Chapter - 3

Imagining Identity- Strategies of Yogakshema Sabha (1908-1947)

This chapter attempts to understand how an organization formed to reform a caste in course of time changed its political strategies to achieve their desired goal. It enquires the ways in which a caste of early 20\textsuperscript{th} century Kerala has become a community incorporating their counterparts from other region as well as erasing internal division within. The organization chosen to argue out the changing political strategies is Yogakshema Sabha, the community organization formed by Namboodiris of Kerala. Right from the inception till the end of 1940s Yogakshema Sabha has always shifted its policy. The changing paradigm shifts have been identified in four stages based on the policies and programmes of Yogakshema Sabha. The first stage was between 1908 to 1920 (moderate period), second-1920-30 (nationalism), third stage was 1930-40(radical social reform), and the final stage was 1940s (becoming a labour force). The practices and programmes of the Yogakshema Sabha during these periods indicated that the Sabha was gradually moving from a moderate position of protecting the traditional interests and passing through active participation in the national movement and radical social reform, and ending with recalling community members that one could survive in the modern world only by becoming a labour force in the contemporary colonial capitalist society. Yogakshema Sabha gradually moved from rational and scientific outlook of the few leaders to the freedom of all community members.\footnote{O.M.C.Narayannan Bhattathirippad, “Kalathinte Kaladypadukal”, Yogakeshama, March 1985, Vol.6(3,4,5), p.26}
Among the caste organizations of Kerala, the Namboodiris were rather slow in imbibing caste cluster consciousness. When other communities were influenced by reforms Namboodiris were reluctant to it and were under the influence of many customs and practices that were not suitable to the age. The popular literature as well as the colonial writings pictured Namboodiris as uncivilized. A designed and conscious effort to reform Namboodiris started in the first decade of the 20th century resulting in the formation of Yogakshema Sabha in 1908. Yogakshema Sabha, like Nair Service Society (NSS) and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) highly involved in social issues.

Discussions on the need of unity among the Namboodiri were started by the second half of the 19th century. Namboodiris were aware of the need for the deconstruction of the traditional space and entering the newly formed ‘public sphere’ in Kerala society. Subsequently some organisations of the Namboodiris with regional or local perspective had emerged. ‘Kerala Brahmana Samajam’ started mobilizing Namboodiris of south Travancore and published a newspaper namely ‘Dwijavaram’. A meeting of ‘Jenmi Sabha’ (landlord) was held at Vadakara on 14th May 1908 and was attended by prominent Namboodiri landlords of Malabar like Karumara Thu Narayanan Namboodiri, Edavalathu Pudayur Vasudevan Namboodiri Moothedathu Kuberan

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184 K.C.Narayanan ‘Verunangatha Vakku’in Mathrubhumi weekly, Vol.74(45) January 5 1997, p. argues that when SNDP was founded in 1903 Namboodiris were under the influence of primitive form of trail namely Smarthavicharam. Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri in his memoirs, ‘Ente Smaranakal’ says that more than 400 Smarthavicharams conducted between 1893-1913, Ente Smaranakal, Vol.111, Panchangam Books, Kunnankulam, pp.12-21
185 Colonial writers like William Logan, Samuel Mateer pictured Namboodiris as a group who stood against progress. More details see chapter1, Namboodiris in Literature
187 Editorial, “Indian Twinkarile Abhiprayam” (Opinion in Indian Twinker), Unninamboodiri, 1927 (ME.1102 Makaram), Vol.8(2), p.266
Namboodiri and Mallisseri Vasudevan Namboodiri. The meeting discussed the need of the formation of a community organization. Thus the discussions for a community organization for reforming their customs and manners had been started by the close of 19th century.

The discussion about Namboodiri reform movement has to be analysed in two contexts. During the initial stage, there was a small group which desired reforms and changes and there were dead opposition from the conservatives. Secondly, Unlike other caste organizations like SNDP and Sadhu Jana Pripalana Sangham that criticized and attacked the dominance of upper castes and related social disabilities, the Namboodiri reformers were targeting their own community to give up outdated beliefs and practices and to accept modern ideas. Transforming Namboodiris into human beings by the union of men and women became the slogan of Namboodiri reform movement in the later stages. This slogan was the art as well as weapon of the reform movement. The attempt for this transformation was started with the formation of Yogakshema Sabha.

**Background of the Formation of Yogakshema Sabha**

Yogakshema Sabha was formed on 4th July 1908 at Aluva, in a gathering of Namboodiris which was attended by 216 personalities. Yogakshema Sabha from the very beginning has an all Kerala perspective which was well attested by one of the

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188 Interview with Naduvalath Pudayur Namboodiri on 13-01-2013
191 Jenmi,op.cit,n.8,179
editorials of Unninamboodiri which claimed all Namboodiris from Kanyakumari to Kanjorode River (Kasaragod) as its members.\textsuperscript{192}

The formation of Yogakshema Sabha has been interpreted in different ways.\textsuperscript{193} The changing political scenario of Kerala from 18th century had a direct bearing on the formation of Yogakshema Sabha and Namboodiri identity. The Mysorean interlude and the colonial take over of Kerala adversely affected the social position and political influence of the Namboodiris in Malabar and the princely states of Cochin and Travancore. They got deprived of their earlier political role and social dominance enjoyed in the previous centuries and was forced to confine themselves to spiritual and religious affairs.\textsuperscript{194}

The Namboodiris have withdrawn more and more into their own shell of rituals. This was especially true in the case of Malabar where the Nayars alone were more loyal to the Namboodiris, discovered new opportunities in English education and British administrative setup and they were alienated from their Namboodiri mentors and masters. The new laws introduced in the princely states by the influence of British also threatened the power of the Namboodiris. The Decree of 1812 confiscating the extensive landed properties of 378 biggest temples in Travancore was certainly aimed at curtailing the power of Namboodiri and Nayar chiefs. The decree also aimed to limit the size of

\textsuperscript{192} Editorial, “Indian Twinkarile Abhiprayam” (Opinion in Indian Twinker), \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1927 (ME.1102 Makaram), Vol.8(2),p. 267
\textsuperscript{194} The withdrawal of Namboodiris to spiritual affairs were noticed by some European writers and they noticed the simplicity and innocence and isolated life of the Namboodiris from the civil society and even argued that Namboodiris were blockade to social progress as a class which strictly adhered on untouchability. See Edgar Thurston, \textit{Caste and Tribes in Southern India} Vol-5, pp. 159-160, Innes CA, \textit{Malabar Gazetteers}, Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1997, pp. 105-106
Nayar army and abolish the Namboodiri Sanketams.\textsuperscript{195} With the abolition of sanketams, the Namboodiris were now virtually reduced to the position of religious agents who lost institutional authority. The Namboodiris as a group has withdrawn from political scene and confined them within the social space bounded by their double function as land owners and religious agents.\textsuperscript{196} The Proclamation of Travancore Raja in 1823 made an attempt to check the high rates of dowry among the Namboodiris and Pottis.\textsuperscript{197}

As a result of the Mysoren occupation of Malabar the then existing social system of the Namboodiris received a rude shock. For the first time they were made to understand that they having the same blood, had no divine immunities, and they were no better than other human beings. Large number of Namboodiris had left their ancestral homes and lands and become refugees in Travancore for the fear of attack. The damage done was so deep that even the partial restoration of the old order by the British could not bring back the old climate, although many of the Brahmin landlords and their dependents returned from Travancore.\textsuperscript{198} Though the period was brief it revealed that the caste hierarchical structure of the Kerala society is alterable and can be changed.\textsuperscript{199} Then Namboodiris were now virtually reduced to mere religious agents who stood deprived of institutional authority, which until then had informed their dominance across the region. Deprived off the support they had always from the military castes, the Namboodiris were

\textsuperscript{195} Sanketams were medieval temple corporations of Kerala which enjoyed semi-autonomous power in its areas.

\textsuperscript{196} Genevieve Lemerciner, \textit{Religion and Ideology in Kerala}, D.KAgencies, New Delhi,1984,p.212

\textsuperscript{197} Pottis, Namboodiris of Travancore region known as Pottis. It is accepted as a major sub division among the Namboodiris like Embranthiris, Moothath, Elayath etc. The Travancore Rajas Proclamation of 1823 says that those Namboodiris who demanded more than 700 Kalian money for one girl will be punished by the court of law, quoted from P.K.Balakrishnan, ‘Jathiyavasthiyum Kerala Charitravum’, p.365

\textsuperscript{198} MGS Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, “A History of Namboothiri Community of Kerala”, in Frits Staal (ed) \textit{Agni,The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar},Vol.1,Motilal Banarsidas,p.275

no longer in a position of power when faced with a political authority supported by the colonialists.  

Also, in consequence of the loss of political control and socio-economic supremacy, they were fast becoming relics of the old world. They tried to stick on their lands, temples, caste privileges and turned their back on the ‘mlecha’ system of modern English education. They could not participate in the social reform movement, since it was directed largely against their dominance. With their aversion to manual labour they could not engage in the world of industry and commerce. Even in the legal matters connected with their landed property, they became dependent on a professional class of lawyers composing of their tenants and caste subordinates. In spite of a small fanatical group of reformers, the majority of the Namboodiris observed the rigid caste rules, Including the 64 ‘anacharams’ or injunctions with increasing religious fervor. The British were not ready to accept their claim as spiritual leaders. This political setback necessitated the formation of Sabha for undertaking reforms among them. The economic changes brought about by the colonial modernity destroyed the enviable position of the Namboodiris as an economic power. They lost their dominance over material sources and they were no longer able to maintain power and superiority over the society with mere signifiers of their body. Therefore the Namboodiris were compelled to develop a new concept of life in the changed atmosphere of Kerala.

The debates over the legality of Sambandham marriage (Hypergamous marriage) in the 1890’s and the confrontation between the two upper castes (Namboodiris and

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201 Anachasrams, 64 castes rules to be observed by the Namboodiris according to Sankara Smrithi, The rules of Namboodiris in Sankara Smrithi known as 64 ‘Anacharam’s’ as the practice unknown to the place
202 A. Ramavarma Thampan, “Namboodirimarum Parishkaravum” (Namboodiris and Reforms), Unninamboodiri, 1924(ME.1099 Midhunam), vol.5(10),p.460
Nayars) have been interpreted as another factor behind the formation of Yogakshema Sabha. It was perceived as a non-marriage relation or a kind of concubinage, a practice that civilized people should avoid.\textsuperscript{203} When the last Smarthavicharam was conducted in 1918, there was severe criticism against it. Demand for ending this cruel form of punishment emerged from all parts of Kerala. Ironically Namboodiri orthodox were unaware of these criticisms as they were ignorant in learning and education.\textsuperscript{204} But the educated Namboodiri youths conducted serious discussions on the drawbacks of sambandham marriage and its effects on man-women relations within the community. Even the traditional intellectuals of the community started criticizing sambandham as an illegal practice.\textsuperscript{205} The debates over sambandham created awareness among the Namboodiris for reforming themselves which needed an organization.

The growing educational and employment opportunities of late 19\textsuperscript{th} century and the caste restrictions that prevented the Namboodiris from entering into the employment sector created a consciousness among the Namboodiris for internal reforms. When other reformist organizations worked against traditional law system and social evils in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Namboodiri stood for the protection of their spiritual sanctity and purity and their movement was not for English education or representation.\textsuperscript{206} A significant minority of the Nayars and lower castes like the Ezhavas had begun opting for professional careers in law and administration by the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Namboodiris then began to realize that their social status and dominance over education system were under threat. This new situation is well attested by Ramavarma Thampan in his article

\textsuperscript{204} Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri, Ente Smaranakal, Vol.1, Panchangam Books, pp.116-117
\textsuperscript{205} For example see Vadakkamkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, ‘Mathavum Samskaravum; (Religion and Culture), Unninamboodiri, 1924(ME,1100 Thulam),vol.6(2),pp.136-145
\textsuperscript{206} N.P.Vijayakrishnan,op. cit,p.99
published in *Unninamboodiri*. In this article he argued that the impact of modern western civilization could not be rejected by any one and participation in competitions in every part of the world have become a must for progress and getting represented in the society. He also advocated his fellowmen to leave the hope of reviving the lost power and win the competitions to capture new powers and rights.\(^{207}\)

The tenancy reforms in the 19\(^{th}\) century, which questioned the rights of Namboodiris, also moved them towards an organizational frame work. The propertied class of Nayars and Namboodiri Brahmins were facing increasing amount of opposition from their tenants and lower caste dependents.\(^ {208}\) In the close of 19\(^{th}\) century and the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century many royal orders were passed for changing the land lord-tenant relations. The 5\(^{th}\) Regulation of ME 1071(1896) in Travancore, Royal order on tenancy in Cochin in ME 1083(1908), the 1\(^{st}\) Regulation of ME 1081(1906) and the 2\(^{nd}\) Regulation of ME 1092(1917) in Cochin are examples of Government efforts to change the existing land lord-tenant relationship.\(^ {209}\) The Cochin tenancy reforms and the royal order of enforcing the tenancy law in provided the immediate cause for the origin of Sabha.\(^ {210}\) This is further established by the public disagreement of Yogakshema Sabha against the Cochi Jenmi-Kudiyan Regulation in 1915.\(^ {211}\)

\(^{207}\) A. Ramavarma Thampan, “Namboodirimarum Parishkaravum” (Namboodiris and Reforms), *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1099 Midhunam), vol.5(10), p.460

\(^{208}\) G.Arunima, op.cit, p.274

\(^{209}\) Editorial, “Namboodiri family Regulation”, *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1100 Chingam), vol.5(12), pp.564-566


\(^{211}\) A.L.Ravivarma, “Achara Samskaranam” (Reforming of rituals), *Unninamboodiri*, 1924(ME.1099 Edavam), vol.5(9), p.409
Yogakshema Sabha had given its first priority to the tenancy question by appointing a committee under Kurur Unni Namboodiri which conducted serious discussion on tenancy laws and submitted many memorandums to the Cochin Government. But the suggestions of Sabha were rejected by the Cochin Government. The growing threat of tenancy legislation added an edge to form a community organization. This factor was later admitted by Chengannur Mathur Vasudevan Namboodiri, who presided over the 14th session of Sabha held at Mavelikkara. The presidential address admitted that the attempt of Cochin Raja to restrict the traditional rights of Namboodiris in land in 1907 resulted in the formation of Yogakshema Sabha.

It is argued that personal elements also contributed to the formation of Yogakshema Sabha like the insult met by the Namboodiri husbands from their sambandham wives of Tripunithara palace for not having good education. It is interesting to note that many early leaders of Sabha were sambandham husbands in Tripunithara palace. Yet another argument considers the incidents of Kuriyedathu Thathri as a factor for the formation of Yogakshema Sabha. Tatri case in fact shook the community, provided the Namboodiris with a common cause to come together; and more importantly, it provoked the liberal section to find ways to regenerate the community through modern organizational and normative lines. The trail of Kuriyedathu tathri provided an opportunity for the liberal and educated Namboodiris to

212 Ibid, p.410, See Jenmi Karkkidakam, 1908 (ME.1088), p.80
213 PK Aryan Namboodiri, op.cit, p.43
214 Ibid, p.39
215 Ibid, pp.35-36, see also C.K.Namboodiri, Yogakshema Sabhayude Munpum Pinpum, p.9
217 Devaki Nilayankode in her ‘Memoirs of Namboodiri women’ also opined that Tatri coincided with reform movement like the inception of Yogakshema Sabha. J.Devika also opined that Yogakshema Sabha was formed not long after Tatri’s incident, p.121
look at themselves and realize how backward they were compared to Ezhavas and Pulayas who were reforming themselves by SNDP Yogam (1903) and Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (1905) respectively. V.T. Bhattathiripad has strongly opined that two women had played their decisive roles in the awakening of the Namboodiris—‘Tatri’ and ‘Indulekha’—both in almost identical ways by exposing the moral and material decay of the community.218

Some of the social changes in the last two decades of 19th century like Aruvippuram installation of Sree Narayana Guru, Malayali Memmorial of 1891 and proceedings of the Malabar Marriage Commission influenced all the caste organisations. Caste organisation among the Ezhavas provided a model for the non-privileged castes and a stimulus to the high caste Hindus (including the Namboodiris) to organize reformatory movements within their own caste.219 The reflection of this wave was the formation of Yogakshema Sabha in 1908.220

By the beginning of the 20th century Namboodiri middleclass were aware of the possibilities of the material world created by the colonial modernity in Kerala. Therefore they easily realized the necessity of deconstructing their traditional social space and entering the newly formed ‘public sphere’ in Kerala by the end of the late 19th century.221 The educated middle class of the Namboodiris were well aware of the fact that if they keep aloof from the realities of the contemporary developments they would be marginalized. The Namboodiri orthodoxy was not ready to give up their tradition and

218 KC Narayanan, ed V Tyude Sampoorna Kritikal, DC Books, Kottayam, pp. 126-127
219 MSA. Rao, Tradition, Rationality and Change, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1972, p.121
220 P. Govinda Pillai, Kerala Navodhanam, Yugasandhatikal Silpikal, Munnam Sanchika, Desabhimani Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2009, pp. 211-212
abandon their holy space. The contradiction between these two groups resulted in the formation of the Yogakshema Sabha.

All these interpretations by and large agree on the argument that Sabha was the response of Namboodiris to the new socio-economic and political demands of the late 19th and early 20th century. It was in these changed circumstances, that the Namboodiris being forced to re-examine their relations with the Nayars and to evaluate their actual strength in the agrarian social structure. The main demands of Yogakshema Sabha, like endogamous marriages, the partition of the family property and the provision of western education for the Namboodiris, had close relations with the political, social and economic conditions of late 19th century and the beginning of 20th century.

A large number of Namboodiris congregated in Cherumukku Vaidikan’s Illam located on the bank of the Periyar River in 1908, and was presided over by Desamangalam Valiya Sankaran Namboodiripad. This event, in fact, gave birth to ‘Namboodiri Yogakshema Mahaasabha’ (Namboodiri Community Welfare Organisation). The congregation elected Desamangalathu Kanjiyuru Sankaran Namboodiri as the first president and Kirangad Vasudevan Namboodiri as the first secretary of the Sabha. Kurur Unni (Damodaran) Namboodiri played an important role in the formation of Yogakshema Sabha.

The Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha formed in 1908 had the expressed vision of uniting the ‘ideals, beliefs and endeavors of the Namboodiris and to create a unity of opinion among them’. Kurur Unni Namboodirippad, one of the founding leaders of Sabha conceived it as to “achieve the end desired by the Brahmins by bringing them all

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within one fold to organize them”\textsuperscript{224}. The Sabha aimed, ‘educational, moral, political, and economic progress of the Namboodiris’\textsuperscript{225}

**Sabha for protecting the tradition**

The period from 1908 to 1920 Sabha was dominated by orthodox sections and was ready to protect the traditional character of the Namboodiris. Sabha declared its primary aim as the protection of Brahmanism.\textsuperscript{226} The glimpse of reformist spirit was firstly reflected among the Namboodiri wealthy landlords. The early leaders wanted changes without destroying orthodoxy and affecting landlordism. The works of Sabha was centered on *swadharmanushtanam* (observing self-duty), protecting of rituals, relation between land lord and tenant etc. The early leaders aimed to transform community without destroying their racial superiority. It not engaged in human issues. Gradually they were influenced by the symbols of colonial modernity like English education, institutions of capitalism like banking, Estate Company etc.

*Swadharmanushtanam* (observing of self-duties), a memorial prepared by Yogakshema Sabha Kottakkal Upasabha illustrated the traditional character of early Yogakshema Sabha.\textsuperscript{227} The memorial was a scheme of observing self-duties and rituals by the Namboodiris and it stressed on the need of observing dharma by the Namboodiris of Kerala\textsuperscript{228}. The traditional character of early Sabha is clear when English Special School was started at Edakkunni, near Trissur, Namboodiri boys only were admitted and

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid,p.2
\textsuperscript{225} PK Aryan Namboodiri, op.cit,p.34, A printed manifesto of Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha is not available. The journals like Unninamboodiri, Yogakshemam, and pamphlets like *Swadharmanushtanam* (Performance of Self Duty) etc. throws light on the aims and objectives of the early Sabha.
\textsuperscript{226} NV Krishna Varier, “VT Oru Ithihasam”, in *VT Oru Ithihasam* (ed) Palakeezh Narayanan, Cherukad Smaraka Trust, Printhalmanna,2004 p.28
\textsuperscript{227} *Swadharmanushtanam*, Memorandum prepared by Yogakshema Sabha Kottakkal Upasabha.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.p.2
the students had to follow strict rules and regulations. The school tried to keep up with both the traditional and modern system of education. Yogakshema Sabha in its early days was hardly ‘reformist’ but chiefly ‘defensive’.229

During this stage Sabha aimed to protect the powers and privileges enjoyed by Namboodiris which were threatened by the forces of colonial modernity. One of the goals of the Sabha was to promote the prosperity of the Namboodiri community in matters relating to ‘Dharmaachaaram’. The history of the Yogakshema Sabha shows a slow but definite change in its views on such issues, in the definition of "Dharmam" and "Aachaaram", and their practical utility. Beginning with the first annual meeting, these issues are seen to have been discussed and debated in several later meetings too. In its early years, various learning centres (Dharmasthhaapanams) were started initially for giving impetus to the study of Vedas and other religious texts, but decisions were taken in later years to utilise these centres for imparting modern education. But some progressive minded people complained that Brahmin practices were obstacles to world progress.230 Early leaders of Yogakshema Sabha were not aware of the grievances of their women folk. They freely engaged sambandham relations with royal houses like Tripunithara palace.231

The close association of Sabha to the landed aristocracy could be seen in its early regulations. Sabha was aimed to settle the conflicts related with uraler rights and checking the declining influence of the land lords. Sabha passed resolution for the

231 C.K.Namboodiri, op.cit, p.9
232 Uraler’, the Namboodiris who enjoyed hereditary power over the administration of temples
continuance of rituals in Namboodiri *illams* (houses). They were not ready to give up their domination over others which was enjoying for centuries.

Yogakshema Sabha from the early period was not a homogenous organization. Internal divisions, conflicts and ideological struggles existed within. In the second session of Sabha held at Trissur 1909 ironically opposed the adoption of modern medicine including taking injection against small pox.\(^{233}\) The attitude and prejudices of Namboodiri community on modern ideas were reactionary during that period. At the same time the meeting also discussed progressive ideas like modern education, child marriage, problems of the ex-communication, opposing vaccination against small pox and the need for endogamy. In the midst of these discussions we could see the unwillingness of Sabha to give up the powers of Namboodiris when it discussed the possibility of a ‘Vaidika Sabha’ (Vedic Sabha) for deciding matters related with Vedic rituals. It reflects the ideological differences existed within Sabha represented by the conservatives and progressives.

Conservatives had overhand during the first stage. Attempts to accommodate and adjust with new development could be seen in the first stage. It was this effort which tried to give an all Kerala meaning to it. With a view to include different sections of the Brahmins of Kerala it had been advised to change its name from Yogakshema Sabha into ‘*Kaeraleeya Brahmana Samajam*’.\(^{234}\) Thus Sabha was succeeded in giving a secular image to the Brahmin movement. But in two years’ time, due to the influence of the orthodox Namboodiris, the new name was dropped for the old one itself.

\(^{233}\) Mullanezhi Sivadasan Namboodiri, *Yogakshema Sabha Charithrangalilude*, Panchangam books, 2011, p.20

\(^{234}\) Editorial, “Abhijathyadwamsana Sabha” (Sabha to crush orthodoxy) *Unninamboodiri*, 1928-29(ME.1104 Dhanu), Vol.10(4), p.234
During the first stage there were attempts to provide a strong organizational structure to Sabha. To solve internal differences and for strengthening the works of Sabha, the Namboodiri villages from Kanjirode river to Kanyakumari was divided into seven units, though its name not referred, a publicity committee was formed with 8 to 10 members for each units. This village committee solved the different problems between the Namboodiris. For example, the Namboodiris of Taliparamba were not having marriage relations with other Brahmin village or outside their circle called ‘Sivangal’. This issue was taken by the Sabha. Kurur Unni Namboodiris ‘Bharathibhushanam’ was the centre of the activities of Yogakshema Sabha and subsequently Kurur Unni Namboodiri and ‘Bharathibhushanam’ became popular as ‘Motilal’ and ‘Anandabhavanam’ among the Namboodiris.

Heated debates took place on the acceptance of English education within the community and Sabha during 1908-1920. When new educated youths like C.S.Subrahmanian Potti became active in Sabha, it entered into new socio-cultural fields. This shift in attitude of Namboodiris could be traced at the Vellinezhi anniversary in 1916. When financial aid for Namboodiri education was sought at Vellinezhi anniversary, many came forward to contribute money and that was characterized as silver rains of Vellinezhi (Vellinezhiyile Velli Mazha).

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235 Ibid.,p.235
237 Bharathibhushanam, residence of Kurur Unni Namboodiri at Trissur.
The newspapers of the period characterized Yogakshema Sabha as Namboodiri Congress.\textsuperscript{240} Newspapers like Samudaya Deepika, Lokaparakasam, Malayala Manorama and Kerala Patrika hailed that the works of Yogakshema Sabha would result in the progress of Kerala.\textsuperscript{241} Vellinezhi Congress attracted the attention of national leaders like Annie Beasant, P.S.Sreenivasa Sastri and C.R.Sarojini Naidu. Literary luminaries like Appan Thampuran, Ullur and Vallathol blessed the Sabha. Very soon Namboodiri special schools were started in different parts of Kerala. Along with English education, traditional education was also imparted in those schools.\textsuperscript{242} Special schools were started at Peramangalam, Taliparamba, Karikkad, Panjal, Kulakkada, Tekkan Tottara, Killimangalam, Killikurussimangalam and Venmeni. Kurur Unninamboodiri put forward the idea of forming university by joining Trissur Brahmanswam Madom. Thus the first step towards social mobility and progress in terms of modernity was emphasized through English education.

From the very beginning there was strong opposition to the progressive concepts of Sabha. Orthodoxy stood against the decisions of Vellinezhi meeting and they met at Sukapuram and formed ‘Noottipandrandukar ’under the leadership of Paschima Raman Namboodiri.\textsuperscript{243} The orthodox published a notice signed by 112 orthodox Namboodiris against the Vellinezhi decisions. But Kurur Unni Namboodiri was successful in ending all these oppositions.\textsuperscript{244} Similarly a newspaper from Thiruvananthapuram namely ‘Indian Twinker’ with Subrahmanya Iyer as its editor opposed modern practices of Namboodiris like modern education, Namboodiri family regulations and caste

\textsuperscript{240} PK Aryan Namboodiri,op.cit,p.49
\textsuperscript{241} See for example the article in Samudaya Deepika, ‘Namboodiri Congress’, 18/04/1916
\textsuperscript{242} Traditional system of education mentioned in the third chapter, pp.
\textsuperscript{243} Sastrasarman Karikkad, ‘From Namboodiri Yogakshema sabha to Yogakshema Sabha’, Yogakshemam, March 1985,Vol.6(3,4,5),p.2
endogamy. It was argued that these changes were not needed and would destroy their Namboodiri identity and would become non-Brahmins. It was also argued that caste system should be continued for the welfare of the Namboodiris.\textsuperscript{245} ‘\textit{Dharmodharaka Samithi}, an organization of the orthodox, stood against special schools at Mannadi, Kumaranellur and Edakkunni by characterizing it as factory producing devils.\textsuperscript{246}

Attempt to reconstitute the identity of the community through English education could be seen in the first phase of Sabha. In the 9\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Sabha in 1917 an Educational Committee was formed with Kurur Unni Namboodiri as secretary. The committee was to decide on the curriculum and the administrative methods of the special schools. Under the leadership of C.S.Subrahmanyan Potti a group of English educated Namboodiris formed an ‘English Educational Conference’\textsuperscript{247}

Yogakshema Sabha began to demand a royal law related with family administration and for checking the ruin of Namboodiri property by the second decade of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{248} But the resolutions passed by Yogakshema Sabha during these early years were rather mildly worded, ensuring that no party would be hurt. The moderate position is well attested by the following resolution which read, "The practice of \textit{Sambandham} is humiliating to both communities. Unless and until Nair boys are allowed to marry Namboodiri girls, Namboodiri boys should not marry Nair girls."\textsuperscript{249} The rhetoric of family reforms was coughed in a highly charged and emotive language,

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\item \textsuperscript{245} Editorial, ‘Dharmodharaka Samitiyude Dhikkaram’(Proud of Dharmadharaka samithi), \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1921 (ME.1097 Kanni), Vol.3(1)p.5
\item \textsuperscript{246} Ibid, p.5, see also Editorial, ‘Indian Twinkarile abhiprayam’ (Opinion in Indian Twinker), \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1927 (ME.1102 Makaram), Vol.8(2).pp. 266-269
\item \textsuperscript{247} Editorial, ‘Vidyalaya varshika yogam’ (Anniversary meeting of school), \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1925(ME.1100 Meeenam, Vol.6(10),p.547
\item \textsuperscript{248} Mullanezhi Sivadasan Namboodiri, op.cit,p.37
\item \textsuperscript{249} Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodirippad, ‘Presidential address to the 6\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Namboodiri youth wing’, \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1925(ME.1100 Edavam), Vol.6(9),p.458
\end{itemize}
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designed to tug at the heart strings of the unconverted. The Yogakshema Sabha in its formative phase lacked solid institutional base and programme of action. Herbert Blumer’s observation that in the initial stages every social movement may be badly organized and would have no clear cut organizational set up was applicable in the case of Yogakshema Sabha as well.250

Certain ideas emanate from the above discussions. Firstly, internal debates were strong within Yogakshema Sabha during its first stage of activity. The debates were reflected in traditionalism verses modernity and conservatism verses progressivism. Sabha not rejected traditionalism for modernism or progressivism for conservatism but it always tried for compromise and conciliation between these groups.

One of the prime areas of contestation was the tenancy legislation initiated by the Governments of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar aiming at providing certain concessions to the tenants. This was taken by the Namboodiri as a step towards curtailing their privileges. So during its first phase the prime concern of Yogakshema Sabha were the laws which given limited power to the peasants of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar and the governance of the temple in which Namboodiris were the uralers. Emergence of metropolitan capital in the high land of Kerala in the form of plantation necessitated continuous flow of labour force for plantations. In Kerala majority of the labourers were agrestic slaves. It was only by liberating the labour force from land lords that the supply of the labourers can be ensured in plantations. It was with this reality that the British introduced tenancy legislations in Kerala.251 Tenancy legislations provided certain concessions to the serfs. Namboodiris viewed tenancy laws and liquidation of

**brahmaswam** and **devaswam** as attempts to curtail the rights and powers which they enjoyed for centuries.\(^{252}\)

During the early period many argued that only Sanskrit education needed for the Namboodiris. They not even thought about modern education. The strong orthodox group within the Sabha tried to spread the Parasurama legend and established Parasurama temples in their strong holds.\(^{253}\) So the early leaders of the Sabha were not revolutionaries, transformers or not even modern. Though Sabha stood for the education of boys, it almost kept silence on the question of education of girls. Sabha also was not ready to support mixed schools. Edakkunni Namboodiri School practiced daily rituals and students were not allowed to wear shirts. Sabha supported English education by not making any significant changes on old culture and it supported Gurukula system of education.

Though many activities Sabha were reactionary in its first phase, it cannot be denied that they were not ignorant about the fast spreading significance of the English education and the writing in English. They recognized the need of English education in interaction with polity, judiciary etc. The inability to read and write English was identified as a real handicap but at the same time they were not ready to give up tradition. Early leaders agreed for an adjustment which accommodated both old and new. But Sabha during this phase by its emphasis on acceptance of modern education, changes in the social behavior and the need of restructuring community wished to create a new community. But the demand for English education show that a progressive youth

\(^{252}\) Yogakshema Sabha passed many resolutions during its early period which exhibited their anxiety towards the growing tenancy legislations ,see Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodrippad, ‘Presidential address to the 6th anniversary of Namboodiri youth wing’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1925(ME.1100 Edavam), Vol.6(9),pp.452-455
emerged in Yogakshema Sabha. Though it was an embryonic stage, it reflected their awareness that only by English education that they could survive in the new socio-political scenario.

**Into Nationalism**

Third decade of 20th century witnessed spread of national fervor over Kerala. National movement began to lose its elitist character by the Gandhian leadership. National movement all over Kerala influenced the policies and programmes of Yogakshema Sabha. This period also witnessed a change of leadership within Sabha. A group emerged in Yogakshema Sabha who understood the shortcomings of the former group. They were not wealthy landlords but middlemen or poor people. The new educated Namboodiri youths agitated against inequalities, inhuman practices of their community and focused on women emancipation as the way for reforming the community. The ideas, demands and programmes of Yogakshema Sabha were oriented towards participation in national movement. When Indian National Congress passed anti-untouchability resolution in its Kakkinada session Namboodiris imbibed this spirit and participated in the Vaikkom and Guruvayur Satyagrahas.

When the movement against the political dependency started in Kerala, the Namboodiris decided to move with other communities and end their isolation. During First World War Yogakshema Sabha under the leadership of Chittur Narayanan

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254 For more details on national movement of Kerala see P.K.K.Menon, *History of freedom movement in Kerala*, Govt, of Kerala, 1970
256 PK Aryan Namboodiri, op.cit, p.4.
Namboodiri convened a meeting for collecting war fund. The Vellinezhi anniversary of Yogakshema Sabha in 1916 was reported by the contemporary newspapers as Namboodiri Congress. This meeting was held during the preparations for the first political conference of K.P.C.C was going on at Palakkad. When the Palakkad meeting passed a resolution for political freedom, the Vellinezhi Namboodiri Congress stood for ritual freedom and English education for the Namboodiris.

Kurur Unni Namboodiri actively got involved in the National movement along with many Namboodiri youths. He attended the political conferences held at Palakkad and Kozhikode. The political conference held at Kozhikkode under C.P.Ramaswami Iyer in 1917, passed a resolution demanding self-government for India which was supported by the members of Yogakshema Sabha.

Newspapers like *Samudaya Deepika, Lokaprakasam, Malayala Manorama, Kerala Pathrika* and *Chakravarthi* wrote editorials in support of the works of Sabha and pointed out that the work of Sabha would result in an all-round progress of Kerala. The editorial of West Coast Spectator on 1st March 1916 appreciated the active participation of the Namboodiris in national movement. The editorial West Coast Spectator suggested establishing of an Anglo Vedic college without destroying Namboodiri culture.

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257 Editorial, ‘Khadar Pracharanam’ (Popularisation of Khadar), *Unninamboodiri*, 1927 (ME.1102Meenam), Vol.8(7), pp.375-376. An exhibition was conducted at CNN high school for raising war fund.
258 Ibid.p.56
259 *West Coast Spectator*, 01/03/1916 wrote, “Namboodiri is awake, alive and kicking from the report that has come to us of the proceedings of the Namboodiri congress and English educational conference we are certainly glad to find that he has determined to work out his own salvation. We have always held that reform.. So far the community is concerned should come from within and not without. God and Government help those who help themselves is truism, the value of which the Namboodiris have realised….”
The 10th anniversary of Sabha under the leadership of Chittur Narayanan Namboodiri passed a resolution that demanded administrative reforms (self-Government) as demanded by the Congress and Muslim League at Lucknow in 1916. The resolution, in the form of a memorandum, was submitted to lord Montague, who visited Madras in 1917. Namboodiri volunteers were active in Ottappalam Conference of K.P.C.C under the leadership of Kurur Neelakandan Namboodiri. After the end of the First World War, movements like October Revolution and the Non-Co-operation Movement affected the functioning of Sabha resulting in the emergence of two rival groups within the Sabha-orthodox and progressive.

Yogakshema sabha openly discussed the issue of nationalism in the 13th anniversary at Kolakkada. Having been inspired by the feeling of nationalism, the meeting was commenced with singing a patriotic poem of Ullur. Raja Ravi Varma the noted painter of Kerala attended the meeting and contributed an amount of Rs 200 and requested to set up scholarship to selected students of Sabha in the name of Kurur Unni Namboodiri. The attitude of the Sabha towards the national freedom struggle was exemplified in an award namely ‘Keraleeya Thilakam’ in the memory of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the first award was given to K.P. Kesava Menon.

The changed attitude of the Namboodiri youths towards national movement was reflected in the participation of VT (V.T.Raman Bhattathirippad), MRB (Mullamangalathu Raman Bhattathirippad), and Premji (M.P.Bhattathirippad) in the national movement. VT Bhattathirippad attended the Ahmedabad session of the Indian

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260 PK Aryan Namboodiri, op.cit, p.56.
261 C.Kunhiraman Menon, ‘Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha’, Unninamboodiri, 1922 (ME.1097 Medam), Vol.3(8),pp.442-445, see also PK Aryan Namboodiri,op.cit,p.57
National Congress when he was a student of Edakkuni Namboodiri Special School.\textsuperscript{262} A few articles of \textit{Unninamboodiri} also expressed the need of participating in the national movement as well as in Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{263} The author of one article, Mozhikkunnam Brahmaduttan Namboodiri, argued that it was for ending the isolation of the Namboodiris that they should participate the activities of the Congress. He commented that Namboodiris should work with others as brothers in order to put an end to Namboodiri isolation from the public.\textsuperscript{264}

A resolution for ending untouchability was introduced by K.P.Sankaran Namboodiri in All Kerala Political Conference held at Palakkad in May 1923 under the presidency of Sarojini Naidu. It was supported by P.Achuthan, Kurur Neelakandan Namboodiri, but traditionalist like Paschima Raman Namboodiri opposed the resolution.

The attitude of Yogakshema Sabha whether participation in national movement or confined in social reformism is evident in an article of \textit{Unninamboodiri} which vehemently criticized the attitude of Kurur Neelakandan Namboodiri, who actively participated in the Gandhian freedom movement and anti-untouchability programmes at the same time reluctant to participate in the community reformist programmes.\textsuperscript{265} The article complained that Neelakandan Namboodiri, who worked for freedom of mobility and anti-untouchability programmes was not thinking about his own community. In his community there was not even freedom for breathing.\textsuperscript{266} There were many leaders for looking after the affairs of India and the absence of one would not effect this movement.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{262} VT Bhattathirippad, \textit{Karmavipakam}, D.C Books, Kottayam, 2007, p.36
\item \textsuperscript{263} Mozhikkunnam Brahmaduttan Namboodiri, ‘Nammude innathe athyavasyam’ (our essentialities of today), \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1925 (ME.11101 Kanni), Vol.7(1), p.12
\item \textsuperscript{264} Ibid, p.13
\item \textsuperscript{265} Editorial, ‘Kurur Neelakandan Namboodirippad Avarkalkku’ (to Kurur Neelakandan Namboodiri) \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1928 (ME.1103 Karkkidakam), Vol.9(11), p.625
\item \textsuperscript{266} Ibid, p.626
\end{itemize}
But the Namboodiri community desperately wanted a leader of experience and ability and leaders like Kurur should cooperate with them. Unninamboodiri also cited the example of TK Madhavan, who was participating both national movement and leading lower caste movements like Vaikkom satyagraha. The article further added that the condition of Namboodiri community was worst and pathetic. So it highly demanded the service of persons like Neelakandan Namboodiri.

There had been a kind of laziness in the works of Sabha immediately after Malabar rebellion in 1922. During this period Sabha formed a ‘Protection Committee’ for helping those who had escaped from Eranad, Valluvanad areas and reached Trissur and further South. It is believed that refugees between 200 to 300 reached daily in these places and they were given food and shelter by the committee. Malabar rebellion adversely affected a group of Namboodiris. Namboodiri activists like Mozhikkunnath Brahmadattan Namboothiripad argued that the rebellion had become communal and some of the Namboodiris were attacked during the later part of the rebellion. Yogakshemam, the official journal of Yogakshema Sabha published series of articles related to the Malabar Rebellions. It characterized the rebellion as ‘Malabarile Chelakalapam’ and identified three groups among the rebels viz, the real rebels fighting against the state, lootters and religious fanatics.

The Purna Swaraj resolution passed in the Payyanur conference held in May 1929 and chaired by Jawaharlal Nehru was supported by Kurur Neelakandan.

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267 Ibid, p.630
268 Ibid, p.634
269 Mozhikkunnath Brahmaduttan Namboodirippad, Khilafath Smaranakal, Mathrubhumi books, 2010, p.55
270 OMC, Namboodiri, ‘Malabarile Chelakalapam’ Yogakshemam, 02-09-1921, p.2
Namboodiri and P.C. Narayanan Namboodiri and other Sabha activists.\textsuperscript{271} Majority of the participants in salt satyagraha in Payyanur were Nayars and Namboodiris, most of them belongs to the dominant families of the region.\textsuperscript{272} During the salt satyagraha, Government enforced repressive measures. In the police atrocities at Kozhikode Kurur Neelakandan Namboodiri lost his eye sight.

Yogakshema Sabha was also inspired by social revolutionary movements. Vaikom satyagraha of 1924, Guruvayur satyagraha of 1931-32 were example for this. These movements were indirectly influenced by the Sabha. It is interesting to note that there was also some reactionary works like Brahmin hotels in Vaikkom had refused to provide meals to Kurur Neelakandan Namboodiri during Vaikkom Satyagraha.\textsuperscript{273} During the Guruvayur Satyagraha, Yogakshema Sabha came forward to support all the publicity programmes. \textit{Unninamboodiri} magazine gave wide publicity to Guruvayur Satyagra and E. M. Sankaran Namboodiri was entrusted with reporting of the Satyagraha.\textsuperscript{274} A march of the Namboodiri volunteers from Sreekrishnapuram to Guruvayur was led by P.C. Narayanan Namboodiri.\textsuperscript{275} During the Sathyagraha, Premji started a ‘khadhi’ store at Guruvayoor. Orthodox started the paper ‘Sanadhini’ against sathyagraha and in return satyagrahis under the leadership of Premji started the paper ‘Yuvadeepam’.\textsuperscript{276} V.T.Bhattathirippad and Premji were the part of eight member committee constituted to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{271} N.P.Vijayakrishnan, ‘Namboodiri Samudayam Veendum Mahanarakathilekko’, \textit{Mathrubhumi weekly}, January 23,2005,Vol82(47)p.12
\item \textsuperscript{272} E.M.S.Namboodiririppad, ‘Ente Jivitha katha’ (My life story),Calicut, 1965, p.297, This conservative position is well illustrated in the editorials of \textit{Unninamboodiri}, Editorial, ‘Vaikkom Satyagraham’, \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1924(ME.1099 Edavam), vol.5(9), pp.395-399, see also Editorial, ‘Vaikkathe sthithi’ (Condition at Vaikkom), \textit{Unninamboodiri}, 1925(ME.1100 Meenam), Vol.6(10),pp.543-545
\item \textsuperscript{273} Payyappilli Balan, \textit{Paliyam Samara Katha},Chinta Publications, TVM, 1998, p.37
\item \textsuperscript{274} K.Gopalankutty, \textit{Malabar padanangal},Kerala Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram,2007p.75
\item \textsuperscript{275} N.P.Vijayakrishnan, op.cit, p.12
\item \textsuperscript{276} NP Vijayakrishnan, \textit{Premji}, Rainbow Books,2003,p.118
\end{itemize}
conduct a referendum among the caste Hindus to find out what they thought about the question of temple entry.

Yogakshema Sabha and its youth wing named ‘Yuvajana Sangham’ strongly supported the anti-untouchability programme as a part of national movement. The 7th anniversary of Namboodiri Yuvajana Sangham upheld that lower castes had the right to travel through the public road and it is injustice to restrict the right of lower castes.\textsuperscript{277} Thus Namboodiri Youths expressed their readiness to allow all religionists to travel through the public roads.\textsuperscript{278} During this period Sabha came forward for the defense of civil rights. When Travancore Government passed Travancore Newspaper Regulation Act Sabha protested against it and requested the Regent to withdraw it.\textsuperscript{279}

A wider conscience and approach could be seen in the 23rd anniversary of Yogakshema Sabha held at Trissur in January 1931. The Youth conference declared that diversity in nationality, caste, religion and sex should not lead to mutual aggression and it also upheld the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity.\textsuperscript{280} Further Unninamboodiri reminded that Religion is a private affair and they should work for ending caste differences and for single caste and single religion.\textsuperscript{281} The noted social reformer K.Ayyappan advised the members of the Namboodiri community to remove anti-social

\textsuperscript{277} Kodanattu Narayanan Namboodirippad, “Presidential address to the 7th anniversary of Namboodiri Youth wing”, Unninamboodiri, 1925-26(ME.1101 Dhanu), Vol.7(4),p.245
\textsuperscript{278} M.Ramavarma Thampan, ‘Namboodiri Youth Wing’ Unninamboodiri, 1926 (ME.1101 Medam), Vol.7(8), p.477
\textsuperscript{279} Editorial, ‘Tiruvithamcore Varthamana Pathra Regulation’ (Travancore Newspaper Act), Unninamboodiri, 1926 (ME.1101 Midhunam), Vol.7(10), p.555
\textsuperscript{280} The Hindu,02-01-1931,p.2
\textsuperscript{281} K.Ayyappan, ‘Unninambodiriramarude oru Karthavyam’ (one duty of Namboodiri youths), Unninamboodiri, 1927 (ME.1102Meenam), Vol.8(8),p.642
elements. Some of the articles of Unninamboodiri opined that Namboodiris were observing swadheshi practices more than that of other communities did.

During this stage Sabha faced stiff opposition from the orthodox group. Traditionalists formed ‘Namboodiri Youth Congress’ which was used as a weapon to attack Yogakshema Sabha. They also formed ‘Sarvajanan Kshema sabha’ and an associated wing ‘Dharmapravachana’ Sabha at Trivandrum.

The argument that the socio-religious reform movements have not fully identified with nationalism and tried to remain as a religious organisations is partly true in the case of Yogakshema Sabha. A critical analysis of the activities Yogakshema Sabha regarding whether to participate on national movement or remain as an institution for social reform would reveal that the internal contradictions within the Sabha continued during this stage. However, a major group within Yogakshema Sabha believed that these two movements were not separate and also, becoming a citizen of India through political activism should be seen as creating a modern progressive community men.

**Age of Radical social reform:**

An interesting development experienced by the late 1920’s and early 1930’s was the resurgence of Namboodiri youths by taking radical position. They realized the need of restructuring the community. By the close of 1920’s Yogakshema Sabha faced an identity crisis. Two positions emerged in and through the debates. First was the youths who had taken radical position of humanizing the Namboodiris and second was the

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282 Kumaramangalass Kesavan Namboodirippad, ‘Presidential address to the 5th anniversary of Namboodiri youth wing’, Unninamboodiri, 1924(1099 Medam), Vol.5(8),p.351
283 Ibid,p.359
284 Editorial, ‘Sudarsanakkar Tekkottu’ (Sudarsanakkar Towards South), Unninamboodiri, 1927 (ME.1102Meenam), Vol.8(7),pp.491-493
conservatives who wanted to maintain the pre-colonial identity of the Namboodiris. The changing land and tenurial relations should be reckon as a reason for emerging radical thinking among the Namboodiri youths. Scholars like John P Mencher argued that the “dichotomy between the tradition and modernity” led to the radical reform movements among the younger Namboodiris resulting in the demand for a break with the past.286

The practice of Namboodiris freely engaging in ‘adhivedhanam’ and ‘sambandhams’ in Kovilakams (royal houses) and noble houses continued even in the 1920’s. This had also necessitated more revolutionary activities. The progressive youths understood that more energy should be given to Namboodiri women for coming out from the inner side of the houses. The revolutionary youths made literature to be an important weapon for bringing revolutionary principles in the anthapurams.287

The youth wing of Yogakshema Sabha namely ‘Yuvajana Sangham’ was formed in 1919, but it remained as an appendage to the Sabha without having any separate programme of action.288 The Youths began to insist that the social reform should not be confined to speeches and resolutions and that it should enter the arena of action. They started questioning the lukewarm stand and the lack-lustier position of the elders that the social change must have the sanction of law. They also argued that it was not possible to remove the social inequalities and superstitions through legislation but it should be affected through a revolution. A galaxy of bright young men spearheaded this call for change. By this time Sabha and the youth wing had taken the historical responsibility of

288 K.Gopalakrishnan, VT Bhattathirippad, Makers of Indian Literature, Sahitya Academi,New Delhi,2010,p.40
consolidating a clear shape in the opinion of Namboodiris in connection with rituals and social affairs. Youths continuously stressed the need for restructuring the community according to the changing times. The ‘Unni Namboodiri prasthanam’ (Youth movement) aimed to secure a prominent place for the Namboodiris in the society and reformation of the community. Yogakshema Sabha has emerged as a visible forum in political and social scenario across Kerala in 1930’s. ‘Namboodiri Yuva jana Sangham’, the youth wing of Yogakshema Sabha, actively involved in issues and took more radical positions and started to demand changes in family system and marriages. Interestingly, Yogakshemam, the mouth piece of Yogakshema Sabha, reported a case where a Namboodiri youth has got married to Namboodiri girl in 1923.²⁸⁹

Yogakshema Sabha, during this phase appropriated all the available platforms to bring radical reforms among the Namboodiris. They fully utilized the potential of literature, theatre and press for achieving their aims. Leadership was changed from conservatives to a galaxy of young intellectuals and activists like K.N.Kuttan Namboodirippad, V.T.Bhattathirippad, Muthirangode Bhavathrathan Namboodirippad, Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodirippad, Pandum Vasudevan Namboodiri, Mullamangalathu Raman Bhattathirippad, O.M.C. Nanboodirippad and E.M.Sankaran Namboodirippad.²⁹⁰ The new social exposure gained by them through participation in national movement persuaded them to look back on their community from behind. These new generation demanded four revolutionary changes, changes in rituals and practices,

²⁸⁹ Yogakshemam,8-10-1923
²⁹⁰ It was pictured that EMS and Kuttan Namboodiri as the hand and body of the movement. Muthirangodu Bhavatathran Namboodiri as the tongue of the movement and VT Raman Bhatathirippad as the hand of the movement. This movement brought revolutionary changes especially in the case of Namboodiri women. See Premji, ‘Parvathi Nenmenimangalam’, Unnimamboodiri, 1947 (ME.1122 Edavam), Vol.1(2),p.64
changes in marriage conditions, changes in the system of education, and changes in economic conditions.291

The orthodox side tried to scuttle the movement for passing Namboodiri Bills which aimed at providing legal legitimacy to these issues. Such nefarious attempts on the part of the conservatives helped only to strengthen youth wing’s determination to bring about change. When the old guards began to publish a fortnightly called ‘Sudarsanam’ to counter the progressive ideas, the young Turks responded to them by starting another journal called ‘Pasupatham’. The conservatives did not stop with that. They started another journal called ‘Kedaram’ to retaliate assertions made by young revolutionaries against the “essence of the Namboodiri community”.

The revolutionary spirit of the Namboodiri youths was further promoted by publishing articles and stories depicting the life of the Namboodiris. ‘Yogakshemam’ and ‘Unninamboodiri’ played a major role in disseminating the reformist ideas and programmes. V.T’s ‘Rajanirangam’ and ‘Pomvazhi’ and M.R.B’s ‘Valkannadi’ were appeared these journals. In a short period V.T, M.R.B and Premji published number stories under a common pen name Vanneri K Savithri Antharjanam to spread radical ideas including women emancipation.

The Namboodiri representation in the legislative councils of Travancore, Cochin and Madras provided an occasion to fight for their rights and express their positions towards different social issues. OM Narayanan Namboodiri, Chengezhimattom Tuppan Namboodiri and Chelur Itti Ravi Namboodiri and Kaplingattu Sankaran Namboodiri represented Malabar, Travancore and Madras legislature respectively and worked for the

passing of Namboodiri Family Regulation Bills for changing the way of life of the Namboodiris. 292

A shift in the policies of Sabha could be seen in the 19th anniversary held at Kumarnellur, Kottayam, in ME 1102. Sabha for the first time passed a resolution for women freedom and Sabha courageously asked to stop the publication of orthodox newspapers that created conflicts between the communities. 293 A growing sense of self-awareness among the Namboodiris is evident in these resolutions. But as a reaction against the new trends of Sabha, orthodox section of the community formed ‘Real Brahmana Samajam of Travancore and Cochin’.

English educated new middle class demanded progressive reforms in customary marriage practices, advocated for English education and also strongly criticized sambahandham and adhivedhanam. Thus Yogakshema Sabha started to work for Swajativivaham (self-caste marriage) instead of Sambhandam (inter-caste marriage) and Makkathayam (patrilineal) in place of Marumakkathayam (matrilineal). Joint family system was viewed as an obstacle for individual liberty and the idea of establishing nuclear family acquired prominence during this period.

Sabha was courageous enough to question the decision to enact the novel Indulekha by Chandu Menon at the meeting of Kerala Sahitya Parishad (literary forum) which was conducted at Trissur Vivekodayam High school in 1928. Sabha got angry on this decision because they considered that novel ‘Indulekha’ generally created pain and humiliation to Namboodiris as a whole. Under the leadership of Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri a deputation of Sabha called on Appan Thampuran at Ayyanthol palace and

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292 The Namboodiri family Regulations aimed to modernize Namboodiri Family life through reforming of Namboodiri marriage customs and partition of joint family property.
293 Mullanezhi Sivadasan Namboodiri, op.cit.,p.47
requested to withdraw the decision to stage the drama. Appan Thampuran promised that the parts depicting Namboodiris as simpleton would not be staged in the Parishad meeting.  

The Sabha meetings in this period warned the laziness of Namboodiris which they had identified as the major cause for all backwardness. The meetings complained that people who had shown respect and reverence to Namboodiris in the past has now begun to laugh at them. The idle state of being of Namboodiri in the marriage affairs resulted in the decline of their population and Namboodiris were insulted for engaging in other caste marriage. Sabha reminded its members that the deplorable state of Namboodiris would not be changed simply by glorifying the past but they should be modified with the changing world.  

It was with the Mavelikkara anniversary of Sabha in 1929 that the Youths began to demand the acceptance of more revolutionary activities. They were not satisfied with the existing working style of Sabha which included delivering speeches, publishing articles, petitions and passing of resolutions. A separate organization was formed at Mavelikkara named ‘Abhijatyadwamsana Sabha’ or ‘Akhila Kerala Namboodiri Sabha’ to fight against orthodoxy. The leaders Yogakshema Sabha who took such position even expressed their wish to change the name of Yogakshema Sabha in to ‘Abhijatyadwamsana Sabha’ or ‘Akeekarana Sabha’. The suggested name also attests

\[\text{Ibid.,p.50}\]
\[\text{K.N. ‘Aa pazhaya kalam ethu’ (which is that old age), Unninamboodiri, 1926-1927(ME.1102 Dhanu), vol.8(4),p.227}\]
\[\text{M.Ramavarma Thampan, ‘Unninamboodirimarodu Orulbodhanam’ (call to the Unninamboodiris), Unninamboodiri, 1926(ME.1102 Kanni), vol.8 (1),p.33}\]
\[\text{Ibid.,p.33}\]
\[\text{Ibid.,p.33}\]
interest of Yogakshema sabha to unify the different groups within Namboodiri community.

The changes in the attitude of the Namboodiris can be seen in the articles published in *Unninamboodiri*. The journal generated heated debates on the contemporary issues. For example the editorial of *Unninamboodiri* in 1929 says “listen to the revolutionary call, victory to the progressive and deadline to the traditionalists, we don’t need *Antharjanam-hood* (womanhood) inside *Marakkuda* (cadjan umbrella), that ha already been burnt along with its friendly leaves”. It further suggested that *Antharjanam-hood* will not be defiled by the gaze of any one or will never be burn in any sunlight.\(^{300}\)

In order to strengthen their revolutionary activities Namboodiri youths wrote and published leaflets and pamphlets. For instance, Desamangalathu Valiya Narayanan Namboodiri wrote a small pamphlet titled ‘*Namboodirimarude Durnadappu*’ (misdemeanor of Namboodiri).\(^{301}\) In this pamphlet he assessed Namboodiri social evils and the ways to eliminate it.\(^{302}\) By this time Youth wing had declared that Brahmanism would never get ruined neither by joining in public schools nor by studying English.\(^{303}\) Through the pages of *Unninamboodiri* they had urged the Namboodiris to work for securing Government employment and thereby improving their living conditions.\(^{304}\)

The Edakkunni meeting of Yogakshema Sabha was a milestone in forming the Namboodiri identity. The first revolutionary incident of the meeting was that Mrs. PM

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\(^{300}\) Editorial, ‘Vijatheeya sambandhathinte Vardhanav’ (Increase of other caste marriage), *Unninamboodiri*, 1929 (ME.1104 Makaram), Vol.10(5),p.287, see M.Ramavarma Thampan, ‘Namboodiri Youth Wing’ *Unninamboodiri*, 1926 (ME.1101 Medam), Vol.7(8),p.480

\(^{301}\) Desamangalam Valiya Narayanan Namboodiri, ‘Namboodirimarude Durnadappu’ (Misdemeanor of the Namboodiris), *Unninamboodiri*, 1923(ME.1099 Vrichikam), Vol.5(3), p.164

\(^{302}\) Ibid,pp.164-172

\(^{303}\) C.Kunhiraman Menon, ‘Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1922 (ME.1097 Medam), Vol.3(8),p.447

\(^{304}\) Ibid,p.447
Manazhi, a Namboodiri woman had attended the meeting after refusing to wear Ghosha (veil), Marakkuda (cadjan umbrella). Mrs. PM Manazhi was accompanied by members of Ezhava community like Mr. Ayyakkutty, the District judge, and his wife Mrs. Parvthi Ayakkutty. Secondly, at Eddakkunnu the play ‘Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekku’ (From Kitchen to the Stage) was staged.

The play ‘Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekku’ was enacted in the place where customarily Tamil dramas were enacted. It was a period when people superstitiously believed that Vallathol Narayana Menon, one of the greatest poets in Malayalam, became deaf due to translating Rig-Veda into Malayalam. In those days people believed that Vedas should not be uttered loudly as the lower castes should not listen to it. To refute this belief, Vedas were chanted in the public stage at Edakkunni. Namboodiri men, disguised as women, appeared in the stage in a period when a Namboodiri girl had no right to present before the public.

The staging of ‘Adukkalayil Ninnum Arangathekku’ was a turning point in the history of Yogakshema Sabha. All social evils entangled with the Namboodiri community were exposed through the drama that instilled Antherjenams to a world of knowledge and freedom. It was a missile shot against the evils of all communities. It voiced against polygamy, old marriage, and supported the system of love marriages among the Namboodiri community. Kuttikrisna Marar reviewed the drama in Unninamboodiri and stated that, “I believe this farce, with 16 scenes has been able to do greater things than the meetings of Yogakshema Sabha for the last 21 years and the

305 Vidwan V Krishnan Namboodiri(MRAI, Thiruvalla), “Namboodiri women” in Mathrubhumi weekly, 1938 July 25, p. 27
306 PK Aryan Namboodiri, op.cit, p. 77
annual conferences of Yuvajana Sabha for a decade could accomplish”. 308 After the drama Mannathu Padmanabhan came to the stage appreciating the actors and he suggested that the drama should be played in every Namboodiri houses of Kerala. 309 A programme of inter-dinning was organized at Edakkunni session and Namboodiris participated it wearing of shirts. 310

On the one side Sabha tried for internal reforms and on the other side Sabha also reacted against the ill treatment towards the community. The Edakkunni session protested the negligence of Cochin Raja in passing of the Namboodiri Bill. So Sabha decided to conduct a strike by black badges in front of the royal palace on the occasion of celebrations of the birth day of the Raja. Sabha’s distress over the delay in passing Namboodiri Bill was expressed in the drama. For example, dialogue of a character namely VM in the drama goes like the following: “Nayars through Nayar Bill escaped from sambandham. Namboodiri Bill passed by the Cochin Council. But the King has not signed it. Two years have passed. In the royal families of Tripunithara, Kodungallur, and Pazhur, Namboodiri sambandham is a must. If the Bill passed it cannot be believe that they will not get Namboodiris for sambandham”. 311

V.T’s drama was followed by a number of other social dramas which triggered a new awakening to the community. M.R.B’s ‘Marakkudaykkullile Mahanarakam’, (The Dirty Hell behind the Umbrella) a play, was performed in the Guruvayur meeting in 1930. This drama pictured out some of the reformist agendas like breaking of sacred thread, wearing of blouse by Antherjanam, cutting of tuft etc. It was in the 1931

308 Quoted from Palakeezh Narayanan(ed) VT Oru ithihasam, p.26
309 P. Narayanan Namboodiri, ‘Achara viplavavum acharyanaya V.Tum-I’ (Ritual revolution and the leader V.T), Yogakshemam, February 1985, Vol.6(2). p.3
310 In this programme prominent reformist leaders like Muthulakshmi Reddy, Mannath Padmanabhan, VK Kumaran Ezthuchanan, TK Ayyakutty and EM Parvathi were participated
Mannarassala meeting that the drama written by Lalithambhika Antharjanam ‘Savthrikkutty’ or widow remarriage’ was staged. Lalithambhika Antharjanam’s ‘Ittichiriyude Randam veli’ was also staged at Mannarasala. In the Vadakkanchery meeting of 1933 another drama based on the novel ‘Aphante Makal’ (Paternal uncle’s Daughter) of Muthirangodu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri was staged and after two years the drama ‘Ritumati’ (Pubertal Girl) of Premji had also staged. The demands of Namboodiri youths like promotion of intra-caste marriage, ending of ‘ghosha’(veil) and imparting education for women reflected in these dramas.\textsuperscript{312} Extreme radical stand of the youths also echoed in the Sabha meetings. At Edakkunni session Muthirangdu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri missioned four important transformations for the Namboodiris- throw Vedas to Arabian Sea, dislodging joint family system, save Namboodiri girls from houses, and unite the different groups of Namboodiris.

In the beginning of 1930’s Namboodiri women began to organise themselves around the issues connected to them.\textsuperscript{313} Mrs. PM Manazhi, attended the Edakkunni meeting of 1929, boycotting ghosha (veil) and marakkuda (cadjan umbrella). Another incident that shocked the orthodoxy of Namboodiri community was that Anthanjanams boycotted Ghosha under the leadership of Parvathi Nememnimangalam, Aryapallam and Devaki Narikkattari in 1931 at the Taliparambha session of Sabha. They came out of the stage and declared that their chastity was not lying in marakkuda (cadjan umbrella). They decided to wear saree and other dresses like that of women in other castes.

\textsuperscript{312} Shamna Padmam.N.K, ‘Charitrathinte Adayalangal Navodhana Malayala Nadakathil’ in Keli, Bimonthly of Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy, June-July2012,p.43

\textsuperscript{313} Vidwan V Krishnan Namboodiri(MRAI,Thiruvalla), “Namboodiri women” in Mathrubhumi weekly,1938 July25,p.27
In the 1930’s Namboodiri youths expressed their opposition to tradition not only through the pages of *Unninamboodiri* and *Yogakshemam* but by conducting direct strikes and boycotts like picketing of marriage of Namboodiri women with old men campaigns for endogamy, campaigns for modifications in women dress style, boycott of *gosha* (veil) and conducting widow remarriage. These were obviously depicted in the Namboodiri dramas.

Namboodiri Youths prepared a plan for breaking unpopular laws. They used popular Gandhian method of struggles like satyagraha, mobilization of the masses, non-violence and picketing in social reformist movement. It is a clear indication of the influence of the national movement on the Namboodiri youths. They adopted these method of struggle when civil disobedience movement getting momentum in all over India and they made use of Gandhian ideology as a weapon for fighting against the orthodoxy.

A subcommittee was set up for the successful implementation of the programmes against the evils related with marriage. *Sambandham* picketing, and *adhivedhanam* picketing were successfully organized under the leadership of Sabha. The committee aimed to check three types of marriages- second marriage when first wife is alive, marriage of girls with old men, sambandham by Namboodiri youths with the force of Karanavan and relatives. The youths attempted not only to block these types of marriages, but tried to arrange acceptable marriages to these Namboodiris. The Malabar

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314 *Yogashemam*, mouth piece of Yogashema Sabha  
315 PK Araya Namboodiri, op.cit,p.118  
316 *Karanavan*, in the joint family system the eldest male member of the family who acted as the head of the family were called as Karanavan
Namboodiri Act and Malabar Matrilineal Act passed by the Madras Legislative Assembly provided new inspiration to the youths.\footnote{Neelan,\textit{VT.Bhattathirippad}, Kerala state Institute of Children’s Literature, Thiruvananthapuram, 2010,p.}

Strong resistances were raised in many places against the above mentioned two types of marriages. The parents were more or less fearful when they were about to fix these kinds of marriages. The press gave a wide coverage and importance to the youth’s picketing when an age old Namboodiri got marriage with a young girl in Aluva in early part of 1930’s.\footnote{The Hindu,28-04-1931,p.10} Similarly in Vaikkom, a Namboodiri who wanted to conduct a third marriage faced intervention of Lakshmivilas Youth League, who taking advantage of the Pardah observed by the bride during the marriage, managed to present the first wife of the groom as the new wife. After the marriage, the man found that he had married once again his first wife.\footnote{Stri Dharma, The Indian Women Magazine, Vol.XVI, No.18,1933,p.485} Adhivedhanam picketing was conducted at Peruvanam, Venganellur, Trissur, Ongallur and Perumbhavur. Chittur Kunjan Namboodiri, P.S.Kesavan Namboodiri, VT Bhattathirippad, Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri and OMC Narayanan Namboodiri headed this movement. This programme of the Namboodiri Youths created a favourable atmosphere in passing Madras Namboodiri Act of 1933.

Sabha neglected individual affiliations when it launched movement against marriage related issues. When Kurur Neelakandan Namboodiri came for sambandham, Sabha workers picketed him. Similarly when Pathirissery Narayanan Namboodiri another leader of Yogakshema Sabha, decided to marry his Nayar daughter to his brother’s son, Yogakshema Sabha workers picketed him. During the programme of picketing sambandham marriages Yogakshema Sabha workers faced attack from the powerful
chieftains and lords. When an educated Namboodiri went Kavalappara Nayar family for *sambandham*, the Nayar house was picketed by Namboodiri volunteers, they were attacked by the police and the Nayars.\textsuperscript{320} Another story was that when a Namboodiri visited to Namboodiri Vidyalaya to discuss the possibility of a sambandham he was driven away by the Namboodiri youths which permeated as a story namely ‘*Pattarum Pazhatholiyum*’.\textsuperscript{321}

When Kummini Raman Namboodiri engaged in Parivedhanam\textsuperscript{322} for the first time, he was isolated by the orthodox with the help of Kavalappara Nayar. Sabha strongly supported Kummini Raman Namboodiri and sent a deputation to Kavalappara to force the family from these anti-social activities. These activities of Sabha created a confidence among its members to fight against injustice and thus Sabha gradually got a separate individuality and evolved to a unique entity.

The movement against the dress code and public appearance were another noted issue raised by the youths. Namboodiri Youths started movement of cutting of *kuduma* (tuft). By 1911-12 rarely some went to school by removing *kuduma* (tuft)\textsuperscript{323} Tuft cutting movement started from the Yogashemam lodge Trissur. The Namboodiris youths who stayed at the Yogashemam lodge initiated the movement. This campaign influenced the ‘*kathumuri*’ (stich back their ears ) movement among women. Kanjoor Kali Antherjanam, Arya Pallam and Gauri Antherjanam were pioneers in the movement.\textsuperscript{324} Breaking of *poonul* (sacred thread) was also triggered on as a movement which began at Trissur Brahmaswam madam. A group of youth ripped off *poonul* and burned it

\textsuperscript{320} Pallinezhi Subrahmanyan Namboodiri, ‘Memoirs of Father’ in *Yajnopaveetham*, August2007,Vol.7(8),p.16
\textsuperscript{321} Ibid,p.16
\textsuperscript{322} Parivedhanam, Same caste marriage by a junior Namboodiri when his elder brother alive
\textsuperscript{323} KanippayyurSankaran Namboodiri, *Ente Smaranakal*, Vol.1,Panchangam Books,p.6
\textsuperscript{324} The Hindu, 05-08-2009,p.10
publically. The authorities were infuriated and suspended the mid-day meals of the participants at the Madam. But the youths responded to it severely by burning Poonul and again sending ashes to the Vedic priests.\(^\text{325}\)

Boycott of *ghosha* (veil) and the promotion of widow re-marriage were the other domains of activities organized by the Namboodiri youths in the 1930’s. The demand for wearing blouse and mundu by women was fuelled by the demand of boycotting ghosha (veil). These movements initiated in 1911-12 and got momentum in 1930’s. In the early period the men who cut kuduma (tuft) and women wearing blouse were not permitted to enter into temples.\(^\text{326}\)

Sabha organised direct struggle against the attitude of Cochin Raja towards the Namboodiri Bill. Though the Bill was passed by the Cochin legislative assembly it was in a state of suspended animation because the Cochin Raja withheld his assent. Different struggles were launched to change the attitude of Cochin raja towards the Namboodiri Bill like observing a fast on King’s birth day, submitting petition, putting black dots on their foreheads on the king’s birth date in every month etc.\(^\text{327}\)

Using of processions and other campaigns in reinstating Namboodiri identity could be traced back in ‘*Yachana Yatra*’ (Hunger march) conducted under the leadership of VT Bhattachirippad in 1930. Though the inspiring factor behind the yatra was the economic difficulties Trissur Namboodiri Vidyalaya, it became a propaganda march for spreading the revolutionary ideas of Yogakshema Sabha. It resulted in the spread of ideas of the

\(^{326}\) Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboodiri, op.cit,p.6
\(^{327}\) K.Gopalakrishnan, op.cit,p.50, see also Pallinezhi Subrahmanyan Namboodiri, ‘Memoirs of Father’ in *Yajnopaveetham*, August 2007, Vol.7(8),pp.16-17
Sabha throughout Kerala.\textsuperscript{328} \textit{Yachana Yatra} was a shock not only to Namboodiris but to
the whole Keralites. It had given a new awakening and vision to the Sabha workers.

The widow remarriage between Mullamangalath Raman Bhattathiri and
Nangema Antharjanam\textsuperscript{329} was taken as a measure for changing the plight of the women
by the radicals within the Yogakshema Sabha. To traditionalists it was like a wild
thunder.\textsuperscript{330} They declared that those who associated with widow remarriage, studied
English, acted in dramas, drank coffee from coffee houses, cut tuft, engaged in
\textit{parivedhanam}, boycotted ghosha and inter-dined were expelled from the community.
With the campaigns and programmes supporting widow remarriage, two groups had
emerged in the Yogakshema Sabha- supporters and opponents. The conservatives stood
strongly against widow remarriage. They raised the banner of ‘\textit{Sanathana Dharma
Samrakshan}’.\textsuperscript{331}

Sabha showed the courage to bring back the excommunicated families\textsuperscript{332} and
those who had changed faith during Tipu's invasion. Their children were encouraged to
apply for admission in Namboodiri schools. The Harippad session of Sabha in 1934
decided to treat all such excommunicated persons as equals. At Thrissur session in 1935
even once out-casted people like V K Narayana Bhattathiri, was elected to the Executive
Committee of the Sabha. The revolutionary group within the Sabha supported the
expiation of Mozhikkunnath Brahmaduttan Namboodiri, who was once excommunicated
for being imprisoned in connection with Malabar Rebellion.\textsuperscript{333} Mozhikkunnam was

\textsuperscript{328} Ibid,p.3
\textsuperscript{329} The widow remarriage between Mullamangalath Raman Bhattathiri and Nangema Antharjanam was conducted in September 1934 by V.T.Bhattathirippad
\textsuperscript{330} Pallinezhi Subrahmanyan Namboodiri, op.cit, p.16
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid,p.16
\textsuperscript{332} \textit{Bhrashtanmaar} included in the infamous ‘64', associated with Thathri’s case
\textsuperscript{333} K.Gopalakrishnan, op.cit, p.54
welcomed to participate in all the progressive activities of Sabha including staging of dramas and the programme of inter-dining.\textsuperscript{334}

The radical outlook showed by of Sabha in 1930’s resulted in passing of Namboodiri Bill’s which resulting in significant changes in the Namboodiri family structure. The Madras Namboodiri Act was passed with the effort of Mattannur Madhusoodhanan Tangal and Travancore Namboodiri Bill was introduced by the effort of CN Tuppan Namboodiri. The passage of these progressive legislations gave a fillip to social change and developed self confidence among the Namboodiri youth. The revolutionary spirit showed by the Sabha was soon spread to its branches. The upasabhas (branches) of Yogakshema Sabha began to question the then existing customs and practices. Namboodiris of Quilandy and nearby villages passed resolution opposing polygamy and called for modernization of Namboodiri family life.\textsuperscript{335}

During this stage, Yogakshema Sabha strated giving attention to socio-economic and educational advancement of the community. Resolutions were passed in the Sabha’s sessions aiming at the economic reconstruction of the community.\textsuperscript{336} The resolution supported starting of small scale industries and participation in agriculture by the Namboodiris for leading a self-earning life.\textsuperscript{337}

\textsuperscript{334} VT Bhattathirippad, “Natyavum Venda Natakavum Venda”, in \textit{VT Studies and Memoirs}, p.91
\textsuperscript{335} The Hindu, 04-02-1931, p.15, The social awakening among the Namboodiris was breaking the confines of social reform and touching economic and political aspects too was also can be seen in these meetings. The Quilandy meeting called on young Namboodiris to take to occupation such as agriculture, commerce and industry
\textsuperscript{336} The 27\textsuperscript{th} session of Yogakshema Sabha held at Harippad in 1934 (ME 1110) Chittur Kunjan Namboodiri introduced resolution which aimed economic reconstruction of the community
\textsuperscript{337} Mullanezhi Sivadasan Namboodiri, op.cit, p.38
Attempt for communal solidarity and harmony was also visible during this period. Youths were in the forefront of this movement. Supporting this initiative Unninamboodiri frequently warned against the idle character of the Namboodiri youths. Along with using cap, shirt, watch, bicycle etc, which were considered as symbols of external reforms, they stressed on internal reforms.

Conflict between the traditionalists and progressive was evident in the Yogakshema Sabha meetings in mid-1930. Attempts for ending the differences between the moderate leaders of Sabha and the youth wing could be seen even by changing the name of Sabha. At Harikanyakapuram anniversary near Guruvayur in 1931 an idea of uniting Youth Wing and Yogakshema Sabha by changing the name to ‘Yogakshema Maha Sabha’ was introduced. It was also argued that there was no need of two separate organisation since the aim and objectives of the two were more or less equal. The resolution infavour of it was passed with majority vote. EMS, KN Kuttan Namboodiri and Moothamala Purushothaman Namboodiri worked behind this resolution.

During 1933-34 the hold of Yogakshema Sabha came to the hands of orthodox group. The Peramangalam session of Yogakshema Sabha witnessed open clash between the conservatives and the radicals. V.T.Bhattathirippad laughed at the role of orthodox in

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338 EMS, To where Namboodiris, *Yogashemam golden jubilee supplement*, p.20, see also Cherumukku Vaidiakan Cherririya Vallabhan Namboodiri, ‘Presidential address to the 8th anniversary of Namboodiri youth wing’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1926-1927(ME.1102 Dhanu), vol.8(4), p.231
339 Cherumukku Vaidiakan Cherririya Vallabhan Namboodiri, ‘Presidential address to the 8th anniversary of Namboodiri youth wing’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1926-1927(ME.1102 Dhanu), vol.8(4), p.231, Unninamboodiri asked the youths to take strong decisions before joining the Youth Wing that they would not engage or participate in any work that harms Namboodiri community and would not work against other communities and will not harm other communities, Edittirial, Our duty, Unninamboodiri,1924(ME.1099 Midhunam), vol.5(10), p.514, see also Kavil Avinjikkattu Bhavadasan Bhatathirippad, ‘Namboodiri Yuvaajanangalude Sradhakkku; Attention to Namboodiri Youths’, *Unninamboodiri*, 1921-22 (ME.1097 Dhanu), Vol.3(4),p.34
340 Muthirangdu Bhavathrathan Namboodiri, ‘Abhivridhikkulla Eka Margam’ (only one way to progress), *Unninamboodiri*, 1927 (ME.1102Meenam), Vol.8(8),p.448
341 Ibid.p.58
Sabha functioning as ‘a donkey play in the hands of ‘Adyans’. The conservatives retaliated this criticism by removing him from Sabha. But surprisingly even women participants under the leadership of Arya Pallam boycotted the meeting and circulated a leaflet praising V.T.VBhattathirippad. Responding to the decision of the conservatives, the youths withdrew from performing the drama ‘Aphante makal’. In course of time, three groups emerged within the Yogakshema Sabha. The first was the traditionalists who wanted the continuance of old practices and resisted changes. The second group, moderates argued for essential education for the Namboodiris but they were against the breaking the daily pujas and rituals of the Namboodiris. Thirdly, the youths, who believed that no community can participate in the movements including national movement without changing the existing features or weakness of the community.

In short, reforms associated with reform was visible in the style and approach of the two journals i.e. Unninamboodiri and Yogakshemam. Unninamboodiri supported the revolutionary stand of the Namboodiri youth in social matters rivaled to Yogakshemam, the organ of the more moderates. To negotiate between the radicals and the moderates, a ‘round table conference’ was convened at Koodallur Mana in Nagalassery, but it also failed.

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342 Adyan- phrase used for meaning wealthy Namboodiris
343 Ibid,p.9
344 V.T.Bhattathirippad, Karmavipakam, p.113
345 Ibid,p.61, One of the groups assembled at Tekkumkad Maithan Trissur and formed progressive party. John P Mencher considered that a major group of Namboodiris moved to national movement and leftism because the orthodox in their social and economic views stood on the side of congress.(John P Mencher,1966, p.193)
346 Neelan,op.cit,p.69
347 EMS.Namboodirippad, op.cit, p.93
348 Ibid,p.93
boycotting ghosha, widow remarriage, ritual reforms and partition of joint property. The presence of conflicting groups affected the smooth functioning of Sabha.  

The Yogakshemam movement became passive in post-1935 period. Some leaders within Yogakshema Sabha felt fulfillment of their aim after the passing of the Madras Namboodiri Act in 1932 and the Travancore Namboodiri Bill in the succeeding years. Many felt that major social problems were solved and they turned to politics with the support of some elderly leaders like Kurur Kunjunni Namboodiri. EMS Namboodirippad, PS Namboodiri, Mullappalli Brahmadattan Namboodiri, MS Krishnan Namboodiri, Olappamanna Appan and Ezhikkottu Narayanan Namboodiriribecame very active in politics. Majority of these who joined in politics showed allegiance with Communits and few associated with Indian National Congress. Those who had link with Communist party were more active and those who stood with Congress were not much active. It has been argued that when many leaders moved to politics Sabha lacked the service of able leaders which resulted in weakening of the activities of Sabha.

The identity issue of the Namboodiris became controversial during this period. Yogakshema Sabha discussed the issue of abandoning Namboodiri identity. There was argument of abandoning Namboodiri identity for the identity of Kerala. But leaders like Chittur Kunjan Namboodiri viewed that it is not suitable for the time and not a solution to the problems faced by Namboodiris. It was also argued that there was no need of

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349 Pallinezhi Subrahmanyan Namboodiri, op.cit.p.18
350 Ibid.p.17
351 ALngodu Leelakrishnan, *Tathrikutiyude Smartahvicharam*, Mathrubhumi,2011, p.67, Those who entered in to politics were also divided in to communist wing and supporters of congress.
352 Ibid.p.244
ending Namboodiri identity for Malayalee identity. This issue of Namboodiri identity remained active within Sabha during 1935-40.

**Yogakshema Sabha– From lord to labourer**

Yogakshema Sabha was animated once again in 1940’s. On the one side, the Aikya Kerala movement was getting momentum in Kerala and on the other side left movement and peasant movement were getting much popularity among the common people. No community or organizations were isolated from these general movements. National movement also became active with Quit India Movement. Yogakshema Sabha was also not an exception to this general trend of this period and it started taking up issues of Namboodiris. For the transformation of the community, Sabha realized the necessity of economic self-sufficiency. Sabha requested the community members to change their attitude towards labour. The increasing call for women freedom in 1940’s was also taken by Sabha and made zealous efforts for bringing women to the mainstream of the society.

Sabha had taken economic reconstruction of the community as its important goal. In the economic restructuring programmes Yogakshema Sabha was influenced by Communist movements. The ideology and practice of Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha was earlier inclined to the Congress Party but it had shifted later to Communist Party. So soon Yogakshema Sabha and the left went hand in hand to end traditionalism.

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During this period Sabha faced another challenge, the problem of dowry. Several Namboodiris married their daughter to Kannada Brahmins as a means to escape from paying huge dowry. One of the examples for Sabha changing with the time was that by 1940 Sabha supported mixed marriages or caste endogamy. V.T.Bhattathirippad became the chief exponent of mixed marriage. In 1941 V.T’s sister Parvathi was married to Raghava Panikkar. It was the first ‘Prathiloma’ marriage in its proper sense conducted to challenge the orthodoxy. V.T’s sister in-law Priyadutta was married to an Ezhava Kallat Krishnan, and his sister’s daughter Tankamani got married to a goldsmith namely Sivan.

The new ideal of disciplined labour was emerged in 1940’s. Transforming of men and women into useful and hardworking subjects became the attention of reformers. The earlier reformers had projected their efforts as a form of self-correction, correction of accumulated ‘defects’ coupled with the Namboodiri ‘essence’. Now by 1940 this projection receded, and a new ideal of self, focused on the capacity of dispersed labour, was advanced.

There was a sharp shift in the picture of Namboodiris projected in the earlier period.Instand of imagining them as the lord of the land, now they have been imagined as labourers. As Anderson had pointed out, “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community which in its basic morphology get the stage for the modern nation”. 355

Namboodiri women awakened of new identity and national spirit gradually moved towards labour. They understood the importance of labour and thereby freedom. In the 34th anniversary of the Sabha held at Ongallur, Palakkad in 1944 EMS Namboodirippad made a clarion call of changing the Namboodiris into human beings. Sabha supported starting of job centres for women and one was started at Lakkidi.

By changing Namboodiris into human beings EMS Namboodirippad aimed socio-economic transformation of Namboodiri life. According to him Namboodiri should not live only by collecting levies and supervision of agrarian lands but to start banks, companies and earn money by new means. The conference aimed to build up a Namboodiri community which could face any open competitions in the future. EMS also sought a rightful position to Namboodiris in the ‘Aikya Kerala’ movement.

Crucial debates over Ongallur decisions were raised within Yogakshema Sabha. A group within the Sabha stood against accepting new Namboodiri identity and wanted to protect their cultural heritage. Another group argued for lifting Namboodiris along with others in the society. They supported the statement of E.M.S.Namboodirippad that Namboodiris should become human beings and Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha should take the responsibility to achieve this. But some suspected the attempt EMS as a way to spread his ideology. They viewed it as communists entering in to the community organization. EMS himself marked the difference between the Sabha and the communists. Against the decisions of Ongallur, a newspaper was started namely ‘Pathaka’. Though it was short lived, it vehemently criticized the decisions of Ongallur.

358 PK Aryan Namboodiri,op.cit,p.170
359 EMS,op.cit,p.139
The editor of *Pathaka* declared that after Ongallur Yogakshema Sabha and its mouthpiece Yogakshemam worked against the spirit of the community.\(^{360}\) The ideological differences that existed within Sabha reflected at Ongallur also. There was rift between the right and the left. Left had the concept of bringing caste organisations in to their side.

Sabha supported the idea of establishing job centres to attain self-sufficiency for Namboodiri women. There were arguments for creating ‘permanent funds’ for labour centres. But conflicts started regarding the use of permanent fund because initially it was raised for the spread of education. EMS and others demanded the use of permanent educational fund for the labour centre at Lakkidi. Some others strongly opposed the idea of converting educational fund to the conduct of job centers. Internal conflicts occurred in Sabha on the question of the running of the Lakkidi labour centre also. The labour centres were controlled by the communists and they started study classes.\(^{361}\) A group opposed it and argued that this was in contrast to the policies of EMS himself who had earlier argued that communists would not try to spread their ideology into Sabha.\(^{362}\) Criticism emerged on the efficacy of Lakkidi labour centre.\(^{363}\)

The radical position of women can be seen in the slogan of, ‘*mangalasutrathil Kettiyidan anganamar adimayalla’*,(Namboodiri women are not slaves to be tied by marriage) declared by Parvathi Nenmenimangalam at Sukapuram in 1946. Namboodiri women were active in the Paliyam Satyagraha of 1948.\(^{364}\)

\(^{360}\) PK Aryan Namboodiri, op.cit,p.171

\(^{361}\) Ibid,p.142

\(^{362}\) Ibid,p.142

\(^{363}\) Ibid,p.142

\(^{364}\) Paliyam satyagraha, Namboodiri women were led by Arya Pallam, Vengallur
Devasena Antherjanam, Thuruthummal Saraswathi Antherjanam and Taliyil Uma Antherjanam were the leaders who participated in the movement.

In 1940’s there was a common argument that literary luminaries through their poems, painters with their brush and actors through their performance should work for the development of the community. Yogakshema Sabha formed literary forum (Sahitya sangham) which published poems like *Nalukettidyunnu* and *Poovili*.365

The *Antharjana Samaajam* was rejuvenated when the Yogakshema Sabha met under the leadership of E M S Namboodiripad at Ongallur. An employment centre functioned at Lakkidi under Yogakshema Sabha, but became defunct when its members were sent to participate in the ‘Paaliyam Sathyaagraham’ and other such activities. The play, ‘*Sakhaavinte Parivarthanam*’ was composed and staged in opposition to the changes among Namboodiris. The activities of Sabha came to a standstill when the periodical ‘*Yogakshemam*’, which was being run under the leadership of T S Bhattathiripad and Nenmini Raman Nambudiripad, was handed over to the Sabha led by E M S. There was even an attempt to close down the ‘Namboothiri Vidyaartthini Sadanam’ and take over its funds, and to forcibly enter the Yogakshemam Library and Reading Room and close it down. But providentially they survived, at least for the time being. Soon afterwards, a play-writing competition was held, and the best one, ‘*Sthreedhanam*’ (dowry) was premiered during the next anniversary at Guruvayur.

**Dissolution of Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha**

The Peruvanam session in December 31st 1947 marked the end of the first phase of the activities of Sabha. Argument to dissolve Sabha started after 1945. Many

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365 *Poovili* was published in 1945 and *Nalukettidyunnu* in 1946
argued that Sabha had already achieved the aims outlined in its statute.\textsuperscript{366} Some left Sabha by opposing its progressive stand and some others entered into politics.\textsuperscript{367} After achieving a few goals in social reforms Sabha saturated itself and became only in name. Some leaders moved to politics and others were isolated from the Sabha.\textsuperscript{368} Later many members of Yogakshema Sabha joined in Congress Socialist Party and later in the Communist Party and worked in industrial and agricultural fields. A group of Yogakshema Sabha workers attracted towards Communist Party by believing that the ultimate aim of these social reforms were to achieve economic equality in a non-caste, non-race and non-religious society.\textsuperscript{369}

Existence of divergent Groups and affiliation towards the idea of revolution rather than reform also caused for its decline.\textsuperscript{370} During the time of its formation of Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha, economy was not a problem. So economic upliftment was not a programme aimed by Sabha. It worked for changing Namboodiris in to human beings. By the work of Sabha for three decades Namboodiri got the freedom to live as a human being. By this the aims of Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha almost achieved its stated objective so it disappeared from the scene.\textsuperscript{371}

I ideological conflicts started within the Sabha by the mid 1930’s. At Peramangalam and Vadakkanchery sessions of Sabha this struggle was visible. After Vadakkanchery session V.T.Bhattathirippad left the Sabha and he became busy with his

\textsuperscript{366} EN Raman Namboodiri, “Working Style”, \textit{Yogakshemam}, November 1979, p.14

\textsuperscript{367} PS Kesavan Namboodiri, “Limit of Community Organisations”, \textit{Yogakshemam}, April 1980, Vol.1(8), p.82


\textsuperscript{369} Ibid, p.17

\textsuperscript{370} PK Aryan Namboodiri, op.cit.p.176

\textsuperscript{371} EN Raman Namboodiri. Working Style, op.cit.p.14
experiment of ‘Udbudha Keralam’.\textsuperscript{372} The question of Namboodiri identity was in live during 1935-1940 and some left Sabha for a while by saying that ‘Namboodirihood’ had a very narrow outlook. Conflicts between moderates and youth wing started within the Sabha on the question of incorporating ostracized persons in to the Sabha. The ideological conflicts within the Sabha were on two concepts - transformation and revolution. Transformation was a slow and gradual progress, therefore the revolutionaries opposed it and voiced for a sudden and rapid progress. The leaders of the Sabha were called by youths as transformists and in return transformists called youths as sword of revolution.\textsuperscript{373}

There is a strong opinion that the over enthusiasm shown by the Namboodiri revolutionaries in the 1930’s and 1940’s in activities such as cutting of ‘Kuduma’ and breaking of ‘Poonul’ (sacred thread) resulted in the decline of Yogakshema Sabha.\textsuperscript{374} The first group who left Sabha was the moderates. They were not against these reforms. But at the same time they got confused with its application in the personal life. They were ready to accept English education and economic policies but they were reluctant to accept the idea of removing ghosha and untouchability.\textsuperscript{375} Modern educated youths left Sabha and joined in politics. Sabha was against politics though in early period passed some resolutions in support of the activities of the Congress. Sabha had even taken

\textsuperscript{372} Udbudhakeralam. A community living programme launched by V.T.Bhattathirippad
\textsuperscript{373} PK Aryan Namboodiri,op.cit,p.156
\textsuperscript{374} M.V.K.Namboodiri, ‘Yogakshema Sabha, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow’ in Panchaksharam, August ,2012, Vol.1(8), p.50, There is a strong opinion in the meetings of modern Sabha that the over enthusiasm shown by the Namboodiri revolutionary movement in the 1930’s and 1940’s in activities such as cutting of ‘Kuduma’ and breaking of ‘Poonul’ (sacred thread) resulted in the decline of Yogakshema Sabha. It exhibits the outlook of modern Sabha on traditional rituals and practices.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid.p.82
disciplinary action against a member who had participated in the election campaigns of a Indian national Congress candidate for the election to Madras legislature.\textsuperscript{376}

The above analysis shows that the political strategies of Yogakshema sabha had been changed in course of time not because of the interest of the Sabha alone, but it was responding to the changes happening in the larger social world. Though Sabha was worked for bringing reform among Namboodiri community, it acknowledged the larger socio-political developments including resisting colonial domination, cultural practices and ending economic exploitation as foundational in achieving their desired goal. It is a fact that Yogakshema sabha is focused within the discursive realm of colonial modernity. However, Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha had a significant difference from caste based reform movements like the Ezhavas and the Nairs. The Namboodiri reform movement that had started with advocating \textit{parivedhanam}, widow remarriage, boycotting of \textit{ghosha} and English education for Namboodiri youths soon began to destroy even casteism by the programmes like mixed marriages and inter-dinning.\textsuperscript{377} It was essentially an attempt at internal reorganization and was born in response to the legislative and administrative changes that transformed kinship relations in Malabar. All through the period, caste and community sentiments were used to foster internal reform, and each venture, be it the agitation for education, endogamy and protection of land lord’s privileges, aided the imagining of the community which transcended differences of age and privilege, and to lesser extent, gender, within the caste. The appeal for ‘transcendent’ community defected criticism from the more conservative quarters and strengthened the particularistic demands of the younger elements. The idea of ‘community’, used as a discursive strategy

\textsuperscript{376} Ibid, p.82
to overcome difficulties created by many internal schisms eventually assumed logic of its own, whereby it appeared to be lend itself to the support of any group appealing to it. This discourse also allowed for the appropriation of ‘women’s issue’ and their transformation as a part of the general demand for the community reform.