CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER - IV

THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY IN SOUTH TRAVANCORE

Slavery was a universal social evil and it has its origin even from the early period of history, and is closely associated with the inception of the caste system viz., the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Of the four, it is believed that the Sudras might have been reduced to the position of slaves.¹

The Institution of Slavery in Travancore started from the political conquest of the original owners of the soil by the invaders and settlers from the North.² In the early period of history the slaves enjoyed the privileges equal to that of a free man. They had their own form of Government and ruling dynasties. During the second Chera Empire (800 – 1102) the Pulayas enjoyed all privileges of the higher caste people. Pulayanarkotta now a suburb of Trivandrum was the centre of a Pulaya ruler who established his sway over the surroundings areas. A Pulaya Princess Kotha by name is said to have ruled over Kothamangala, Vellanad Pakuthi of

Nedumangad Taluk.\textsuperscript{3} In course of time this influential community lost its power and prestige and were subjected to slavery.\textsuperscript{4}

The Brahmins who came from the North and settled in Travancore\textsuperscript{5} were responsible for creating caste rules and barriers, to their religious and social customs and fair complexion fascinated a section of the natives. They considered it as a privilege to be in close association with the Brahmins. The Brahmins extended special treatment to those inhabitants who accepted their supremacy and were called sad-sudras (Good Sudras). The other group who refused to accept their supremacy continued to be outside of the new social set up. It destroyed the harmonious life of several centuries, and paved the way for the introduction of inequalities based on castism.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[3.] L.K. Ananta Krishna Ayyar, \textit{The Travancore Tribes and Caste}, Vol.II Trivandrum, 1939, p.120.
  \item[4.] K. Saradamon, \textit{op.cit}, p.456.
  \item[5.] K.K. Kusuman, \textit{op.cit}, p.25.
\end{itemize}
With the change of social order many segments of people with the common title “Avarnas” found a place in the list of different social groups. According to the common law of the country, they were considered untouchables and treated as slaves. As a symbol of their social status they were strictly prohibited from entering into the temples and using public roads, wells tanks and Chatrams. Equal opportunity of education and employment were also denied to them, and their women were strictly prohibited from wearing any upper cloth or carrying pots of water on their hips.

It is seen from the records that among the total population only ten per cent of the population constituted the slave class. The traditional slave caste were the agricultural labourers, Parayans, Pulayas, etc. and the total number of slaves in Travancore in 1647 was 1,65,000. Many of them became slaves because of hereditary factors. But the political and social order of the day also added to the number of slaves. Usually the victories in the war carried away the people from the territory of the vanguished king and converted them as slaves.

During times of severe famine, the affected

9. English Records, Cover File No.286, Trivandrum
parents sold their children as slaves either for money or for a meal, and these unfortunate victims were made slaves. Women of higher castes who were found to be in association with men of low castes were invariably degraded to slavery and barred from their parental community. Debtors who found in difficulty to repay the same as slaves till the liability was over.  

From time immemorial the slaves had to observe certain prescribed distance in their approach with higher caste people. They also had to get their provisions without going to the common market, and were strictly forbidden from entering the market for selling their goods. The agrestic slaves belonged to the lowest strata in Hindu society, and they were not only untouchables; but also were unapproachable. If a high caste man, was polluted by the touch of a low caste man, purification was necessary, and the low castes were commonly spoken of as outcastes and untouchables.

11. Ibid.
Barbosa says that if a Nayar woman was touched by a Pulayan she became an outcaste for life.\textsuperscript{15} If a Pulayan touched a Brahmin, he had to take his bath at once and change his Brahmanical thread. On the other hand if a Nayar was polluted by a Pulayan’s touch, he had only to take his bath to purify himself.\textsuperscript{16}

The rules regarding untouchability was so very severe in Travancore, and rules were imposed on approachability who also cruel. The low castes had to keep stipulated distances from the caste people in proportion to their status in the social order. Francis Day says that an Ezhava must keep 36 paces from a Brahmin, and 12 from a Nayar while a Kaniyan would pollute a Namboothiri Brahmin at 24 feet.\textsuperscript{17} Mateer states 36 paces as the distance, a Shanan must keep from a Brahmin and 96 paces as the distance for a Pulayan. From a Nair, a Pulayan should keep a distance of 66 paces, and a Nair must not come within 3 feet of a Namboothiri Brahmin and Ezhava or Shanan within 24 paces and a Pulayan or other untouchables within 36 paces. In the Malabar Gazeteer, C.A Innes writes that the artisans must keep about 24 ft.

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\begin{enumerate}
\item J.H. Hutton, \textit{op.cit}, p.78.
\item \textit{Ibid.}
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from a Brahmin, while a Nayadi must keep 74ft. away.\textsuperscript{18} Dr. A. Ayappan gives a scale of distance pollution for several castes, a Nair must keep 7ft from a Namboothiri Brahmin, a Ezhavan must keep 32ft, Cheruman 69ft and Nayadi from 74ft, to 124ft.\textsuperscript{19} It is on record that an untouchable should stand at a prescribed distance and had to cover his mouth with one had when speaking to a caste Hindu,\textsuperscript{20} and the approach beyond these limits would pollute the caste Hindus. Maculay writes “If the poor wretched who tills the soil had ignorantly to cross any Nair in his path, the Master draws his sword and kills him on the spot with immunity.\textsuperscript{21} Their presence was polluting and the distance they had to maintain from the different high castes was fixed by a kind of arithmetical prescription.

The land owners were selfish and treated their peasants with untold cruelties. They did not have the right to worship in the temples of the high castes, and not allowed near its vicinities and distance of approach were prescribed which varied from temple to temple. No Ezhava should come within 325ft. of the walls of the temple of Guruvayur.\textsuperscript{22} The road to the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} J.H. Hutton, \textit{op. cit}, p.80.
\item \textsuperscript{19} A. Ayyappan, \textit{Social and Physical Anthropology of Nayadis of Malabar}, Madras, 1937, p.18.
\item \textsuperscript{20} V.T. Samuel, \textit{One Caste, One Religion, One God.}, (A study of Narayana Guru), New Delhi, 1947, p.23.
\item \textsuperscript{21} S. Sobhanan, \textit{Rama Varma of Travancore}, Calicut, 1978, p.72.
\end{itemize}
temple at Vaikkom was forbidden to the untouchables and the same was applied to the road leading to the Suchindrum Temple. But they had to supply paddy, rice, vegetables, milk products, coconuts, jaggery etc. during the temple festivals.  

The economy of the country centered on agriculture and the caste people were the sole custodians of all arable as well as waste lands. For a slave the possession of a piece of land was a day dream. They had to cultivate the land and take the yield to their masters, and inspite of the commendable social service rendered by them, they got in return only “contempt, neglect and, indifference” and their masters were of an ungrateful and cruel lots they were largely left unattended during ailment, and left to die pathetically.

The communities who were governed by Marumakkathayam law were obliged to pay the Government a succession fee called Adiraya, which amounts to one fourth of the value of the property. This custom was

23. Western Star, June, 1881.
25. Ibid.
prevalent in South Travancore and it caused severe hardship to the people. They had to pay the fees to conduct marriages. An Ezhava lady in Shertalai, who was unable to pay the tax and stand the humiliation cut off one of her breasts and presented it to them.\textsuperscript{28} These cruel taxes lowered the so-called higher castes to the level of barbarians. A special tax called ‘Kuppakkalche’ in the nature of poll-tax was imposed on Parayas and Ezhavas in the taluk of Thovalai.\textsuperscript{29}

Before the 14\textsuperscript{th} century the condition of the slaves in South Travancore was not as bad as it was in the other parts of India. But after the 14\textsuperscript{th} century their condition started deteriorating. The socio-economic arrangement fostered mutual dependence between the castes. The same dependence was there between the landlord and the tiller.

The life of a slave was still miserable, and there was no prescribed rule against the separation of husband and wife when they were sold. The condition of the runaway slaves was still worse, and after they were got back the children born during their absending used to be shared between the old


\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Travancore Land Revenue Manual.}, Vol. V., p.76.
master from where they had fled, and the new one to whom they were sold.\textsuperscript{30} They lived in mud huts constructed near the paddy fields which they had to protect for their masters, and could not send their children to school.

\textit{‘Pula Pedi’}, and \textit{‘Manna Pedi’} the two social observances, also helped to increase the number of slaves. \textit{‘Pula Pedi’} was practiced usually during the months of February and March, and during that time a high caste woman will lose her caste mark if a slave happened to throw a stone and hit her after sunset.\textsuperscript{31} The Parayas were free to break into the houses of Nayars and Brahmins, and seize, their woman and children during the month of February, and these acts had legal and social sanction also. Even the Nayars and others belonging to higher castes, having committed grave offences were excommunicated from their parental religion and were subjected to slavery.\textsuperscript{32}

The slaves had to follow certain prescribed rules and methods in the course of their social movements, since they were the absolute property of their masters. They could also be sold or transferred in any manner as the masters thought it fit. Buchanan describes three ways of transferring a slave

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\item \textsuperscript{30} Walter Hamilton, \textit{The East India Gazeteer}, Vol.II., London, 1815, p41.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Pulaya on meeting a Sudra Woman “might seize her and she would \textit{ipso facto} lose her caste as well as the connection with her relatives.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Buchanan, Francis, \textit{op.cit}, pp.370 – 371.
\end{itemize}
from the old master to a new master. The first method was by sale, and the price varied from place to place. The second method of transferring a slave was by mortgage, and according to this system the owner borrows an amount from another person and mortgage his slave, and after paying the amount with interest he can get back his slave. The third system was by renting out his slave to another person for an annual amount for the borrowers services. The second and third were utterly, detestable in the sense that the person who got the slave tried to gain the maximum profit by extracting from him hard labour, but providing for their subsistence. Oozhiyam and Viruthi were the other kinds of feudal systems established by the State. Oohiyam means labour without remuneration and Viruthi also comes under the same category under a different name. Under these systems, ryots of Ezhava, Nadar, Pulaya and Paraiah communities were mercilessly oppressed by primitive rules by the village officials. The members of these communities were obliged to supply provisions to the Palace, Temples and Uttupuras and to render Ooziyam during Temple festivals, Palace ceremonies and Royal tours. Jaggery was demanded free from the Nadars. Another type of Oozhiyam imposed on the Virutikkars was the Velakalli performance in the temples during festival days, the next item of this service was the carrying of images of swans and flags in

_Uttupura_ – Feeding House of the Brahmins attached is the temple.
connection with the *Velakalli* performance and the lighting of lamps and torch bearing. This kind of personal services, sometimes received petty allowances, but usually they had to go off without any pay.

A system by name *Oozhiyam* that prevailed in ancient days in South Travancore impoverished the agriculturists who were frequently called for *Oozhiyam* services. So it became impossible for them to pay attention to the cultivation of their lands and this incurred heavy losses and debts. They were also deprived of the small nominal sums that were is some cases given for work.

The slases were subjected to oppression and the freedom which the other industries in offered were denied to them. The Government was adamant and proved to be very cruel in proceeding against those who were not willing to perform *Oozhiyam* services. To all *Oozhiya Viruthi*, *Oozhiyam* service was a must and failure to do it meant forfeiture of their land. It was proclaimed by the Government that those who wished to retain possession of the family of the original holder for over fifty years, the *Vilayartham* was


twenty five times the assessment and if the possession in the hands of the
alliance was between twenty five years, more times the assessment was levied
as *Vilayartham*,\(^{36}\) and exercises more influence on the Government in this
little State of Travancore) than all the rulers of the rest of India put together.
The prerogatives of the upper classes to use the lower classes for their benefit
and comfort, had the sanction of the Government and custom like
untouchability and inapproachability, were devised to preserve their
superiority.

The social privileges enjoyed by the Brahmins lead us to believe that
the Government of caste Hindus, by caste Hindus and only for caste Hindus.
The lower caste people had only *Oozhiyams* to perform with no rights to
claim and untouchability which had its impact in all aspects of the life of the
lower castes put them into miserable existence.

The native Hindu rulers in general thought it their sacred duty to
protect the rights and privileges of the ‘Savarnas’ and any attempt on the part
of the ‘Avarnas’ to question the sanctity of the *Varna* system or to assert their
right is to be treated as treason and to be put down with a heavy hand.
However the political initiative and reforms against these evils emanated from
outsiders namely the British.

36. Letter No.14 1468 dt 26.5.1896 from Thomson, J.Resident to the
Dewan of Travancore, Vol.VI, p.250.
Dr. Palpu who established the Ezhava sabha submitted a memorandum to the Maharaja on 17th October 1896, in which he stated that times and their surroundings have changed and the age old customs which put the low castes into untold hardships should be discarded and as a first step all government schools should be thrown open to the Ezhavas according to the repeated proclamations of the rulers that all classes without distinction of caste or creed, may have access to public institutions. Secondly the denial of admission to the services which at that time constituted a powerful incentive to western education was the main reason for the lower sections of the community to remain in a state of protracted intellectual torpor.\textsuperscript{37} Though the immediate response to the memorandum was poor, they emboldened the lower castes to come forward and sign a petition their chief grievances regardless of all consequences.\textsuperscript{38}

In order to perpetuate caste and untouchability in the field of education, the authorities inorder to prevent the mixing up of Savarna and Avarna pupils, established separate caste schools in certain areas. But the Government of Madras depreciated such a policy of establishing separate caste schools in certain areas. But the Government of Madras depreciated

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\item \textsuperscript{38} T.K. Ravindran, \textit{op.cit}, pp. 72-73.
\end{itemize}
such a policy of establishing separate caste schools as "retrogressive tending to sanction and ratify the righteousness of caste feelings". When of the Popular Assembly passed a bill stating that Government schools, should be opened for children also, the Government refused to do so saying that it was impossible to have an Ezhava girl in the same school with a Nair or a Brahmin girl. This was the nature of the educational opportunities available to the outcastes during the early decades of this century.

The Government of Travancore was very keen in keeping its prestige and dignity by appointing only caste Hindus in various places of trust and responsibility. It had the misconception that prestige and dignity would disappear with the appointment of the low castes like Ezhavas in high posts. The Malayali Memorial of 1891 and the Ezhava Memorial of 1896 did not solve the problem faced by the sponsors. Therefore they requested Lord Curzon the Viceroy to take steps for the redress of their educational and political grievances when he visited South Travancore in 1900. On their behalf a memorandum was presented to Lord Curzon accompanied by a brochure entitled 'Treatment of Ezhavas in Travancore'. This memorandum came to be known as the 'Ezhava Memorial of 1900' and it described the plethora of disabilities. Lord Curzon forwarded the Memorial to the Madras Government.


40. Chidamparam Pillai, op.cit, p.67.
and the Resident for necessary action. At the beginning of this century Sree Narayana Guru (1894 – 1928) a Saint and philosopher of the Ezhavas exhorted them through his preachings to awake, arise and act, and several dedicated members of the community like Kumaran Asan, and T.K.Madhavan came forward work for the uplift the community. Dr.Palpu’s plea for social reform together with Kumaran Asan’s sublime poetical power, with Sree Narayana Guru’s spiritual influence, emerged a Socio–religious organization called the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, which did great service for the uplift of the Ezhavas. Thus the S.N.D.P.Yogam set the stage for the social, political and religious emancipation of the Ezhavas.

Narayana Guru wanted a thorough and basic reform in the society, thorough a constructive but silent revolution, both physically and mentally. This movement therefore took the character of revival, reform and revolution and a growth mentally and physically. A relentless crusade against the caste and its creeds, untouchability and unapproachability were the most important aspects of the modernization process initiated by Sree Narayana Guru.

41. N.K.Bhaskaran, Vaikkom, Satyagraha, A study, Quilon, 1976, p.23.
In pursuance of his programme of Sanskritization or modernization the Guru constructed the temples and consecrated them with Aryan God’s like Siva, and Subramoniya for the worship of the untouchables who were denied access to Saravana temples. This was the first open challenge against Hindu priesthood, and caste system. The Guru also laid stress on education and industry and his preachings caused an awakening among the Ezhavas. This awakening stopped the tide of the conversion to Christianity in the community and several of those who became Christians came back to Hinduism.

Guided by the examples of Ezhavas, the Pulayas, and the Parayas also began to work for their own emancipation and formed their own associations. Their prominent Associations were the Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham, the Central Travancore Pulayas Samajam and the Cheruman Mahajana Sangam. These Associations successfully worked for the advancement of the people concerned. For the common good of Kuravas, Pulayas, Parayas, Vetas and other degraded communities the Kerala

44. *Ibid*.
Adjmajana Sabha had been organized. The Kerala Panar Samajam established in 1918, started many branch associations in Central Travancore by 1931. The proclamation of 1855 was the key factor behind the above said awakening which was set in motion by Narayana Guru and Kumarasan Asan. Their work made the weaker classes to feel the thrill of a new life.

In the meantime, there was also an increasing awareness among the upper caste Hindus about the injustice inherent in the caste system. Hence the movement for the eradication of untouchability and inter caste barriers gradually received the backing of the more enlightened section. At the beginning of it, the Nair Service Society was started in 1914. Its leader Padmanabhan, opposed the manifold evils of the caste system. In the initial stages the S.N.D.P.Yogam and the N.S.S. worked hard in fighting social evils. The teachings of Chattampi Swamigal, a Nair reformist led to a social awakening among them which served as an inspiration to the non Brahmin castes.

Inspired by the teaching of the Guru and by the activities of the S.N.D.P.Yogam, the Pulayas began to work for their amelioration, their leader Ayyan Kali (1866 – 1941) who instilled in them encouragement of strength and hope. In 1904, 4 years after the formation of the S.N.D.P.Yogam, Ayyankali founded the Sadhujana Paripalana Yogam in Travancore and embarked upon a course of vigorous campaign for the uplift of the Harijans. He also appealed to the Pulayas to make the best use of the educational
facilities and concessions granted to them. Due to the untiring efforts of the leader the number of educated Harijans increased from 2,000 in 1913 to 17,753 in 1970. He also voiced the grievances of the depressed classes in the Popular body.  

Reforms of social customs was one of the activities of the Sadhujans Paripalana Sangham and Ayyankali demanded that the Pulayas and other depressed classes should be allowed to discard the caste symbol ‘Kallayam, Mallayam’ and also to wear clothes covering their breast. He had to face stiff opposition from the caste Hindus while implementing these programmes. In 1917, K.Ayyappan founded at Chertali another organization called Sahodhara Sangham. The main object of the organization was to eradicate the evils of caste system from among the Ezhavas in relation to their own sub castes. In the same year they organized at Chertalai a Mishrapojanam ceremony of Ezhavas, Arayas, Pulayas and the like.  

The denial of Temple entry to the low caste was one of the gravest disabilities even after the emancipation of the slaves. The Temples were the last strongholds of the unrelenting orthodox society, and feeling of self

46. A. Sreedhara Menon, op.cit, p.376.

47. A. Sreedhara Menon, op.cit, p.372.
respect gave a stimulus to the Avarnas Hindus to demand Temple entry to them. T.K. Madhavan, a member of the Ezhava community, was to engineer a much more vigorous campaign on the (evils) disabilities of the Ezhavas, especially the most galling of all was the denial of entry in temples to the educated prosperous and 'respectable' also. He was a good example of the Ezhava educated elite. Through press and platforms, he brought the issue of temple entry to the notice of the public. He even attended the Congress with the aim of urging its leaders to add untouchability removal in the list of programmes of the Indian National Congress. As a result of this, the Congress Committee passed a resolution demanding to start progressive steps for the removal of untouchability. To alleviate the fears of the Ezhavas towards the congress, he himself became a member of the Congress. All his initial efforts for Temple entry for the low castes failed, but he did not lose hope, and in 1930 he formed the Temple Entry League at Vaikkom, but unfortunately he did not live long enough to enjoy the fruits of his labour.

Along with the struggle of the suppressed classes to get entry into the Temples, their fight for the right to walk along the public roads was also going on; but as they were not well organized and had no outside support, it

did not succeed. Finally the Indian National Congress took the lead, which culminated in the Vaikkom Satyagraha of 1924 – 1925 and it was a landmark in the Social History of Travancore. It was organized by the Indian National Congress under the guidance of Gandhiji. Securing the freedom of the lower strata of the Hindu society to move freely along the roads around the Vaikkom Temple in Travancore was the objective behind it, and the peaceful Satyagrahis subjected to great hardship by the Government.

But the Satyagrahis stood firm in their noble cause, and an compromises was reached between Gandhiji and the Government by which the roads on three sides of the temples were thrown open for the use of the suppressed people.

The tremendous success of the Satyagraha at Vaikkom prompted similar Satyagrahas to be held in Guruvayur and Suchindrum by aggrieved communities.

The Satyagraha at Guruvayoor (1931-1932) started on 1 November 1931 under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Congress, and was intended to get the Guruvayur Temple open to all Hindus. The leader of the Satyagraha was

K. Kelappan and captain of the volunteer corps was A.K. Gopalan, but the Satyagraha and later a referendum were also called off on Gandhiji's advice. After some time a referendum was held by the Kerala Pradesh Congress among the caste Hindus of Ponnani taluk to assertion their views on the issue of temple entry. More than 20,000 people expressed their opinions, and among them 77 percent were in favour of temple entry, 13 percent against and 10 percent remained neutral, and the referendum had a favourable response for temple entry of the low castes.  

In addition, the lower castes who were solong kept out of the stream of political life began to take active part in the struggle for political emancipation. There was a sudden spurt in political activity in the state as a whole to make it as a mass movement.  

Once the mass movement gained momentum ground throughout the State, the Nair on the basis of caste cheated the Ezhavas in many ways and thus caused the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims to join together and form the Civic Right league in 1919. Its aim of focusing the attention of the Government through the Legislature had the due response and the Government promised to consider its suggestions.


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On 5th April 1919 the Civil Right Leaguers held a public meeting at Kottayam, and John Chandy welcomed the gathering and outlined the object of the League. “To love one’s country and to work for its highest good is the bounden duty of every citizen, it is the true patriotism. To love one’s country merely for the enjoyment of its advantages is not patriotism, it is selfishness. To govern a country in a spirit of exclusiveness and thereby to cripple the larger life of the country for the benefit of a few is not patriotism, it is selfishness….

It is the object of the league to work on these lines”.

In 1920 the leaders like A.J. John and T.K. Madhavan launched an agitation under the justice of league, and demanded the bifurcation of the revenue department into two viz – Revenue and Devaswom to generate more employment opportunities to the lower castes. As the Government was not willing, Lord Willington, Governor of Madras on his visit to Travancore advised the State Government to consider favourably the request made by the unprivileged classes. Accordingly a Committee consisting of the Hindus and the non-Hindus was constituted, and based on its recommendations the Maharaja issued a proclamation 12th April 1922 separating Devasvam of the revenue department. Which was meant for the better management of

58. Travancore Civic Right League (pub), Caste and Citizenship in Travancore, Kottayam, 1919, p.3.
59. Press Communique Under Devaswom Proclamation, 1922
temples and their properties the year 1932 was a period of political awakening of the under represented communities in the Legislature\textsuperscript{60}. On 18 March 1832 the Ezhava members of the Sri. Mulam Popular Assembly submitted a memorandum to the \textit{Dewan}, requesting to widen the franchise and to grant adult franchise, and the right to contest elections from the general constituencies.\textsuperscript{61} On 31 July 1932 the all Travancore Ezhava Political League met under the Presidentship of C.V. Kunju Raman and reiterated the demands mentioned above.\textsuperscript{62} Like the Ezhavas the Latin Christians also demanded adult franchise, and wanted, they to have representation in proportion to their numerical strength. Following the examples of the Latin Catholics the Travancore State Catholic Congress also on October 1932 submitted a memorandum, and pleaded for joint electorate with reservation of seats on the basis of population. In like manner all the major arrived communities rallied round a common goal, for the realization of their political rights and formed the Travancore Joint Political Congress in December 17, 1932.

\textsuperscript{60} Devasvam Hand Book, Section I.

\textsuperscript{61} Memories from the Ezhava members of the Popular Assembly 18\textsuperscript{th} March 1932.

\textsuperscript{62} Resolution at the meeting of the Ezhava Political League 31 July 1932.
On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1933 the representatives of the constituent organizations of the all Travancore Joint Political congress met in the L.M.S.Hall at Trivandrum and passed the important resolution to abstain and boycott the elections.\textsuperscript{63}

Historians and writers differ in evaluation the very character of the Abstention Movement. A.K. Gopalan wrote “The Reform Movement for justice to all communities and termination of the monopoly enjoyed by some communities in the civil service marked a new chapter in the political history of Travancore but the Government tried to suppress the Movement”. The Abstention Movement was the result of the failure of the Malayali Memorial, and as such it was a continuation of the later in spirit and aim.

According to Woodcook, in 1932 Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims came together in the Join Political Congress, aimed at gaining responsible government and led representatives of all malcontent groups, together with a few Nairs whose democratic ideals were stronger than their caste solidarity.\textsuperscript{64}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Gopalan} K.Gopalan, \textit{In the Cause of People}, Madras, 1973,p.100.
\end{thebibliography}
C. Narayana Pillai seems to be confused in judging this movement, and commenting on the organisers, he has stated that the architects gave it the title ‘Joint Political Congress’; but the sole motive was to secure communal rights.\textsuperscript{65} This was counteracted by another statement. “Joint political congress was the first popular Movement which had state wide organization and the emotional backing of the common man. Likewise this was the first instance when leaders of various castes and religions stood together for attaining political rights.\textsuperscript{66} According to E.M. Sankran Nambudiripad, “Inspite of its communal Character” the extremists welcomed the struggle and had no hesitation to designate it as the first political movement in the State”.\textsuperscript{67}

A scheme of representation was submitted by the Abstentionists to the Government “keeping the franchise as it was and allocating seats to different communities on population basis”. The number of general constituencies would be reduced and re-arranged in such a way that no particular community would get predominance and more seats could be set apart for faculties election.

\begin{enumerate}
\item C.D. Narayana Pillai, \textit{Tiruvitamkur Swakantriya Samara Cheritram} (Mal), Trivandrum, 1972, p.150.
\item \textit{Ibid}, p.28.
\item E.M.S. Nambudiripad, \textit{op.cit}, p. 150.
\end{enumerate}
The Dewan had on 1st March 1933 announced the Governments readiness to accept the principles of proportionate representation on the basis of population without disturbing the existing arrangements of franchise. On 14 March the Government issued a communique promising adequate representation to the Ezhavas, Latin Catholics and Muslims.

From the very beginning, the Government tried all possible means to drive a wedge among Ezhavas and Muslims who were anxious about their interest of the communities.

The Executive committee of the Joint Political Congress met the Dewan at Munnar on 2 May 1934 and submitted a memorandum signed by seven leaders representing the Ezhavas, Christian and Muslims. The Muslim Services League met on 3 May 1934 at Kayamkulam, and on the next day the Joint Political Congress also met, and they expressed the anxiety and to find an early solution to the issues.

In June 1935 the Government passed orders on the issue of appointment in the public services, and stated that it was not practicable to give representation to every community in the public services, but only to certain well defined unitary groups. The Government considered that the minimum percentage of communal recognition should be fixed neither too low nor too high. The failure of the agitation of the leaders founded a more broad-based organization, viz The Travancore State Congress, secure for the people, full responsible Government on the basis of universal adult
franchise. Hence the Joint Political Congress was formally dissolved on 4 July 1938. Then the Abstentionist joined the State Congress and strengthened it to fight for the achievement of responsible government. With the achievement of this goal in 1947 after a protracted struggle, a new democratic era commenced in the history of the State.

Nearly half a century witnessed agitations and the Abstention movement united all the communities for a popular agitation and 50 in 1935 a Public Service commission was formed and the principle of communal rotation, tantamount to reservation in the recruitment to the public service was accepted. With the promulgation of the Temple Entry Proclamation in November 1936 most of the Social disabilities were removed and once for all.

On 11th November 1936 the Maharaja of Travancore, Sri. Chitra Tirunal Bala Rama Varma issued the Temple Entry Proclamation and declared open all the Temples to the Avarnas which was an important event in the annals of the social history of modern India. The Temple Entry Proclamation (1936) was no doubt the result of the Abstention Movement, and their vigorous campaigns and the wounded pride of the Ezhavas in particular that opened the eyes of the Government. Commenting on the Temple Entry proclamation of 1936, Hutton observed thus;

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68. P.K.K.Menon, _opcit_, p.16.
"Theoretically perhaps, the administrations of a Hindu Temple would be enough since it is conceded to remove all other disabilities for the temple is not merely a religious institution but is also in many ways a social one"\textsuperscript{70} The Proclamation instilled in the minds of the vast majority of people in the State, whose consciousness of self respect and self importance was ignored for ages, a new sense of values, or rights and a new fire of ambition to come to the fore with a new life. The Government of Travancore was also prompt in sensing the spirit of the times and relinquished its earlier role, the role of protector of special privileges of upper classes. Fortunately for Travancore the Temple Entry Proclamation had, at least in the eye of the law, established complete social equality between the communities.\textsuperscript{71}

The Proclamation was an unexpected blow to the higher castes, for it proved that all their claims and postures on religious matters as false. Among the numerous untouchable castes of Travancore it was the Ezhavas who fought for the rest of the untouchables. It was a battle against the age old the customs and traditions of the land, strongly observed through the ages.

\textsuperscript{70} L.A Krishna Aiyer, \textit{op.cit}, p.46.

\textsuperscript{71} V.Achyuta Menon, \textit{The Socio Economic Reconstruction of Travancore}, Trivandrum.1937, p. 113.
Serious opposition from the adamant officialdom in the initial stages of this hard-fought struggle for the social equality, was encountered which they fought till the very same official some who conceded their demands and once it was achieved, it assured achieve political equality and justice.

In every sense, the abolition of slavery in 1855 formed the basis of these radical changes that took place in the past two decades of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th centuries. It also marked the beginning of a series of protests and demonstrations by the backward Communities for equality before law. The liberal views generated by the western education which the low caste people received in abundance- mainly because of the large-scale conversion to Christianity to escape from the inequalities connected with caste system even after the proclamation of 1855 was a prime factor that put them into action. Thus the memorials of 1890- the Vaikkom Satyagraha, the Abstention movement and similar other socio – political movements were nothing but the far-flung after effects of the epoch making proclamation of 1855. If the proclamation 1855 ensured their salvation from bonded servitude to land and persons, the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 ensured their redemption from their slavery to caste observances bondage, and –old traditions of the land. Both these factors were inevitable to make any man free, in the true sense of the term.
The work of the missionaries in their fight against slavery in Travancore, produced remarkable results, and it became the basis for the radical changes that took place in the last part, of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries. The event is a significant chapter in the social history of Travancore because it marked the beginning of the rise of backward communities to prominence and fight for equality. The echoes of these could be heard later in the Malayali Memorial (1891), Vaikkom Satyagraha (1924-1925) and similar other socio-political movements. The culmination of their concerted action for the total emancipation even after the abolition of slavery in 1855, was the Abstention Movement (1931-1936). The success of the movement secured for them their inalienable political rights.

Even though the Government announced all measures it took a long time for the people to get the benefits.72 The policy of the caste dominated Government poverty and ignorance of the inferior classes added to keep them in permanent subjugation to the superior classes. Economic security and educational facilities were denied to them as if they would made the aboriginals uncontrollable. The rulers were averse to introduce any change in the existing social and political policy. This negative attitude of the State

excluded the lower castes from all positions and were subjected to exploitation and humiliations. In doing so they wanted them to remain hewers of wood and drawers of water.73 The Ezhavas and other depressed classes fared no better at the hands of the Government and the economic disabilities imposed made them still worse.74 Prerogatives of the upper classes to use the lower castes for their benefit and comfort were given Governmental sanction. The low castes were denied entry into temples, schools and public services. This showed the feudal character of the state and the society.75 However, by the last quarter of the 19th Century the situation began to change, and the discorded sections began to receive the assistance of the British authorities and the Christian missionaries. The education in the mission schools coupled with the growth of democracy after emancipation helped them to break the shackles of caste based customs and became more and more conscious of their fundamental rights.76 The static and conservative set up gradually broke up and the lower classes became restive and the

74. *Oozhiyam and Viruthi* two feudal exactions made by the State continued even after the abolition of slavery in 1855.
western education kindled in them an intensive desire to fight discrimination. They knew that they have to fight all alone to get their rights. When many a community was pressed down, by public and private oppression, and prevented from moving forward, it was pretty natural for the victims to ask for benefits in the order of their priority. Their first necessity was social equality and natural justice.

The opposition movement against discrimination gathered momentum under the Ezhavas. They were a large community who derived the maximum benefits out of the emancipation of 1855. According to the census report of 1881, they formed 22.05 percent of the total Hindu population of the State, and rose to 22.8 percent in 1891. From 1870 the Ezhavas began to have college education and by 1891 12.1 percent of Ezhavas were literates and had English education. Thus by virtue, of their numerical strength and improved educational status, the Ezhavas were foremost than the other lower classes in their struggle for social equality and justice.

The era of memorials brought about a change in the caste-ridden society leading for a better future, and the first evidence of political consciousness in an organized manner in Travancore was in 1891. The Travancore Memorial or ‘Malayali Memorial’ of 1891 was drafted by K.P. Sankara Menon, Dr. Palpu, G. Parameshwaran Pillai and others, and more than 10,000 signatures from among Nayars, Ezhavas, Christians, and Muslims of Travancore were obtained and presented to the Maharaja on 11th January 1891. In the
memorandum they stated that their educated men were not provided with better opportunities and the Government jobs are enjoyed by Tamil and Telugu Brahmins. Statistics on Government jobs states that in 1879 there were 3407 vacancies on Rs.10/- as pay in the whole State and Sudras got 1575, Nanjanad Sudras 75, Nazaranis 76, Ezhavas and other castes. The rest were monopolised by the so called foreigners.

The Memorials in general, did not evince any interest in the social uplift of the under – dogs of the Hindu society, namely the Parayas and the Pulayas who in 1891 had a combined strength of 4,11,013 constituting 30.39 percent of the Hindu population, and 17.12 percent of the total population. But for this drawback, “The Malayali memorial is an important landmark in the political awakening of the people”, but unfortunately of the government reply was that, the Ezhavas are perfectly satisfied with their traditional occupation of toddy tapping, coir making etc., They are not interested in higher education or Government service and they have been induced to sign

77. Malayala Manorama, 24, January 1891.
78. For full text of the memorial, vide, Dr.M.J.Koshy, Genesis of Political Consciousness in Kerala, Trivandrum, 1972, p.152.
80. P.K.K.Menon, op.cit, p.11.
the memorial by political agitators desirous of increasing their own numerical
strength. Dr. Palpu who served the Mysore Govt. as an assistant surgeon
pleaded the Government to extend the concessions enjoyed by the converted,
Christian Ezhavas to their Hindu counterparts also. As the Government
turned a deaf ear to his plea, he suggested the lower and depressed classes to
embrace Christianity. Because of the prejudices that had been shown against
a Hindu Ezhavas could not be seen in the case of a converted Christian of the
same caste. The Governments ameliorative measures to concede the
educational rights to the non caste Hindus, did not have the desired effect. In
spite of the various proclamations of the ruler all classes without distinction
of caste or creed could not get a fair deal at the hands of the prejudiced
officers. The press and platforms projected this issue to the public, but the
reluctancy of the higher authorities remained unchanged. They instead of
looking into their complaints, became more and more indifferent. For
example, in 1911 the Ezhavas raised their voice, Samuel mateer was of the
opinion that the condition of the serfs continuing in servitude was not without
its advantages. According to him sudden revolution in the social

82. P. Chidambaram Pillai, op.cit,p.156.
83. Madras Political Proceedings, 23 April 1870.
condition of such multitudes was not desirable. Because in spite of their educational progress and cultural development in the long run they had to seek employment under new masters. While writing about the emancipation of slaves Nagam Aiya says that though they were emancipated, in majority of the instances they have remained under of their former masters and are happy and contented with their lot.  

The emancipation did not bring any economic changes, and the slaves had to work for their master to make a living, because agricultural lands were the monopoly of the higher castes, William Logan hit at the heart of the problem when he observed, that, “the slaves however, as a caste will never understand what real freedom means until measures are adopted to give them indefeasible rights in the small orchards occupied by them as house – sites”.  

The former slave owners grudged the emancipation of the slaves fearing the ruin of their agricultural interests. For their agricultural operation the rich masters largely depended upon the slaves. This affected the economy of the state. They could not tolerate the loss of income. Further the educational instructions were opened to them. They were afraid that the slaves would become equal to them. Hence they resisted their access to courts of justice

overcoming the resistance if the slaves approached the courts. But the caste dominated judiciary did not give them a fair judgment. Government schools, public markets as may left their old masters and sought labour elsewhere. Fearing the inimical and unsympathetic policies of the slave owners, many slaves sought their fortune in the newly started plantations in the Malabar region, and few went to work in the gold field at Kolar in the neighbouring States of Mysore as coolies. All these caused deficiency of labour in Travancore and the abolition of slavery in 1855 “caused the landed gentry much dissatisfaction and loss of income”. The delay in introduction of the reform of abolition was caused by the landlords and landed proprietors. They thought that it would lead to the ruin of agriculture. The slaves though emancipated did not get fair treatment from the caste dominated society. Infact the court required them to pay penalty of forgave them on condition that they would return to their former conditions of servitude. Thus the constant troubles the emancipated slaves had from their caste masters questioned the very genuine nature of the emancipation

Proclamation.\textsuperscript{89} However the wider demand of labour in the growing coffee plantations enabled them to procure better forms from their old employers. The emancipation Proclamation was uniformly applied to the entire slaves of Travancore. These responses in the North Travancore was poor. This was partly due to the ignorance of this region and partly due to the awareness of the sellers and buyer of the slaves that their right of slaves trade would not be enforced by law. Majority of the slaves were ignorant of the emancipation proclamations. Further there was no proper agency to create a sense of awakening in them.

But the British and Resident and the Government of Madras began to show unprecedented interest in the welfare and the progress of the once suppressed classes\textsuperscript{90} and forced the officers of Travancore to take appropriate measures to improve the lot of the oppressed, and it had the desired effect.

The Travancore administration started to remove one by one the disabilities of the suppressed classes, and people like Ezhavas were left


\textsuperscript{90} English Records, Dewan’s letter to the Dewan Peishkars, 22, September 1869.
unmolested, and their women were allowed to dress as they wished. Slaves were given property rights, and the practice of framing false cases against them, ceased, but the slave owners were against these measures. In spite of all the ameliorative measures, injustice and inequality were not completely over in spite of various beneficial proclamations.

The activities of the Christian Missionaries of South Travancore in various fields brought progress to the Nadars of the region, and the education they imparted to the Nadars helped them to know their social rights and made them to fight for equality in the society. The Missionary ladies taught the Nadar women to dress neatly by covering their breasts and to appear descent in the public. The higher castes became jealous of this and instigated the ruler to issue a Proclamation in 1829 prohibiting the Nadar women from using upper clothes. Travancore issued proclamation permitting Travancore Nadar women to wear upper clothes without imitating the dress of the higher caste ladies. By the Queens Victoria’s Proclamation of 1858, the British Crown took over the East India Company’s Administration. Some expressions of the proclamation were misinterpreted by the Nair for as forbidding


missionary efforts and the public proclamation of Christianity. Its consequences were the revival of the struggle in 1858. The struggle became so aggressive in December 1887-1888.  

From 25th December Christians were molested throughout the Neyyoor Mission district, and on the same day riots broke out in the Parachaley District, and similarly disturbances began in January 1859 in Trivandrum 143 and Santhapuram Mission district. 

The Dewan made a proclamation on 27th December in which he uttered a strict warning to the Nadars while the Nairs untouched. Instigated by the proclamations the Nairs complained that missionaries encouraged the converts to dress in such way as to irritate the higher castes. 

The Madras Government ordered the Resident that “the Raja of Travancore to change the existing rule regarding the dress of women”. The Madras Governor also informed the Secretary of State for India about the

97. MPP dated February 1, 1859, p.144.
happenings and repeated his request of appointing a commission to investigate into the happenings in South Travancore.\textsuperscript{98} This much of arrangement did not have the desired effect.\textsuperscript{99}

On 26\textsuperscript{th} July 1859 a proclamation was issued in Travancore, which permitted the Nadar women to dress in coarse clothes like the fisher women did. "However mere legislations could not root out the practice of centuries, and in many places the old restrictions prevailed. The Madras Government received many complaints stating that the Proclamation did not improve their position.\textsuperscript{100} The L.M.S. Missionaries petitioned to Sir. Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India about the weakness of this Proclamation.\textsuperscript{101} The British authorities continued to express their desire to the Maharaja with regard to the lower castes in the matter of dress.\textsuperscript{102} This pressure made the Travancore government to bring a fresh legislation in 1865 granting this right to all the lower castes. Though the missionaries could not help the Nadars much throughout the revolt they firmly stood by the side of Nadras.

\textsuperscript{98} Governor of Madras to the Secretary of State for India Letter dated, 26.3.1859, official paper, p.3.
\textsuperscript{99} Minute by the Hon. President, dated 30.5.1859.
\textsuperscript{100} MPP, January 30,1860,p.61.
\textsuperscript{101} Petition to Sir. Charles Wood from all missionaries of T.D.C. Correspondence No. 127, 1859, MS\textit{(copy)}, India, Odd, box 16 CWMA.
\textsuperscript{102} Maltby (Resident) to Pycroft, T., dated 15.2.1860 M.P.P. March,1860, p.179.
However all these Proclamations had nothing to do with the abolition of slavery, and slaves continued to be bought and sold. The Government itself owned a large number of slaves. Though the motives behind these proclamation are to be appreciated, they indirectly aimed at the retention of slavery in Travancore for generations to come.

Faced with strong public demands at home, the Indian Government was compelled to take positive steps against the institutions of slavery. This case in the form Act V of 1843 which had four clauses. The Princely states of Travancore and Cochin however did not come with in the purview of this act. These Christian missionaries through a series of memorandum and petitions ventilated the grievances of the slaves and presssurised the Indian Government to find an early solution to this social evil. In 1841 Rev. Abbs, J., observed the plight of the slaves of Southern Travancore in person. The other missionaries also noticed the evils and commented “we cannot but feel

sorry for these poor sufferers; and if consistently with their higher object, we can produce for them some relief from their temporal distress, It is our delight to do so" 104. The missionaries declared that the ‘State was priest ridden and by no means a model which it had long been represented to.105 The missionaries believed that it was the inalienable rights of the lower classes of Travancore as of any other people and to fight for their rights and to enjoy the fruits of their toil. They also believed that any Government which deprived the people of their rights and oppressed them the people had a further right to alter it or abolish it. They held that it was a crime against man and God to permit any longer a rule that had caused the division of individuals for the free use of force and deprived the majority of their rights and privileges.106 The Both from the religious and altruistic points view the conditions were favourable for the missionaries and as such their activities could be justified.107

In 1847 the missionaries submitted a memorandum to Utram Tirunal Maharaja portraying the plight of the slaves for considerations. It was in this petition that the demand for the abolition of slavery in Travancore began. The

missionaries pleaded to the Maharaja, “to pass a law in with reference to the slave population of Travancore, similar to that passed by the Government of Bengal and now in operation with regard to slaves in the Honorable company’s territories”.108

In September 1853 the Travancore authorities prepared another draft proclamation, and the copies of it were sent to the Dewan of Cochin and the Resident for their consideration. The Resident readily approved the same, and the Maharaja was congratulated for the liberal contents of the Proclamation. He also justified the reluctance of the Travancore Government to free adult Sirkar slaves as they almost exclusively cultivated Raja’s extensive Paddy lands and commented the second clause as controversial, as it blamed the missionaries for making use of emancipation for conversion.

In the meantime, the Government of Madras wanted to see the proposed reform enacted at the earliest. This could be seen from M.C. Montgomery’s letter to the Chief secretary to the Madras Government.109

It was in this back ground that the historic proclamation of 1853 abolishing slavery was issued.

108. English Records, Resident’s letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 10 September 1853.

109. English Records, Resident’s letter to the Chief Secretary to the Resident, September 1853.
The proclamation of 1853 was not devoid of loopholes and drawbacks. The Resident, was dissatisfied with the working of the controversial second and fifth clauses in the Proclamation.\textsuperscript{110}

The drawbacks of 1953 proclamation was so glaring, that the Resident wrote a series of letters to the Dewan of Travancore stressing some facts. In one of the letters he requested the Government to discontinue the tax levied on the Sirkar slaves.\textsuperscript{111} In another letter the Resident mentioned the cruel practice of selling free men as slaves in Eraniel.\textsuperscript{112} But the Government of Travancore replied that the parties involved in the transaction were men,\textsuperscript{113} who were perfectly unaware of the recent Proclamation. At the same time the indifferent attitude of the Travancore Government became “well known to the authorities both in this country and abroad”\textsuperscript{114} As a solution to this problem that the Resident suggested there – publishing of the Proclamation of Her Highness the Rani of 1887 or the issue of another proclamation which is

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{110} English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 5 May, 1854.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 8 July 1854.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} English Records, Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, 11 July 1854.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
more definite than the previous one. In order to make the matters clear; the Government arranged many discussions.\textsuperscript{115}

The main features of the discussion between the differing parties were (a) abolition of slavery was not attempted after a full understanding of its origin, nature and extent and the institution's impact on the slaves, (b) All those who came forward with the idea of abolition of slavery and the amelioration of the slaves were not eager to stir the socioeconomic system which had backed slavery.

Despite the discussions and debates held at different stages the defects of the Proclamation could not be rectified. The failure of the 1853 Proclamation to achieve the real purpose for which it was meant created a sense of awareness in the minds of both English and the native States of Travancore.\textsuperscript{116} Finally yielding to the persistent Pressure on the part of the Resident, the Maharaja withdrew the first Proclamation and issued another in its place on 24\textsuperscript{th} June 1855.

First, form, and after the date of this Proclamation all those who were included in the denomination of Sirkar Slaves shall be considered free as well as their posterity, the tax hitherto leviable on them being hereby abolished.

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Resident's letter to the Dewan of Travancore}, 12 August 1854.

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Shungra Warrier's letter to the President}, 14 August, 1854.
2nd that all slaves who may hereafter become the property of the
Sirkar by the estate of estate without heirs shall also be free.

3rd that no public office shall, in execution of any decree or order of
court or for the enforcement of any demand of Rent or Revenue shall or cause
to be sold any person, on the ground that such person is in a state of slavery.

4th that no right arising out of an alleged property in the person and
services of any individual as a slave, shall be enforced by any civil or criminal
court or Magistrate within this territory.

5th that no person who may have acquired property by his own industry,
or by the exercise of any art, calling or profession or by inheritance
assignment, gift or bequeath shall be dispossessed of such property or
prevented from taking possession thereof, on the ground that such person, or
that the person from whom the property may have been derived was a slave.

6th that any act which would be a penal offence if done to a free man
shall be equally an offence if done to any person on the pretext of his being in
a condition of slavery.117

The remission of all Government slaves satisfied the Court of
Directors. They wrote “The way has been paved for the amelioration of
slavery in Travancore. In dealing with this question to the greatest direction

117. Royal Proclamation 1855, K.K. Kusuman, op.cit, p.112.
and circumspection are necessary to avoid arousing the jealousies and suspicions of the population in a manner that might combine the larger slave holders in hostility against the benevolence of the Government. The means should be left untried by perseverance in a conciliatory policy and by persuasion, to induce the private owners of slaves to follow the laudable example of the *Raja*. ¹¹⁸

A final blow to slavery in India was struck by section 370, 371 of the Indian Penal code, which came into force in January 1862. Following this, any person found to possess slaves became punishable. The Zeal and enthusiasm of the missionaries in the amelioration of slaves must be duly appreciated. It was their drive and initiative which shook the conscience of all. Their enthusiasms was later championed by the Resident.

It was the missionaries who drew the attention of the public as well as the authorities to this social evil. The memorandum which they submitted in 1847 was the first of its kind, in which the lamentable plight of the slaves was comprehensively portrayed. In their attempt for social equality in Travancore the missionaries had to face stiff opposition from the State authorities and the high caste people.

¹¹⁸. *Political Despatch from the court directors*, London, dated 27th June 1855, Foreign, Political Despatch, 1883, No.4.
The history of the abolition of slavery in Travancore is closely associated with the English and their unifying and persistent efforts. The British Residents of Travancore like Colonel Munre and General Cullen openly interfered in the administration. Their pressure and persuasion virtually persuaded the concerned authorities into action. The gossip that these benevolent measures owed their origin to the enlightenment of the then rulers and not to the political power exercised by these Residents is far from true. At the same time the initial reluctance displayed by Utram Tirunal the Raja of Travancore on this important social reform should not be interpreted as a reactionary attitude. He being a symbol of the period in which he lived, wanted to preserve the status as far as possible. The Travancore authorities knew that the abolition of slavery would surely disturb the coils balance commented and fortified by age old customs and institutions. Yet unmindful of the orthodox public opinion, the most potent obstacle that stood in the way of very reform the English insisted on the abolition of slavery and stage by stage they succeed in realizing their object.