CHAPTER -V
UPPER - CLOTH STRUGGLE

The Nadars are inhabiting the Southern taluks of Travancore, and their mother tongue is Tamil, and some of them speak Malayalam also. Bishop Cladwell considers them as immigrants from the northern coast of Ceylon.¹ They seem to have migrated into the southern taluks of Travancore either from or through the Tirunelvelly District.² The fact of their having been an important community in the past is borne out not only by such expressions as Nadar and Nadalvar which are found in some old stone inscriptions in Travancore; but also by numerous customs which are peculiar to them, and they were good fighters, hardly and brave. The Shanars are known as Valankai - Uyarvu - Kondar or Valankariuya - Kondar. These terms are found in ancient and modern title deeds. The names used for the headmen of the caste called as Periya Nadan, Turattu Nadan, Mutal Pattu Nadan, Karakara Nadan, and etc. The head man of the working men is called Mukkandan.

This race has at present three distinct and separate divisions viz., the Shanars proper, the Nattattishanars, and the Virali Shanars.

2. Ibid.
The members of these divisions cannot intermarry. The origin of the name *Nattatti* is not definitely known, and some think that the proper form of this ruling race at one time is borne out not only by such expressions as Nadar and Nadalvar, but also by numerous customs which are peculiar to them and by other circumstances. Their rule was subsequently overthrown by later circumstances.

There are eight families to this day known as the *Ettuveetu – Nadakkal* in all the *taluks* in Travancore, and Eraniel has the largest number of Shanars. Out of a total of 1,55,894 Shanars in Travancore, 43044 are found in the Eraniel *taluks*, the earliest seat of the Travancore sovereigns, while the *taluks* of Agateeswaram and Thovalai, which lie nearer to Tirunelveli than Eraniel have only 23,718 and 3,236 respectively. The bulk of the Shanars of Travancore are found in Eraniel, Vilavankode, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Neyyattinkara.

3. *The expression Nadalvar occurs in some ancient stone inscriptions of Travancore.*

The people of this caste are ordinarily called Shanars by the people of other castes; but they themselves use the term Nadar. The word Nadar is also used as a title. The titles Tiruppapur Nadar, Udayamartanda Nadar, Nayamanimartanda Nadar etc., were granted to some families of Shanars by the ancient kings. The names are Nattattar i.e., the natives of the regions of the central river. The Virali Shanars are the offspring’s of the people who had been put out of the caste proper for moral, and social delinquencies within the caste. The term Karukumatta is probably a corruption of Karukuppattayam, meaning Shanars who had served as soldiers. The Travancore annual report for 1901 gives various names for the Shanars that is “Itanad, Illan, Kara, Karukamatta, Kavara, Kiriya, Mutt Nadan and Tiruppapur”.

In this period of their existence there emerged a determination among the Nadars to resist the social tyranny. To begin with their struggle for emancipations was directed against forced labour and restrictions in dress and subsequently it turned into Temple Entry Agitation, and ultimately as the Self Respect and Tamil Integration Movements. In fact this struggle which lasted for one and a half centuries, heralded the movements, which aimed, at social liberation in other parts of India, and different factors contributed to these movements. The Nairs attacked the Nadars for violating the rigid caste customs and stripped the Nadar women the upper cloths of their dress in the market places, assaulted the men for refusing to do work (Oozhiyam) for them, burnt down the Chapels and schools and raided their houses. In 1828
rioting broke out at many places particularly in Neyattinkara, Eraniel and its suburbs and continued till 1859. In Padmanabhapuram several people were killed. Among the Nadars who lost their lives was Vedamanikkam, a much respected leader of Attur armed with deadly weapons and supported by the administrators, the Nairs roamed around and committed outrages and instituted reign of terror.

The social organizations carried a message of equality and progress, and in 1802 the Protestants founded a Church at Mylady in South Travancore, and many of the Tamils embraced Christianity and many churches, and schools were established. To the Christian Missionaries the oppressive system that was enforced upon their people appeared to be cruel, and they upheld the cause of the converts. In the mean-time Muthukutty Swamigal (1809 – 1851) founded the Society for the Establishment of equality. Claiming himself as the incarnation of Vishnu, he carried on a crusade against the distinctions imposed upon the society by the caste Hindus. In response to his call several

5. C.M. Agur, *Church History of Travancore*, Delhi, 1903, pp.832 – 33.

6. According to some other records (*Dinamalar* – 6.6.1999) the year of birth of Muthukkuty – Swamigal is 1809.
Nadars began to wear turbans as mark of royalty, and a ‘Sacred thread’ and tuft as the caste Hindus did. However, his mission was cut short after his time, the mission he started had grown thousand fold. Added to these, the wealth and education gained by the Nadars imparted to them a growing sense of self confidence, and they launched their struggle for social equality with a decision of defy the established traditions and restrictions imposed on them. By 1820 they refused to render any free labour to the rulers and the Nairs, while the women decided to wear the upper clothes which was once the sole monopoly of the higher castes.

In those days the socially backward classes had to look to the European missionaries for redemption of their lost rights as human beings and citizens. The abolition of numerous social evils like forced labour, and slavery had been effected throughout India through the official intercession of the British authorities. We have noted else where how tardy the Travancore administration was in abolishing the institution of slavery. Again it was due

to the British intervention that the Shanar Women of South Travancore and Ezhava women got the right to wear Jacket but the obscurantist officialdom denied them the right to wear the upper cloth which was then the prerogative of upper castes. Naturally the people who got social rights and respectability at the instance of the white man's sense of justice tended to learn more on their caste superior and his promises of social amelioration and political progress sounded hollow to them.

The Nadars constituted one of the numerous and popular communities of South India who were known as Shantrar, Shantore, Nadazhavar and Shanar. They were mainly a peasant community but also with learned men, warriors, merchants and toddy tappers in their fold, and it is widely believed they were Rajakshatriyas. Two inscriptions at Kalladaikurichi suggest that in medieval times the Nadars served as administrators and accountants in the Pandya kingdom. If the references found in the Mahavamsa and the name of the persons who served in the principalities of Kerala are an indication that

the Nadar warriors fought under the command of Kulasekhara Pandya against the powers of Lanka and under Martanda Varma against Quilon. In later periods the Nadars cherished the memory of their glory and the ruins found in their early settlement prove their tradition.\textsuperscript{10}

The Muslim and Telugu conquests dealt a serious blow to the glory of the Nadars, and as a dominant community and Tamil power, they had to bear the burnt of foreign aggression. As the resistance to the Muslims appeared futile, they evacuated Madurai and moved to places like Kamudi, Chinnamanur, Manad, Vannikulam Palayamcottai and Tenkasi. One of the later chieftains Hari Kesari Parakrama pandyan, went on a pilgrimage to Kasi and on his return installed a Sivalinga at a village, which subsequently developed into a flourishing Nadar settlement, which in the present Sivakasi.\textsuperscript{11}

Before we take up the depressed castes movements in Kerala, it is appropriate to speak about the social awareness created by the Christian

\textsuperscript{10} R.L. Hardgrave in his "The Nadars of TamilNad" pp (97-104) asserts that the Nadars settled in Sivabari and other towns in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. But local traditions in Trivandram and palm leaf records in Nellikkakuzhi established that several Nadar families emigrated from sivakasi and settled in the coastal areas of Travancore in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century.

missionaries among the depressed castes of Kerala such as the Nadars, Pulayas and Ezhavas. Christian Missionaries belonging to the London Missionary Society and the Church Missionary society came increasingly into contact with the lower castes. The systematic Christian teachings, and the inculcation of liberal and human values drew converts from the depressed castes. There was wide spread social awareness and demand for liberty among the converts as well as their Hindu counterparts. During the second half of the 19th century this awareness manifested in various ways and led to various movements, like the Upper Cloth Movement Izhava Movement, the Pulaya Movement and Srivaikundaswamikal deserve special mention. There is no denying the fact that the Christian Missionaries in South India gave full support to the lower castes in their struggle for civil disabilities. In this respect the famous Upper Cloth Movement and the involvement of Rev. Charles Mead of the L.M.S is great indeed.

Long before Ayyan Kali and Sri Narayana Guru, there appeared, on


the seen a depressed caste reformer and a Hindu revivalist by name Sri Vaikunda Swamikal, a Saint and reformer from the Nadar community. Born in 1803 at Sasthankoilvilai, a village eight miles South-east of Nagercoil. Sri Vaikunda Swamikal was named as Muthukutti by his parents. As a young boy, Muthukutti was given some instruction in the didactic Tamil literature such as Naḻvazhi Mudurai, Thirukkural and Bhakti literature like Tiruvasagam and the Holy Bible and he was exposed to Christian teachings of the LMS Missionaries. At this time he made a pilgrimage to the famous Murugan temple of Thiruchandur, an event which proved to be a turning point in his life. He felt that he had the spiritual power of the Gods and began to play the role of a spiritual leader and a Saintly reformer. He assumed the title of Sri Vaikundaswamikal and started preaching the message of love, equality, oneness with of God and Universal brotherhood. Through mass prayers and inter-communal feast, he rallied the people cutting across caste barriers. The response to his message was quite encouraging and a large number of people mainly from the Nadar community accepted him as their Guru. Several religious centres called Nizhalthankals were built in different parts of South Travancore in honour of the Swamikal which became centres for the propagation of his teachings.

Sri Vaikunda Swamikal was very critical of the oppressive and exploitative tax system of the Travancore Government for which he suffered rigorous imprisonment. He was against the economic exploitation of the
upper caste Hindus and sternly warned them of its evil consequences, and condemned in unequivocal terms untouchability, and the caste distinctions based on birth. He was opposed to Brahmanism and Brahmanical forms of Hinduism which he considered to be the prime cause for the overall decadence of the Hindu society and the depressed castes.

Being a firm believer in self-respect, he exhorted his people to fight against the restrictions even on dress, and advised his people to wear turban, which was denied to the lower castes in Travancore. Through constant tours Sri Vaikundaswamikal made them conscious by his message of love, equality and social justice. By remaining with in the Hindufold, Swamikal wanted to reform it and purge its evils. It can be said that in a way Sri Vaikundaswamikal was a forerunner to Sri Narayana Guru and Ayyankali, and in a way they were influenced by him. In any case the life and mission of Sri Vaikunda Swamikal constitute an important land mark in the history of the depressed caste movements.14

The administrative report for M.E. 1040 gives a surprising list of over 110 direct taxes. There were various taxes on houses, oil mills, bows, iron forges, exehangers, palanquins, boats and nets and festivals like Onam and

14. Ibid.
Deepavali. Oppressive taxes were levied on the depressed classes by the Government, the most obnoxious was the capitation tax. In 1754, a head tax was imposed on the Nadars. The heaviest tax was one Kuppakale (house tax) of one Panan for each hut. There was another important tax called purusantaram, a tax if 25 Percent. The authorities collected the tax in an oppressive manner and created fear in the minds of the poor people.¹⁵

He condemned those who divided the society into many groups and wanted to unite them.¹⁶ Vaikunda Swamigal made an appeal to the lower caste to lead an independent life without any fear of the dominant castes.¹⁷ In those days, the lower caste people were prohibited to wear cloth below the knee and above the waist.¹⁸ In this miserable condition Swamigal ordered his followers to wear turban on their heads.¹⁹

The depressed class females were denied the right to cover their breast, which was the exclusive social and civil rights of the upper castes. It marked 'the coming of the making civilization of the west civilization of the

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19. It was traditional custom among the Nadars that when a boy attained the sixteenth year, he showed wear a head cloth called Urumalkattu and to camp a knife as a weapon of defence, T.K. Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual Vol. I, Trivandrum, 1940, p.856.
west with that of the east" otherwise these orders of the Hindu society will for ever remain unraised.\textsuperscript{20} It paved a big way for the exploiting the opportunities in various fields such as education, social work, industry etc.\textsuperscript{21} Also they engaged Zenna workers and Bible women for the distribution of tracts and for the regular visiting of the house of caste Hindus.\textsuperscript{22} On the whole, the Cultural life, outward appearance and habits of the outcastes of Nanchilnad attained tremendous progress. The low caste people began to think in terms of justice, equality and civil liberties. Conversion gave a promise for emancipation from slavery, forced labour, free service, high handedness, injustice and many other feudal restrictions. The coming of the L.M.S to South Travancore brought great benefits to the Nadars through educations, medicine dress, accommodation, civil rights etc. The upper cloth agitation, which was a historic struggles for the right to wear the dress of their choice of the people, was started by a Nadars of South Travancore wider the support of the missionaries.

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textbf{20.} English Records, Trivandrum, \textit{Cover File No.3639, Petition from South Travancore Christans}, Nagercoil, p.9.
\item \textbf{21.} English Records, Trivandrum, \textit{Cover File No.3239, The Ezhava Memorial, 1895}.
\item \textbf{22.} English Records, Trivandrum, \textit{Cover File No.2115 of 1859, Rev. Lewis, letter to the Resident, Santhapuram, 21 Jan 1859}.
\end{enumerate}
Encouraged by the orders of Col. Munro in Many 1814 which permit all the female converts of lower classes to cover their breasts with a jacket as worn by the Christian ladies. The Nadar women began to wear the upper cloth along with the jackets. To the annoyance of the Nairs, they soon appeared in multicolored upper clothes and moved about bravely. In July 1855 the Missionaries of Travancore presented a joint petition to the Madars Government which gave the facts of oppression and cruelty by the government to the converted.

A crowd under the command of a superindent of the salt depot at puvar near Neyyatinkara tore the jacket of a Nadar women in the public market. The Nadar women wore different kinds of cloths like the Nairs and other high caste women and frequented the public roads, which made it impossible to distinguish between the Nairs and Nadars.

On the 21st November 1812 Veeraputra Pillay, the Turrakar (tax peon) of Kotaram in the district of Agasteeswaram went to Tamarakulam and called

23. Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras, Political Department, No.7 of 1859, to the Secretary of State of India, 26 March 1859.

24. Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras, Fort St. George Political Consultation, First February 1859, No.4,

on the Kareikar GuruSwamy (the same unfortunate Christian whom Dr. Proven cured of ulcerated cheek) for all the taxes of his sub division in anticipation of the coming year. The demand was 112 ½ fanams on 18 houses for Taleivari, Veleipadivu, and Kareilickanam. Mukilan the Mughal Sardar, when he invaded South Travancore introduced several reform for the good of the women, who lived between Varkala and Vilavancode, which tract was under his sway. He was the first man who introduced reform from the field of dress and broke the established customs before the introduction of the liberal reforms under the leadership of the Missionaries of L.M.S. He ordered that the woman should cover the upper part of their bodies with a cloth like men and should not remain naked like their sisters of the north. The women need not wear the lower cloth after the fashion of the women of North Trivandrum. After the death of Mukilan the reforms introduced by him were buried underground and the people returned to the old barbarous days.

After the establishment of the L.M.S and the spread of Protestant Christianity in South Travancore Col. Munro, the Resident of Travancore in

27. English Records, Trivandrum, Cover File No.3719, John Cox to the Resident.
1812 issued an order permitting "the commons converted to Christianity to cover their bosoms as obtains among Christians in other countries." The Government of Travancore issued a circular order in May 1814 permitting the women of the inferior classes of the population who are converted to Christianity to cover their bodies with a short bodice or jacket as was worn by the women of Syrian Christians Mappilas and such other. They had been permitted to wear the upper cloth in the manner of the caste Hindus. Now men of Paravars, Shanars and others of that description were to be allowed to wear clothes on their bosoms as the Nairwomen. Mrs. Mault the founder of the lace making industry in Travancore and other Missionary ladies who did not like the Christian women to move about with their bosoms exposed like their Hindu neighbours had devised a loose jacket for the Christians female converts, which perhaps satisfied the modesty of the European ladies but did not meet the social aspirations of the Nadar women. The same community in Tirunelveli wore the breast clothes freely and the women of Travancore would have nothingless for they considered the

29. C.M. Agur, *Church History of Travancore*, Appendix I.
wearing of upper cloth as a symbol of their enhanced position. Thus in addition to the prescribed jacket or often in lieu of it the Nadar women took the liberty of appearing in public with an additional Cloth or scarf over the shoulders as worn by the men of caste Hindus. The Christian women who appeared in decent dress were mocked, abused and ill treated in various ways in markets and way sides by the Upper Castes. The stripped the upper clothes and jackets worn by the Nadar women, and Rev. Mead in whose districts these disturbances took place, complained these outrages to the Padmanabhapuram court. When decent dress was withheld, he appealed to the Resident describing the illegal proceedings of the irritated upper castes at the innovation in the dress of the Christian women.

With a view to restricting these practices and their freedom the Government of Travancore issued a Royal Proclamation on 3rd February 1829 (23rd Makaram 1004). The important sections of it are whereas some disturbances have taken place in the kalkulam, Eraniel and Vilavancode districts between the Shanars and Nairs.

The government officials played a despicable role in attacking the Nadar women. An official came to the Kaliyakkavilai market near Parasala, now in the Trivandrum district and declared that he was empowered with the authority to insult and to strip the breast clothes and jackets of the Nadar women and acted accordingly. His example was followed by other caste Hindus, and in the struggle that followed between the Nadars and the caste
Hindus in the Parasala Mission district, three small places of worship were set on fire and destroyed. The struggle in Parasala lasted for twenty days and spread to other places.\textsuperscript{32} A man named Sebastiyan was assaulted and his clothes and hand kerchief were snatched from him, and torn and hung up on a tree by the roadside.\textsuperscript{33}

On 19\textsuperscript{th} February 1855 Visvasam Vedanayakam Catechist and others of Agasteeswaram village complained to the Resident about the ill treatment of the Christians by the tahasildar and Parvattikar of Agasteeswaram. These officers acted with great injustice and cruelty, and the poor people who refused to carry salt and deliver writing cadjans without gratis were kept in prison and starved.

The outbreak at Kottar\textsuperscript{34} was very severe after the issue of proclamation of December 27, 1858 and a large party of Nadars under the leadership of Cinna Nadar marched to Kottar and forcibly took away tobacco and money from Manikkavasagom, Subramonya and other merchants. In his letter to the

\textsuperscript{32} Samuel Matter, \textit{The Land of Charity}, p.299. When the peoples Revolt of 1858 – 59 broke out there were five Mission district in South Travancore. They were Neyyoor, Nagercoil, Parasala, Trivandram and Quilon Each Mission District was under the control of one or two of the missionaries of the L.M.S.

\textsuperscript{33} The Humble petition of Visvasam Vedanayagam to the Resident, dated February 19, 1888

\textsuperscript{34} Robert L. Hardgrave, \textit{The Nadars of Tamil Nadu}, Bombay, 1969, p.63.
Dewan dated January 4th 1859, the Deputy Peishkar in charge of southern districts stated that “Shina Nadan and other Shanars of Puthukudiyirupoo assembled as a large Party, repaired to the petty shops on the western side of the Tobacco Bank shall at Kottar an about 10 O’clock P.M. forcibly took away tobacco and money from the shops of Manikavasakam, Subramanyam and others and attempted to pull down the shops by seizing and shaking the lower parts of the roof and the Shanars consisting of 350 armed men are moving about with the evident object of resorting to violence and that the merchants of Kottar have a panic need and shut up their shops and stopped pad the trade in the bazaar.³⁵

When Shungoonny Menon reported the Kottar riot to the Dewan and asked for a detachment of Sepoys to assist him, orders were forth with given, and a detachment of the Nair Brigade consisting of hundred men and commissioned officers were sent atonce to Nanchinad,³⁶ and they moved to the places of unrest. Police force was strengthened in the places in disturbances started.

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Auxiliary police officers were appointed to keep peace and order.\textsuperscript{37} The presence of the Military and Police officials in Nanchinad created anger in the minds of the Nadars, who with renewed energy began to attack and resist the outrages of the caste Hindus. On 7\textsuperscript{th} January 1859 above 500 Upper castes armed with clubs, swords etc. and under the leadership of Government officials came to kumarapuram, a place near Nagercoil, in search of the Christians there. They forcibly entered the houses of the Christians, and pillaged the furniture dragged the women and children almost naked tearing their cloth and jackets and committed the most obscene deeds which cannot be described.\textsuperscript{38}

In Neyyur district the revolt started with the inhuman behaviour of the police sergeant of Eraniel. He with his caste Hindu followers beat men and women, plundered their goods money and jewels and then bound up a number of Nadars and took them to prison. It started with the appearance in markets and streets of Nadar women with jackets and upper clothes. Acts of violence in Neyyur continued for many days. Three churches and one school were burnt down, but the miscreants were not punished.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid, Letter from Rev. James Russel to the Resident of Travancore, 1859.}
The revolt spread to almost all parts of South Travancore by January 10
1859 and there was severe persecution of the lower castes. A number of caste
Hindus joined together and with the assistance of the Police tied up a number
of Nadars including Christians, who were pursuing their ordinary vocation in
the Monday Market neat Neyyur. They were presented before the Eraniel
Thasildar has a nick and false charges were made against them.\textsuperscript{39} The caste
Hindus stripped the jackets of women and abused them.\textsuperscript{40} After this, they
marched to a near by village Vadakkankara, and damaged the houses of
Christian people and beat some of them and same night the Chapel (Vadakkan
Kara) was burnt down.\textsuperscript{41}

About 50 caste Hindus of Arumnallur under Ananda Pillai,
Sivaramakrishna Pillai and Nagerpilai proceeded to Kollenturutty and asked
the Catechist of the Church to stop preaching the gospel. Another party, of
about 30 caste Hindus from Ceremadam in Kulithurai a palace about 34 miles
south of Trivandrum

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, Letter from Rev. Fredrick Baylis to the Resident, dated Neyyur
January 1859.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, Letter from Rev. Baylis to the Resident of Travancore, dated
Neyyur January 11, 1859.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, Letter from Rev. James to the Resident February 1859.
ordered the Christians of Palliyadi and Kalluvantidil to close the churches. The caste Hindus also forced the school girls at Kalluvantidil, to remove their jackets, and tore their books\textsuperscript{42} while they were at the school. The privileged classes of Mylaudy headed by Sivasubramanya Pillai, Muttapillai and Bhutalinga Asari, drove away the catechist and his wife of the Mylady Church, and insulted the women, who were on their way to bring water from the river.\textsuperscript{43}

The reaction of the Nadars to these atrocities started with the Kottar procession popularly known as "Kottar riot" in the first week of January 1859. The Travancore administration appointed a special commission to complete the trails of individuals connected with the late disturbances in Nanchilnad.\textsuperscript{44} In July 1865 another Royal Proclamation was issued by the Maharaja who allowed the women of Ezhava and other low caste Hindu communities to wear upper clothes like the Nadars.\textsuperscript{45} Following that in 1865 the Travancore Government granted the right to all classes to use wheeled

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43.  \textit{Ibid}.

44.  English records, Trivandrum, \textit{Cover File NO.2115, Letter of the Resident of Dewan of Trivandrum, 2\textsuperscript{nd} April 1859}.

45.  English Records, Trivandrum, \textit{Cover File No.15901 of 1865, p.27}.

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vehicles and *Uliyam* services were no longer demanded.\(^{46}\) It marked the beginning of the fulfillment of the promises of the missionaries to the converts which won for them the affection and loyalty of the Nadars. It was not the usual practice till the early years of the 19\(^{th}\) century, for women of the lower castes to wear any upper cloth. When the Nadar women of South Travancore were converted to Christianity they wished to do so as a matter of decency. By an order passed at the time of Col. Munro (1829) they were permitted to wear the *Kuppayam* or the jacket as worn by the Syrian Christian women of North Travancore.\(^{47}\) The Nadar women were not content with this, and they appeared in public wearing an upper cloth over the *Kuppayam*, as was worn by the higher caste Hindus. This aroused the opposition of the higher castes and led to serious breaches of the peace in South Travancore while ended in open fight.

In July 1855 the missionaries presented a joint petition to the Government of Madras detailing the acts of oppression and cruelty to Christians which proved that the political atmosphere of Travancore to be deplorably bad,\(^{48}\) and the police became a force of oppression. People

\begin{itemize}
  \item \(^{46}\) *Ibid*, Cover File No.286, p.11.
  \item \(^{47}\) *English Records*, *Trivandum*, Cover File No.15901 of 1895, p.27.
\end{itemize}
were seized and imprisoned for indefinite periods without trial, and the most cruel treatment and torture prevailed, in police stations and prisons. The high officials were bad characters. Criminals and inefficient men were appointed to high offices. The Courts were also corrupt. A system of forced labour for Government supplies existed, which opened a wide door for oppression. The innumerable evils that arose from the pepper, salt, and cardamom monopoly prevented the development of free trade and the material resources of the country. All the evils were fully exposed in the petition. The missionaries concluded the petition with the following request. We pray for the appointment of a Commission of well qualified Europeans with full powers first to secure the records in the courts and public offices and then to enquire into the whole affairs of the Government.

The Maharaja also acknowledged that there was some ground for complaint and stated that he was endeavoring to improve matters. The petitions sent by missionaries to the Government of Madras were forwarded to General Cullen with instructions to institute immediate enquiries, and

50. R.N. Yesudas, A people's Revolt in Travancore, Trivandrum, 1975, p.54.
to investigate and report upon the allegations contained in them. A cold war between the missionaries and General Cullen followed, and the missionary John Cox tried his best to prove the charges brought against the Travancore Government. Seeing that the alleged charges were of a very grave nature and they were corroborated in some measure by the constant petitions received from the natives of Travancore, the Madras Government decided that investigations of some sort was imperative.

The Resident of Travancore, General Cullen, at this time began to receive a number of petition from Hindu Nadars of South Travancore who were very anxious to wear upper clothes following their Christian brethren. The British Government declined to intervene as the matter was a local caste system. But the missionaries were in favour of British interference in the affairs of Travancore. Rev. Baylis wrote:

I confess, I see little hope of the Srikar

Being willing to allow the women of the

51. Ibid.

Shanar, and such castes, the privilege of
Dressing decently by covering their
Breasts, unless constrained by the
Interference of the British Government;
And I confess too that I long to see that
Government to interfere.\textsuperscript{53}

General Cullen was against innovations in the existing system and suspected the missionaries of attempting to unsettle the existing political arrangements in the native State of Travancore. On the contrary, the missionaries believed that General Cullen was the enemy of the Church in Travancore and the opponent of Christians aspirations to higher status. General Cullen firmly believed that the Christians Missionaries were responsible for the adoption of upper cloths by Hindu Nadars. The missionaries denied this allegation on the ground that the same class of people in Tirunelveli used the upper clothes freely, and no restrictions existed there with regard to dress. The

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adoption of upper clothes by the Nadars of Travancore was the consequence
of their seasonal migration to Tirunelveli in search of employment, where all
women freely used the upper clothes on the Tirunelveli borders of
Travancore the wearing of the upper cloth had become the rule.

The strained feelings between the Christian Missionaries and the
Government, the grudge of the socially backward classes against the caste
Hindus, and the prejudices of the privileged classes against the caste Hindus,
rapidly grew worse. The social, economic, cultural and political frustrations
of the caste Hindu land owners were directed against the Nadars and the
wearing of upper clothes by their women. ‘The agitation has been recently
revived’ General Cullen wrote to the chief secretary to the Government of
Madras, ‘the upper castes asserting that the Shanar women are constantly
assuming the privilege of covering the upper part of the person, and thereby
preventing the identity of the caste.”

When the British Government came to know about this people’s revolt
for the right of women to cover their bosoms with jackets and upper clothes,

54. English Records, Petition of the L.M.S. Missionaries of His Highness
the Rajah of Travancore, dated February 7, 1859.

55. Copies Official Papers… Letter from General Cullen to the Chief
Secretary to the government of Madras, dated January 13, 1859.
an order was issued by T. Pycroft, Chief Secretary dated January 27, 1859 instructing General Cullen to be ‘careful to give no countenance to the idea that the British Government of which he is the representative, recognizes any exclusive distinctions, or the right of any set of men to prevent others from following in all matters of social or domestic life, such course as they may see fit, provided it be not repugnant to public decency and morals’. The Resident was also reminded of his duty ‘to impress these views on His Highness the Raja and to point out to him such prohibitions and those contained in the circular order of May 1814, or in the Proclamation of February 3, 1829 are unsuited to the present age, and unworthy of an enlightened price.

The Resident, when the revolt became widespread, suspected the proceedings of the Government of Travancore. He wrote to the Dewan when he received several letters from the missionaries relating to the outrages committed by caste Hindus; ‘I do not see a single case of assault by either Shanars, Sudras, or Christians nor of the Chapel burning – not withstanding

56. Copies of Official Papers... Orders of T. Pycroft, Chief Secretary, dated January 27, 1859.

57. Ibid.
the numerous cases that have occurred.\textsuperscript{58} The Resident feared; There must be something very defective, in the Police management; He hoped 'The\textit{Dewan} be able to afford explanation upon the various specific charges of outrage made by the different missionaries'.\textsuperscript{59}

The report of the\textit{Dewan} dated February 12, 1859 regarding the origin, development and suppression of the revolt, which was forwarded to the Madras Government was 'a temperate and fair statement'.\textsuperscript{60} The Madras Government requested General Cullen to inform it of the steps he had taken in furtherance of the instructions conveyed to him on the 27\textsuperscript{th} January 1859—'your will without further delay yield obedience to be repeated order which have been conveyed to you, and report in detail what you have done in consequence of the resolutions of this Government communicated to you on the 27\textsuperscript{th} January and on the 14\textsuperscript{th} March last, and what the\textit{Maharaja} has done in consequence'.\textsuperscript{61} The Resident was also informed, 'The degree of interference which for many years of past has been exercised by the representative of the British Government in the affairs of Travancore is so

\textsuperscript{58} English Records, \textit{Letter from the Reident to the Dewan of Travancore}, dated February 10, 1859.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{60} Copies of Official Paper... \textit{Minute by walter Olliot dated March 3, 1859.}

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Minute by the President dated May 7, 1859.}
large, and his intervention so general that the credit or discredit of the administration greatly rests with the British Government and it has thereby become their duty to insist upon the observance of a system of toleration in a more decided manner than they would be at liberty to adopt if they had merely to being their influence to bear on an independent state.  

The missionaries of the L.M.S. of South Travancore having received no response from the Government to their petition dated May 7, 1859, referred the matter to the investigation and decision of the Madras Government. On 28th March 1859 the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras Mr. Pycroft, called for a reply from the Resident of Travancore. The reply being not satisfactory, the whole matter was communicated to Lord Stanley of State for India and to the Supreme Government. Sir, Charles Trevelyan, the Governor of Madras, was ordered by Lord Stanley to institute a prompt inquiry. He studied the whole matter which was a complicated one because, the differences on religious principles and caste habits are mixed up

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.
with social and pecuniary interests. The Nadars on becoming Christians claim privileges, which partly, if not entirely, free them from many of the duties, which their state of serfdom, if not slavery, previously entailed upon them; and on these advantages accruing to the Christian converts, the Shanars evidently aspire to the enjoyment of the same changes, though without conventions.

'The upper castes, on the other hand, look with great jealousy on these changes, not only on account of their placing those whom they consider a degraded race, in a better social position, but also because they themselves became losers by the emancipation, to some extent, of their serfs or slaves from some of their duties. The Governor Charles Trevelyan and his Council members after inquiring into the matter found just cause to interfere on behalf of the defense less and suffering women of South Travancore on 6th may 1859 'There is no objection to Shanar women either putting on a jacket like the Christian Shanar women, or to Shanar women of all creeds dressing in Coarse cloth (kattissila) and tying round with it as the Mukkuvattikal (Low caste fisherwomen) do, or to their covering their bosoms in any manner whatever, but not like women of high castes.'

64. Minute of the Governor dated February 28, 1859.

65. Directorate of State Archives, Proclamations.
The Proclamation failed to satisfy the aspirations and desires of the people in general, since they wanted full liberty to follow their own liking and tastes in matters of dress and personal adornment and comfort, as in Tirunelveli and other parts of British India. The situation changed even after the proclamation. The dissatisfied missionaries of the L.M.S. of Travancore submitted a petition in July 1859 to the Governor of Madras, denouncing the reservations of the proclamation and requested the intervention of the Governor in the affairs of Travancore to secure the position of the missionaries and their Christian converts. The petition further protested against the presence of General Cullen as Resident in Travancore, who was in their eyes a Hindus, Christian, supporting the Raja and the Dewan in their opposition to the missionaries’ endeavors.66

Charles Trevelyan, the Governor of Madras wrote to the Resident in these terms:

I have seldom met with a case, in which not only truth and justice, but every feeling of our common humanity are so entirely on one side. The whole

66. Ibid.
civilized world would cry shame upon us, if we did not make a firm stand on such an occasion. If anything could make this line of conduct more incumbent on us it would be the extraordinary fact that persecution of a singularly personal and delicate kind is attempted to be justified by a Royal Proclamation, the special object of which was to assure to Her Majesty’s Indian subjects, liberty of thought and action, so long as they did not interfere with the just rights of others. I should fail in respect of Her Majesty if I attempted to describe the feelings with which she must regard the use made against her own sex, of the promises of protection so graciously accorded by her. It will be your duty to impress these views on His Highness the Raja, and to point out to him that such prohibitions as those conveyed in the circular order of May 1814 or in the proclamation of the 3rd February are unsuited to the present age and unworthy an enlightened prince.\(^{67}\)

The minute was evidently written under the impression that the privilege of covering the bosom had been entirely denied to the Nadar women. Such however, was not the case. The demands of decency had already been met but the disturbance arose from the attempt of Shanar

women, Hindus well as convert to imitate the costumes of the women of the higher sections. This became as inflammable material connected with religion and caste and nearly caused a general conflagration in Travancore. The mischief was however, arrested by the thoughtful action taken promptly by Madhava Rao, the correctness of which was upheld by the Madras Government and later by the Secretary of State. The Dewan sent a report on the 12th February 1859, in which he gave a clear and concise account of the origin, development and suppression of the disturbances. He stated the case between the rival factions in the fairest and most dispassionate terms. The letter concluded thus:

Though matters has assumed a very serious aspect, I am glad to be able to state that the mischief already done is far being very considerable... No loss of life or limb has occurred anywhere. The authority of the Sirkar having been vindicated, it may perhaps be desirable to take an early opportunity to consider what modifications should be made in the Proclamation of, M.E.1004, so as to suit the requirements of altered times and circumstances and satisfy and parties as far as it may by possible to do so.  

68. Ibid.
The Madras Government observed in their Minutes of Consultation, the Dewan's Report appears to Government to be a temperate and a fair statement, and they hope that no further disturbances or breached of the peace need now be apprehended. They added:

The Government will hope to learn, at an early date, what arrangement has been made by the Dewan. The principle on which it should proceed has already been laid down by Government in the last para of Extract Minutes of Consultation, 27th January 1859. General Cullen inform the Government what communication he has held with His Highness the Raja in furtherance of the instructions then conveyed to him. The degree of interference which for many years past had been exercised by the representative of the British Government and it has thereby become their duty to insist upon the observance of a system of toleration, in a more decided manner than they would be at liberty to adopt, if they had merely to bring their influence to bear on an independent State.69

The whole correspondence have been laid before the Maharaja, the Dewan again wrote to the Resident:

69. Ibid.
The whole subject has had careful consideration. His Highness certainly feels that the provisions of the Proclamation of 1004 M.E. on the subject of the dress of the inferior castes require to be greatly modified. His Highness now proposes to abolish all rules prohibiting the covering of the upper parts of the persons of Shanar women and to grant them perfect liberty to meet the requirements of decency any way they may deem proper, with the simple restriction that they do not imitate the same mode of dress that appertains to the higher castes.  

His Highness desire to observe that anxious as he is to meet the wishes of the Government to the utmost of his power, and to give free scope for the improvement of the moral and social condition of his subjects of all classes, His Highness would not have made even this small reservation, were it not for the fact, that the sudden and total abolition of all distinctions of dress which have from time immemorial distinguished one caste from another, may produce most undesirable impressions on the minds of the larger portion of his subjects and cause their serious discontent. Still I am observe that by the present concession, the demands of decency have been fully answered, without needlessly offending the feelings peculiar to the other castes.

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70.  *Letter from the Dewan to the Resident, 17th May 1859.*

It is of course needless to remind you of those many circumstances, which would make the introduction of decisive reforms, especially in matters of caste and religion, much more difficult in Travancore than in Her Majesty's territories. While therefore the progress of education among the people in general may be expected to pave the way for much greater changes. His Highness hopes that the arrangement now proposed, the only one which seems to be calculated to answer the object in view without the probability of disturbing the peace of the country would meet with your approval and that of the Madras government.72.

A royal proclamation was issued later on 26th July 1859 'abolishing all restrictions in the matter of covering the upper parts of the persons of Shanar women and granting them perfect liberty to meet the requirements of decency in any way they might deem proper with the simple reservation, however, that they should not imitate the dress of the women of higher sections.73 The Secretary of State for India approved of this action of the Travancore Sircar.74

72.Ibid.
73.English Records, Proclamation dated, 26, July 1859.
74.English Records, Letter from the Secretary of State of India to the Madras Government, 19 August 1859.