost land through the land reform. Sabha through meetings and memorandums demanded the need of passing second land reforms and re-fixation of land ceiling. Yogakshema Sabha urged Government to put an end to neglecting practice of Brahmin community. The demonstrations of Sabha demanded for extending the benefits of reservation solely on economic status of the people.

New orientation was given to the emancipation of Namboodiri women in the contemporary period. ‘Kshema Sree’ was started as a project of economic enterprise and to mobilize women and to get access to political and social sphere. It envisaged

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996 First of thhese direct struggle was massive collectorate march on 07-07-2010
997 www.yogakshema sabha.org.in accessed on 08-08-2010 see also ‘Yogakshema Sabha conducted march, Malayala Manorama 08-07-2011, Yogakshema sabha Prathisheda dharanakal Ezhinu, Mathrubhumi, 04-07-2010
998 ‘Pavapettavarkku Samvaranam Labhikkan Yogakshema Sabhayude Prathishedham;’ Mathrubhumi 08-07-2010
999 ‘End of the neglect of Brahmins- Yogakshema Sabha’ The Hindu 08-07-2010
1000 www.yogakshemasabha.org.in accessed on 17/08/2013 It is organized as micro credit self-help groups (Self Help Groups SHG’s) in 2009. In 2008 at Kollam and Kottayam district it was started with the title
‘Kshema Sree’ on the model of ‘Kudumba Sree’ and ‘Jana Sree’ and the leaders claims that ‘Kshema Sree’ stands for ending the inferiority complex of Namboodiri women.  

‘Kshem sree’ is viewed as the new age mantra (slogan) for the empowerment of the women folk. This change of Namboodiri women acquiring new employment opportunities was characterized as ‘marakkudayil ninnum manathekku’. During this period Sabha attempted to introduce divergent programmes for women mobilization and self-reliance.

Micro-level gatherings (group meets) were convened with the intention of disseminating new community consciousness among them. All these gatherings aim to consolidate Namboodiri power, status and dignity. It tried to reach the consolidation in the grass root level. Community and Sabha expressed their anxiety in the degeneration of Namboodiri youths especially those who engaged in priestly profession. As a mark of this consciousness efforts for strengthening youths have been organized by

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1002 Yogakshema Sabha has initiated serious discussions in various levels for devising and implementing projects based on this concept. Upasabhas and District Sabhas were instructed to discuss this in local meetings and chart plans for formation of SHGs, with membership between 10 to 20 people, which was the first step. Though the set criteria were very stringent, in financial terms this scheme was very attractive and cost effective. Apart from pickles and other small scale domestic industries Sabha hoped to device better revenue generating, new generation projects under this scheme.
1004 For example a job training camp was started at Kaithapram Upasabha where 40 women participated and was supported by KITTS and Heritage India Foundation. The programme had given training to Namboodiri women in handicraft products, fashion designing, embroidery, and ornament making. Sankaran Kanapram, ‘New way of Women Mobilisation’, Mughadarsanam, Monthly by Kannur district Yogakshema Sabha, May 2013, Vol.1(8), p.8
1005 Some of these family meetings provided opportunities to some to criticize the radical position of VT and others during the reform movement.
Attempts for communal solidarity also can be seen in some activities of modern Sabha. Arguments can be seen that priests could protect Brahmanical culture. Priests are portrayed as preserver of Namboodiri culture. ‘Enikku Santhikkaran Mathi’, a short story written in Malayalam portrays the priests as the symbol of love, patience etc. The movie ‘Namboodiri Yuvavu@43’ by Mahesh Sarma deals with the love story of a 43 year old unmarried temple priest with 18 year old girl. The comments in the Facebook indicate the eagerness of Namboodiris on the depiction of typical Namboodiri characters in the film.

The community adopts different strategies to cope with the problem of marriage of the Namboodiri youths. They are ready to marry girls from rescue homes. Recently it is reported that in Kuttippuram four Namboodiri men got married from Tavanur rescue home. Another important feature of the contemporary period is that resolving the difficulties in connection with Namboodiri youths marrying non-Brahmin girls. The ways in which it has been resolved can be seen in the following example. A non-Brahmin girl named Bini was converted to Namboodiri after a series of rituals like ‘saptasuddhi’, ‘panchadurga’, ‘hiranyagarbhasutra’. After that she has been asked to

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1006 www.yogakshema sabha.org.in accessed on 25-06-2013, Youth Wing of Kottarakkara Upasabha of Yogakshema Sabha conducted a programme namely ‘Yuvajana bodhana Sibiram’ on 23-06-2013 which gave the call for youth awakening. Namboodiri Youths conducted ‘Yuva sangamam’ (youth meeting) at Trissur Namboodiri Vidyalaya on 25-11-2012 for creating a new generation of Namboodiri youths. Thiruvananthapuram district Youth Wing reorganization meeting was held on 25-11-2012 which considered the protection of Brahmanism as the chief work of the Namboodiri youths. The changed attitude of Namboodiri Youths reflected in a short film namely ‘Eklochamam’ on Kuriyedathu tathiri

1007 www.facebook.com accessed on 12-03-2013, Youth Wing of Arathil Upasabha of Kannur District conducted ‘Iftar Sangamam’ to express their solidarity with Muslim brothers. Though District level leaders attended the meeting many of them criticized this attempt of collaboration with other religionists. This attitude of the Sabha leaders proved that they were not ready to give up their traditional orthodox character even in this modern age.


1009 www.facebook.com accessed on 28-08-2013, The comments of Namboodiri youths on their marriage problems are flooded in the Facebook comments.

1010 Doore Parambaryam Tirikathumbol; Grihalakshmi, April 2012, Vol.10(3), p.8
take an oath. The ritual concluded by giving her a new name Saraswathi Antherjanam. The ceremony was held on 23\textsuperscript{rd} and 24\textsuperscript{th} August 2008 at Rohini Kalyanamandapam Guruvayur. Marriage was conducted under the auspicious of Nakeri Vasudevan Namboodiri, a Vedic priest, and under the Boudhayana rule of Brahmanical laws. This marriage was supported by All India Brahmana Federation.\textsuperscript{1011} Another similar type of marriage was conducted at Chakkulathu Kavu on 16-07-2007 between Sreekumar Namboodiri and Sreevidya, a Nayar girl. This marriage was also supported by Yogakshema Sabha.\textsuperscript{1012}

Some exceptional cases of conversion also happened in the districts of Malappuram and Trissur. Surprisingly a few lower caste members are converted to Namboodiri by paying rupees 250 and undergoing a few rituals for a short period of time. It is reported that more than 50 non-Brahmins have changed their caste in this manner between 1995-2000.\textsuperscript{1013} The priests and converts claim that these conversions are "officially" sanctioned by the Paliyam Declaration of 1987.\textsuperscript{1013} Most of these new Brahmins are seeking acceptance in the Namboodiri community. These new Namboodiris demanded equal status with others in the observance of traditional rituals and ceremonies.\textsuperscript{1014}

\textsuperscript{1011} Yajnopaveetham, September 2008 Vol. 8(9), p.
\textsuperscript{1012} Harikrishnan Namboodiri, ‘Yogakshema Sabha Graph Mupotto Pirakotto’ Mughadarsanam, June 2013, Vol.1(9), p.13
\textsuperscript{1013} M.G.Radhakrishnan, ‘The new Namboodiris’ India Today, January 25,1999,p.33
\textsuperscript{1014} Quoted from M.G.Radhakrishnan, ‘The new Namboodiris’ India Today, January 25,1999,p.34
Orthodox Namboodiris in Kerala have given up their monopoly of priesthood in temples and ready to accept different groups of Brahmins as equal.\textsuperscript{1015} The apex authority of the Namboodiris (the most orthodox Malayalee Brahmins) were forced to take lenient position on priesthood on the circumstance of depleting strength of the community and an acute shortage of priests in temples across Kerala. Six Namboodiri families that have the powers to interpret Vedic and shrouthik matters constitute the apex authority. The proclamation was signed at an extraordinary meeting, at the Peruvanam Shiva Temple near Trissur. It says that all Brahmin communities in Kerala - Namboodiris, Embrandiris, Tulu and Konakani Brahmins - will be treated as equals. The proclamation approves that other Brahmin community members who practice traditional religious and temple rules, too could be selected as temple priests. Declaring the proclamation as revolutionary, leaders of Sabha said that it would lead to an unprecedented solidarity among various Brahmin communities in Kerala. The leaders argued that the reason behind providing equal status to all Brahmin communities is the construction and revival of temples across the state. While new temples are being built and dilapidated ones are being revived, the Namboodiri community is unable to supply required priests.

Like that of the reformist period, there were attempt to self-correction within the Namboodiri community recently. Some expressed that Namboodiri community tried to keep aloof from the mainstream society and used to lead a lazy life. Namboodiris have been self-adjusted and been complacent during this time. That had resulted in their decline. The critics argued that the attempts to revive the old rituals and practices would be a hindrance to the development of the Namboodiris. The critics said that Namboodiris

\textsuperscript{1015}www.rediff.com ;Namboodiri give up religious monopoly in Kerala, accessed on 20-07-2013
were reluctant to accept new branches of knowledge, but at the same time were ready to accept magical hymns. In the contemporary period there are attempts to revive traditional symbols like ‘kuduma’, wearing Poonul, dressing in traditional way. Modern Yogakshema Sabha is also not free from criticisms. Critics argued that Sabha is not focused on guarding Brahmanism as a whole; they have been aimless to a certain extent and not vigilant on the affairs of the priests. Sabha leaders were also being criticized on their leadership quality.

Attempts can be seen in the modern age to change the rights of succession and seeking recognition from the larger Namboodiri society. A grant meeting was convened for a shift from the matrilineal system of inheritance to patrilineal system under the leadership of ‘Payyannur Grama Samajam’, an organisation of Namboodiris of Payyannur. The assembly was featured by Vedic sacrifices, meeting and speeches of Vedic scholars and seminars. They sought permission from the Alvanchery Tamparakkal, the authority on Namboodiri succession rules, for this change. Many of the Vedic scholars had given blessings to this venture. The appeal of the meeting was to shift the Payyannur Namboodiris known as ‘Thirumumbu’ equal to the Namboodiris, who had been traditionally following matrilineal system of inheritance to patrilineal system followed by other Namboodiris of Kerala. The other Namboodiri subtitles like ‘Bhattahtiris and Tamprakkal’ the ‘Thirumumbu’ also denoted their status title. Till this day Payyannur Namboodiris conducted marriage by adopting bride or groom to any one of their mana or family. The organizers of the meeting claimed that it was for checking

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1016 In a facebook post on the opening of a new Namboodiri hotel at shornour Namboodiri is caricatured in the traditional way
1018 Ibid,p.14
the decline of the community. The venture was hailed by them as an attempt to get ritual rights along with other Namboodiris of Kerala. The rituals related with the inheritance change were conducted under the leadership of Cherumukku Vaidikan Jathavedan Namboodiri. By this change Payyannur Namboodiris expected to be equal with other Namboodiris in conducting rituals and priestly activities in the temples. It was a part of identity conflict with in the Namboodiris. They sought recognition within the Namboodiri society and in the larger society by conducting vedic rituals. We must read this as an attempt to reconstruct a new identity for the Namboodiris. It ofcourse addressed the question of internal division and its errasure. But more than that, the participation of all important ritual heads of Malayala Namboodiris from all over Kerala and converting matrilineal Namboodiris into patrilineal must be read as a building of new community identity.

**From Caste to Community; Namboodiris in the Cyber World**

In the following section an attempt has been is made to understand the dynamics of imagining a new community identity by the Namboodiri in the cyber world. They are trying to invent new identity through various cyber spaces like Websites, Social networks, Blogs etc. Through active involvement in cyber space Namboodiris are inventing a new identity beyond their caste frame. Namboodiris actively participate in the internet social networking and interactions. There are a lot of active Namboodiri communities in social networking sites like Orkut, Facebook, plenty of active email groups in yahoo, gmail etc. which reflect the attempts to develop a new identity. The different types of internet spaces including General Websites, Social networking sites

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1019 *Subrahmanya Purathil Eni Puthu Charithram, Mathrubhumi, 10-05-2011*

1020 Interview with Nangeli Amma Tirumumbu on 25-05-2011
such as Orkut, Facebook, Google+ etc., Blog sites and various sharing networks functions as an important media of articulation of social relations among Namboodiris. It gives space for interactive discourse for the Namboodiris.

General Websites are internet space that gives information on a range of matters on Namboodiris. The sites on Namboodiris are constantly visited by people and it is found that the number of Google sites for Namboodiris is 83299\(^{1021}\). These sites are not the product of Namboodiris alone. The ownership range from state, NGO’s, individuals etc. On these sites most of them are related to discussion on cultural pattern of erstwhile Kerala where Namboodiris are presented as an important caste.

The dominant position enjoyed by Namboodiris in Kerala society during pre-colonial and colonial period underwent drastic changes during the post-independence period, especially after social reforms, the introduction of land reforms etc. These reforms adversely affected the social status of the Namboodiris and gradually they lost many of the privileges previously they enjoyed. To resist this new trend, Namboodiris began to introduce new strategies. It is in this background we must read the first major website devoted exclusively to illustrate Namboodiris at their caste identity came in. The website is named as “Namboodiri Website Trust” which is a web hosted on September 1999\(^{1022}\). The site aimed at documenting culture and traditions of Namboodiris at Namboodiri.com. The site says that it as a voluntary non-profit oriented forum based at Calicut and its duty is to provide details concerning Namboodiris. The interesting feature of this website is that it ventures to rebuild the caste identity of the Namboodiris which had undergone changes as the consequences of social reforms, land reforms and new

\(^{1021}\) www.google.com/accessed on 20-12-2011

\(^{1022}\) www.namboothiri.com/accessed on 24-12-2011
socio-political order. The focus of discussion are centred around on caste, sub castes, families (Illams) and personalities. The site tries to project elitism of Namboodiris.

Towards the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Namboodiris began to reassert their supremacy over Kerala society. There is a new demand for priestly profession of Namboodiris as well. It is in this context that the Namboodiris began to imagine caste identity. The cyber expression of this new trend is the website mentioned above. This site still relies upon caste and sub caste divisions. The movement to transfer the boundaries of sub caste division is hardly seen in any of the postings. Moreover the emphasis given to families (Illams) and personalities support this argument.

But the middle of the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century the representation of the Namboodiris in the websites underwent major change. Now it is not confined to just the caste identity, but larger solidarity of the Namboodiris are imagined. Discussions are not on caste, sub caste, families or their tradition, but the need for having a community identity, with a modern outlook. AGNI (Arena for Global Namboodiri Interaction) indicates this shifting paradigm\textsuperscript{1023}. AGNI declares that, its aim is “getting to know each other, bring them all under one umbrella which is otherwise scattered in various parts of the world”\textsuperscript{1024}. Instead of speaking on caste, tradition etc this site tries to create a new identity. The title description in the AGNI site reflects this changing attitudes. It reads “we are no longer following the traditional life style of our ancestors, our forefathers were enjoying life with all possible luxuries and comforts of the time. That has become the story of bygone era. Things have changed much. Today, highly competitive world, we must change our attitude and perspective towards life and we should be ready to

\textsuperscript{1023} www.agni.ws/ accessed on 25-12-2011
\textsuperscript{1024} www.agni.ws/ accessed on 25-12-2011
adopt new technologies in order to reach the top. Today, we can proudly say that Namboodiris are there, holding prestigious positions, in all most all areas, apart from his usual bread winning job of a “shanthikkaran” or “dehannakkaran”\textsuperscript{1025}. The statement manifests the declining importance of caste identity and also their move towards modernity. AGNI created a web based directory as a satellite for Namboodiri community worldwide. It is ready to give informations on job opportunities, real estates, vehicles etc for its members. The important news related with the community is published through an e-news letter to which any Namboodiri can contribute articles.

The change of attitude from caste to a larger Namboodiri community can be seen in the website of Yogakshema Sabha. Through its official website ‘yogakshemasabha.org.’ Yogashema Sabha makes active interactions in the cyber world and urges for the unity of Namboodiri community and active involvement in the social and political issues. These trends indicate the declining importance of caste and move towards a community identity and modernity.\textsuperscript{1026}

Social networking sites such as Orkut, Facebook, Google+ etc provide greater space for social interaction between the people. The Namboodiri communities appear in Orkut, one of the popular social networking sites. Orkut has more acceptance among the Keralite’s, till very recently Facebook occupied its position. Orkut is a Google based social networking site that, “designed to make your social life more active and stimulating”. Orkut enables the users to create their own communities. It is surprising to

\textsuperscript{1025} www.agni.ws/ accessed on 25-12-2011
\textsuperscript{1026} www.yogashemasabha.org.accessed on 26-12-2011
note that the Orkut communities formed for and by the Namboodiris has stretched over 50012 within a short span of 7 years from 2004 to 2011.\textsuperscript{1027}

Some of the early communities formed in Orkut are “Brahmanas” “Namboodiri” “Malayalala Brahmin” “Namboodiri Network” “Brahmins of Kerala” “All Kerala Namboodiri Family” etc. These Orkut communities are not prescribing a single idea of retaining to tradition. Major aspect of the Orkut communities formed till 2006 was that, they were trying to project the caste identity of the Namboodiris. Many communities are often confined to a major group with in the Namboodiris. Moreover their elite culture is celebrated. For example “Kerala Brahmin” an Orkut community formed on 20\textsuperscript{th} December 2006 says that, Namboodiri and Bhathathiri clan of Kerala, one of the most pure and elite of the Brahmin classes of the country\textsuperscript{1028}. They were also rulers and patrons of Kathakali and traditional art forms and now it is spread across various nations like UK, USA etc. They forms good group of Indians who makes their country proud and the ‘Sanathana dharma’ which we are all a part”\textsuperscript{1029}. Another community namely “Malayala Brahmin” calls for regaining elitism by resorting to six duties of Brahmin community namely teaching, learning, performing yaga\textsuperscript{1030}, make performing yaga, accept dana and give dana. Here also Orkut community is seen as a one of the elitist among themselves. What happens to Namboodiris involved in other means of subsistence has been undermined. It shows that, the things which are fundamental for imagining their caste identity has been retained and Orkut communities for this purpose are created.

\textsuperscript{1027}www.orkut accessed on 18-10-2011
\textsuperscript{1028}www.orkut accessed on 18-10-2011
\textsuperscript{1029}www.orkut accessed on 18-10-2011
\textsuperscript{1030}Yaga means sacrifices
But when we come to have a look at the Orkut community that came in to being since 2009 we could see radical change in the perceptions narrated above. For example a community namely “Kerala Brahmin Rocks” says that “this is a community for all modern day Kerala Brahmins who follow rituals and perform poojas. Kerala Brahmins must realize the fact that all politicians are against us and we are alone. We are struggling for existence. We have to fight. Politicians only need relations to vote bank. We are not united. So we must unite and fight against the illegal and unbearable acts against us”\textsuperscript{1031}. We should only discuss the problem of the nation and Brahmins in this community. Another Orkut community created on 29\textsuperscript{th} July 2009 (more than 52000 members) asserts that the,” community is open to all irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. It also ask people to join this community to know more about who we are, what are we supposed to do and keep alive the flame of purity and knowledge\textsuperscript{1032}.

In these Orkut communities tradition and elitism were not the focus, but the survival in the contemporary age. It assured that upholding elitism and the former caste exclusiveness would not help them to become a pressure group. Becoming a pressure group will fetch them new opportunities. How do they can achieve a unity beyond caste line at the same time, not far beyond these confines then a problem. The solutions then they finds in the erasure of caste elitism and exclusiveness and by forming an umbrella group of Namboodiris of different denominations. Here their occupation, tradition is not considered primary, but their position of twice born only. That is now instead of becoming a caste groups exclusive to elite Namboodiris, it is becoming a community incorporating various sub divisions with in the namboodiris.

\textsuperscript{1031}www.orkut accessed on 18-10-2011
\textsuperscript{1032}www.orkut accessed on 18-10-2011
A blog is a type of website or part of website. Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other materials such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via widgets on the blogs and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites. Like social networking sites Namboodiris are the early adaptors of Blogs. Many blogs related with Namboodiris like ‘Namboodiri network’, ‘Youth namboodiri’ ‘Namboodiri network blog’ etc gives scope for active interactions and forms active cyber network communities. Namboodiri network blog comments, “Namboodiris are well known for their social networking skills. Namboodiris have plenty of religious functions and ceremonies in their entire life from ‘Jathakarmam’ to ‘Shodasam/Savinni’. Each and every occasion is utilized for building new relations and to enhance their social activities.” Blogs, which got wide acceptance in the cyber world very recently we can see the image of Namboodiri as a community and not as a caste or groups. For example a Blog created by Damodaran Namboodiri says, “When so many Namboodiri related communities and websites exists on the web what is the need for another site? Is it really needed? Will it be useful to the community? These were the few questions I had in mind before starting this website. The inspiration to start the site came from the numerous communities with in the social networking sites and their inherent limitations to specifically suit the Namboodiri community needs. In addition to this, my interest/hobby in understanding our origins (family history/genealogy), my professional experience in building websites and the encouragement from family and friends literally

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1033 Rituals from birth to death
1034 www.namboodiri network blog accessed on 28-12-2011,
helped to bring up this site up and running”1035. This site relies on the Namboodiri community to create and drive the content, engage in conversation with an aim to, preserve the heritage in digital formats, educate and understand the Namboodiri tradition, culture through collaborative interactions, assist and guide Namboodiri community members on financial, education and professional areas, build relationships-understand the past, build friendships and establish new relationship and enrich and promote talents through social media tools. This site utilizes all networking like photo sharing, video sharing, blogs, forums etc to achieve the objective. In addition to this family tree (genealogy) section enables to research and find distant relatives and the matrimonial section enables to establish new relationship.

Many of the recent internet sites related to Namboodiris urges Namboodiris to register to these sites and build their own online identity through active participation and interactions. Here we can see the importance given to the community which incorporates various subdivisions with in the Namboodiris.

Sabha and Namboodiri Youths are trying to strengthen their collectivity through active intervention in the popular social networking sites Facebook. There are also attempts to transform the friendship in the virtual world to the real world. Namboodiri Facebook Friends Group Meets, the extension of Namboodiri collectivity in the social networking to real world is another example of Namboodiri attempt to build their own identity. Namboodiri Group meets were held in different parts of Kerala.1036 These Group meets featured by discussions on different themes and strongly demanded the

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1035 www.google .com accessed on 30-12-2011
1036 Facebook Namboodiri Sauhridavedi’ middle Kerala meet was held at Vangasseril illam, Kaviyur, Tiruvalla, Pattanamttita on 10-08-2013 and another held at Mandur, Pilathara, Kannur District on 19-08-2013, Facebook Group also held at Shournour on 22-09-2013
protection of Brahmanism.\textsuperscript{1037} In addition to serious discussions on the problems faced by the Namboodiris it also included entertainment like songs, Kathakali sangheetham etc.

These Facebook Group Meets discussed the possibility of collectivity among the members in different fields of activities. The Group Meet established a methodology for 'business meetings'- done with specific focus, enabling idea exchange from every single attendee, recording/ minuting them and ending a discussion with a clear set of action items. The meeting decided on establishing a Resource Exchange Platform, A Master Training Team of 20 resource persons. This team will be trained, and then impart training to smaller groups across Kerala to our members & their families. In a Facebook posting on Namboodiri Group Meet to be held at Shournour a Namboodiri old man and a Namboodiri youth is pictured.\textsuperscript{1038} Old man had no knowledge in Namboodiri customs, no knowledge in Sanskrit, but the youth as a scholar in every Namboodiri customs. This picturisation reflects the contemporary attitude of Namboodiris. Youth showed as ready to protect Brahmanism.

These Group meets discussed the possibility of starting a business by forming a core team. A team of ten or twenty members ready to invest one lakh rupees were invited to participate in it. Though the participants not decided the nature of the business they decided to work together. The Meet was like a collectivity of internet using members of the Namboodiri community. The organisers claimed that they had definite aim in the selection of a public place as a venue of the meeting as it will give the participants collective responsibility in arranging the meeting hall, scheduling the programme, supply

\textsuperscript{1037}www.facebook.com accessed on 11-08-2013
\textsuperscript{1038}www.facebook.com accessed on 03-09-2013
of food and cleaning. In their attempt of finding out their own identity there is an attempt to revive even the old debates over Namboodiris. A Facebook posting on 07-08-2013 criticised the concept of notable historian Ellamkulam P.N.Kunjanpillai on Namboodiris which earned the title ‘Ellamkulathinte Namboodiri Sakaram’. Active interpretation on this posting continued for days and many expressed proud on the return to Ellamkulam written by Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri. A general website namely www.namboothiri.com was started to convey the Namboodiri tradition in the virtual world.

Though Sabha is actively trying to find out a separate identity for the Namboodiris in the cyber space, there is also argument that new technologies were destroying rich cultural heritage of the Namboodiris. There are many postings in Facebook on Vedic study classes and one such posting says that study on Vedas and rituals for the interested Namboodiris were arranged with accommodation. Another posting says that Yogakshema Sabha Kumaranellur Upasabha is launching a Namboodiri matrimony website namely ‘Sahadharmam’, which would be an exclusive matrimony site for the Namboodiris. Another interesting posting in Facebook is that of inauguration of the Namboodiri lunch home at Shournour. The picture in the posting shows a Namboodiri with traditional style with ‘kuduma’ (tuft), ‘Poonul’ (sacred thread), and ‘tattudukkal’. This portrays that they will get customers by projecting Namboodiris

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1039 www.facebook.com, accessed on 19/08/2013
1040 www.facebook.com, accessed on 07/08/2013
1041 This website was hosted in 1999. It throws light on the history of Namboodiris, their culture, villages, traditional rituals, details of Yogakshema Sabha and political and literary figures including E.M.S. Namboothiriappad and V.T. Bhattathiriappad. More than 50 researchers including Frits Staal, T.P. Mahadevan, M.G.S. Narayanan, noted historian, etc. have contributed to this web site.
1043 www.facebook.com accessed on 02-08-2013
1044 www.facebook.com accessed on 17-07-2013
in the traditional way. The hotel is run by a Namboodiri event management group. A Namboodiri blog namely ‘Namboodiri Sanka’ actively made postings on the issue related with Taliparamba Sree Raja Rajeswara Temple. The posting entitled, ‘Ayithavum Manushyavakasavum Rashtreeya Muthleduppum’ strongly criticized the stand of political parties’ caste organisations on the issue. The viewed it as an attempt to spread anti-Brahmin feeling in the society. Namboodiris never responded to these types of insults against them and says that does not think that it is their weakness.

In short, with the effect of the transformations in the post-independence period Namboodiri communities were reformulating themselves to switch to the new situation. The land reforms of 1950’s and 1960’s resulted in a rethinking within the community on their economic position. As a result planning and industrialization became an agenda in their discussions. They understood the importance as well as dignity of labour and they succeeded in reconstituting themselves with the contemporary situations by entering into different economic arenas. The discussions for and against the land reforms had showed the strategies adopted by the community for overcoming the problems faced by the community.

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1045 www.facebook.com accessed on 20--11-2012
1046 The article says that unbiased approach to the issue is needed. The temple is traditionally under the control of 41 Namboodiri families of Taliparamba. Elder members of these families democratically select five members as the Trustees for the administration of the temple. In addition three non-traditional trustees were nominated by the Government. The accuse of untouchability towards non-Brahmins in the temple came days after the High Court decision to continue the uramakku of the trustees. The blog finds it as an attempt to capture the increasing money in the hands of the temple. It also criticized the attempt to create communal conflict. One member of Taliparamba Namboodiri family argued that Namboodiris not enjoying any special privileges in the Taliparamba temple but it is only the part of rituals in the temple. In many of the temples in Kerala like Parassinikkadavu Muthappan Temple, Tali Temple, Kozhikkode, Guruvayur Sree Krishna temple etc. trustees enjoying some special powers as a part of rituals, see E.P.Jayanarayanan namboodirippad, ‘Uralanmarkku Viseshavakasam mathram’ Mathrubhumi, 14-08-2013, see also E.A.Kuberan Namboodiri, ‘Brahmanarkku Ayitham Kalpichittilla’, Mathrubhumi, 30-07-2013, Karakkad Kesavan Namboodiri ‘Brahmanarkkum Ayitham’ Mathrubhumi 23-07-2013
As a result of the shifts in post-independence period Namboodiris view on society and culture got changed. They attempted to revive their social status through bringing back the old tradition and customs, which were rejected by them during social reform movement. Namboodiris began to claim separate identity from others through popularization of traditional customs and rituals. The caste marks and symbols, once pictured as hindrance to community progress, reappeared in the modern community practices.