

Chapter - VII

FIGHT FOR SOCIAL IDENTITY

The educational programmes that were started by the Protestant missionaries to create social and political awakening in Travancore began to bear fruit. The people realized the social degradation under which they were groaning for centuries together. The English education, that they received opened their eyes to the civilized world and learnt the free life of the people of the western world. When they compared their life style, they could understand the abhorable ways in which they were treated under the feudal set up and the obnoxious taxes under which they were groaning for a long time. The women could understand the shameful and abhorable ways of their dressing and the ill-treatment of the high caste people. Now they could understand that their social identity was a question. They decided to fight for social identity for which they looked up to the missionaries to take the lead. The Protestant missionaries like Rev. Mead took the lead and the fight for social identity started.

7.1 Fight Against Feudal Exaction

The vexatious exactions and various kinds of free services to the temple festivals, to the Brahmins and the feudal lords drove the peasants to the verge of poverty. The oppressive taxes that the feudal lords exacted

made the Virutikars extremely poor. The oppression and the interference of the feudal lords in the freedom of the work of the peasants forced them to think of the sufferings and compared their position with the tenants of other areas of South India. The enlightenment and the social awakening that the Protestant missionaries created through education forced them to long for freedom¹.

Severe punishments were inflicted on those who refused to perform Oozhiam services. Torture was a common feature. Those who refused to supply materials for public work were put in cages. Ramayyengar, the Dewan who was the Settlement Peishkar says in his memorandum about the hardship, "these peasants endure that they had been reduced to destitution, at present a class of miserable semi serfs struggling to draw a bare subsistence from their hated Virutti lands for which and their own wretchedness there is no escape. It is impossible to overate the evils of this state of affairs in its bearing on the trade and industry of the country".²

Another painful incident occurred at Kothanavilai, when the headman and others villagers of Kulattuvilai Pakuthi ordered the Christians of Kothanavilai near Colachel to contribute money for the purpose of celebrating a festival in their village temple.³ The Christians refused to pay the customary offerings to the temple. Thereupon the headman and his

¹ Rev. Samuel Mateer, *op.cit.*, p. 359.

² Dewan V.P., *Madhava Rao's Note on "Vilayartham on Viruti"*, Vol.I, P.164.

³ Augur, C.M., *op.cit.*, p. 776-778.

followers demanded them to pay some money to the newly appointed Kalavisarippukaran who was managing the above festival. They further urged that such a present to the Visarippukaran would secure them special favour by exempting them from their usual services to the idols. The Christians however did not yield to this demand and the headman took them to the Kalavisarippukaran. He tied a Christian by name Yovan on a tree and inflicted on him severe blows. He also forced him to write a Kaicittu or receipt to pay tax for toddy or Padani or sweet toddy. Yovan could not bear the torture of the Visarippukaran, paid him the tax and the bribe just to be free from of the torments. Though he was released, the other Christians by name Narayana and Maraperumal had "the fire- locks hanging on their ears for two days"⁴. Thus the merciless treatment of the feudal officers forced the peasants to rise in revolt.

7.1.1 The Peasants Revolt

The resentful activities and the obnoxious extraction of taxes created discontent and disappointment among the peasants to an alarming extent. They vehemently protested against forced labour on several occasions.⁵ In connection with the Meenumutsavam in the Temple at Ambalapula, the Viruttikkars refused to conduct Velakali and hence the Temple authorities

⁴ Desikavinayam Pillai, S., Ancient forts at Kalkulam and Udayagiri". Kerala Society papers, series-1, pp.1-10.

⁵ Devaswam Department Records, File No. 852/1923.

were compelled to entrust the Velakali to the Provertikars.⁶ The Viruttikkars allotted to various officials also refused to perform their duty even after several warnings. Her Highness the last Senior Rani of Attingal, was to visit the Virutti holders at Chennithala but the Viruti holders absented themselves from duty.⁷ In one of the annual ceremonies of Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple, the cooks of the Temple struck work⁸. Those who attended Oozhiam service in the Parur Sarkar Temple and other minor temples refrained from attending to the work.⁹ They even filed a suit against the sarkar contesting liability of the Samuham (association) to work and question the Sarkar demand.¹⁰

7.1.2 Government Reaction

Still the Government was adamant and proved to be very cruel in proceeding against those who were not willing to perform Oozhium

⁶ Devaswam Department Records, File. No. 852, 1923.

⁷ Viraraghava Aiyengar, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

⁸ Proceeding of the Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore Miscellaneous Paper Relating to Devaswoma and State Charities, p. 27.

⁹ Viraraghava Aiyengar, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁰ In the Parur Samutham Case, Mr. K. Kuinhirman Nair and Mr. Govinda Pillaim, the High court Judges observed that " by force of religious sentiments and the moral influences of the executives, such as dragging the car, carrying the car, carrying the Vahanams: in processions. Cooking in the country have been done without remuneration. Even if the villages were invested with a right to perform the service, they cannot thrust upon government and persons as they like. The services being a purely personal nature, no delegation is legally permissible". *Ibid.*

services, and said that it was a compulsory duty and failure to do so means forfeiture of their lands. In one instance when the Viruthikkars of Nettamom village did not come forward to do Oozhium services, they were expelled from their lands and such lands were sold outright by Government. The Oozhiyavirutti holders at Chirayinkil taluk were ejected from their lands since they were not willing to attend the Oozhiyam services. It was proclaimed by the Government that those who wished to retain possession of their viruthi lands would pay a fine known as Vilayatharam¹¹. If the land was in the possession of the family of the original holder for over fifty years, the Vilayatharam was twenty five times of the assessment value. It was to be paid by the peasants¹².

These exorbitant demands on the Viruthikkars caused great resentment and began to realize their degrading position. A petition was prepared and presented to the Dewan Peishkar by the Viruthikkars of Chirayinkal and Neyyattinkara.¹³ About five thousand Nadars from Travancore met Col. Munro, the Resident of Travancore, and represented their grievances against the polltax and other compulsory services and

¹¹ Letter No. S. 125 dated 4-6-1896 from S. Shangrasoobery. Dewany to the British Resident in Travancore and Cochin (First Vol. VI, p. 254).

¹² Letter no. S. 125 dated 4-6-1896 from J. Ythomas, Resident, to the Dewan of Travancore (250).

¹³ Royal Proclamation dated 12-10-1896, (*Ibid.*, p. 260).

taxes.¹⁴ Commenting on the evils of the Vilayatharam, Nagam Aiya, the settlement Dewan Pesihkar wrote to Dewan that it was "Universally complained of a serious grievance and causes dissatisfaction and resentment of the ryots all over the country".¹⁵ He also severely criticized the views of the Government and again wrote to the Dewan that it was "highly necessary to amend the law and avoid unnecessary pain and heartburning to the peasants."¹⁶ But the Government was adamant and ordered that all viruthikkars who wanted to retain possession of their lands should pay Vilayatharam, otherwise they would be evicted from their lands.

7.1.3 Royal Proclamation of 1822

Moved by the heavy oppression of the ryots, Mr. Atasius and Vedamanikkam, the Missionary workers, decided to put an end to the untold misery of the peasants. Frequently, petitions were sent by them to the Government complaining of the troubles that might arise from the feudal taxes and services. However, by their untiring efforts the Christians of Travancore were relieved from certain kinds of compulsory labour such as pounding of rice and supplying oil for the use at festivals in Temples.

¹⁴ Petition from the ryots of Neyattinkara, 11th Mithunam 105/30th June (First, Vol, IV, p.1167).

¹⁵ Augur, C.M., *op.cit.*, p. 501.

¹⁶ Letter No. S. 125 dated 4-6-1896 from V.Nagam Aiya, Settlement Dewan Peishkar, to the Dewan of Travancore (FRRST Vol. VI., p. 389).

On 29 December, 1815 a Proclamation was issued by Her Highness the Maharani, Gouri Parvathi Bai to exempt the Christians permanently from Oozhiyam duties connected with Hindu temples and supplying provisions of uttupuras on Sundays.¹⁷ This Proclamation was considered as the first major attempt relating to the abolition of Oozhiyam in Travancore.

Though the Government issued a series of Proclamations and notifications, it was still an uphill task for them to remove this evil from society. The Protestant missionaries through the Resident exerted pressure. Therefore in October 1883, Dewan Ramayyengar, with a view of abolishing viruthi system invited experienced officers and prominent landholders of the State to a conference. The majority of those who attended the conference were in favour of the abolition of the viruthi service. However, the entire abolition of the Oozhia-viruthi services recommended by Dewan Ramayyaengar in his settlement memorandum was not adopted at that time. The idea was later abandoned by himself.

The succeeding administration under Dewan Rama Rao re-examined the system of Oozhiavirutti and proposed measures for ameliorating the conditions of the peasants. Soon after, a notification was issued in April 1888, relieving Viruthikkars from the obligation of supplying provisions and rendering personal service in connection with the

¹⁷ Translation of proclamation exempting Christians from compulsory dated connected with pagodas, murajpam and other Hindu religious festivals and Devanswom work, dated 16th Margali 199 (1815). (C.M. Augur, *op.cit.*, Appendix XUIII, P. XII XI).

tours of the Rajas of Mavelikkara, Ennakkad and of Koil Tampurans, Namburipads and Swamimars.¹⁸ However, a final decision was taken by the Government on 7 August 1893 to give up the Oozhia - viruthi services permanently¹⁹. This decision brought to an end the Oozhia - viruthi service in Travancore and paved the way for a new system of administration and revolutionary change in the society.

7.2 Fight against Slavery

Slavery, an unfortunate institution, was non-existent even among the aborigines. Existence of this obnoxious institution of slavery was opposed by all people. Selling of slave children to the slave owners of far off places was opposed tooth and nail. When Col. Munro became the Resident Dewan of Travancore he understood that the whole of Travancore was infested with slavery, which was highly abhorable to by all the sections of the population.

The slaves progressed rapidly because of the services of the London Mission Missionaries.²⁰ They started a Boarding school at Nagercoil in 1820, for admitting slave girls. Their idea was to secure freedom for the

¹⁸ Government Notification dated 13-4-1888, Vol. VI. p. 169.

¹⁹ The Acts and Proclamations of Travancore. Vol. I, (Trivandrum 1948) p.211. The Travancore Government Gazeete, dated 22.09.1893.

²⁰ Yesudahs, R.N., *The History of the London Missionary Society in Travancore* (1806-1908) Trivandrum, 1980, p. 158.

slaves. They paid the cost of the slaves to their masters for freeing them from bondage.²¹ But some masters refused to receive the amount from the missionaries, and their only aim was to retain their slaves.

Strangely enough these slaves were also working under highly deplorable conditions. Their wages were very low. The price of a slave depended upon the place where he was working and the kind of services he did. This meant that the price of a slave was not fixed but it varied from master to master and place to place. A healthy and wellbuilt slave did not cost more than six rupees in the low lands. In the highlands a slave could be bought for eighteen rupees or even for double the amount. The Nairs, the principal slave owners of the state, had a custom according to which the children of the slaves were the property of the Mother's master and not of the father's master²². Usually the slaves worked in the paddy fields. There they dug the ground, manured it, transplanted the young rice plants, repaired the banks, and performed other connected work in the paddy fields. While doing these work they were standing for hours together. Quite often made them victims of rheumatism, fever, cholera and other diseases. The survivors who were out of work used to beg or steal in order to support themselves and families²³. They could not go to the market places, build

²¹ The Evangelical Magazine and missionary Chronicle, (EMMC) London Vol. III, (New series, December 1830) pp. 540-51) Letter from Mrs. Mault to the Foreign Secretary, Nagercoil, dated 12 June 1830.

²² Christian Mission Intelligencer, April, 1883, p.216.

²³ Ananda Krishna Ayyar, L.K., *op.cit.*, p.213.

their houses near public roads nor could they use the sirkar boats to cross rivers²⁴.

The slaves owned by the government were no better off than private slaves. Most of them were victims of the vile system of imprisonment. Sircar officers forcibly took away the low caste people and made them do all kinds of work like carrying Sircar loads from place to place, keeping watch over sirkar timber, and keeping vigil over elephant pits in dangerous jungles²⁵. When there was no government work to do, the services of these government owned slaves were hired out to others and this afforded a small revenue to the Sirkar²⁶.

7.2.1 The Proclamation of 1823

The treaties of 1795 and 1805, that were concluded between the English East India Company and Travancore made the Company a decisive political power. It empowered the British with the right to interfere in the administrative and political affairs of the states.²⁷

²⁴ Christian Mission Intelligencer, April, 1883, p.210.

²⁵ Letter form the dewan peishkar of Quilon to the Dewan of Travancore, dated Quilon, 30th September, 1869 cover File No. 286, p.695, T.G.E.Records.

²⁶ T.Pycroft, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 9th March 1855, Political consultations, 5th April, 1855, No.32-33, F.1.

²⁷ Aitchison, C.U., *A collection of Treatises, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. X., Calcutta, 1909, p. 135-138.

Rani Lakshmi Bai (1811 -1815), introduced several social reforms which helped the slaves to get certain privileges denied to them.²⁸ By the proclamation of 1812, Rani Lakshmi Bai issued a notification for the abolition of slavery. This proclamation was published on 21st Virichikam 987 ME, (1812) "with reference to the natives and foreigners who for the sake of profit, buy at a cheap rate, the boys and girls of several low caste people of this country and sell them for a higher prices, take them to distant places and pay tolls at sea ports and thus make a regular bargain of them. As this is really an inhuman and disgraceful custom, which ought to be checked, we hereby notify that no person shall, for purpose of cultivation buy or sell Kuravars, parayas, Pulayas, Malayars, vetars and others in Mortgage, Jenmam or Pattam, as is done in many places or get title deeds with the prominent landholders of the place concerning them or engage such people in cultivation and that no people of any other caste shall beyond this natural customs, buy or sell children of their caste or pay toll to the Sarkar. Any one that acts in opposition to the notification given above and has a regular dealing of the slaves shall be subjected to severe punishments, their property confiscated and they themselves banished from the country"²⁹.

²⁸ William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.149.

²⁹ Proclamation of Rani Lakshmi Bai, 1812, Quoted Kusuman, K.K., p. 77.

Subsequently several obnoxious, taxes such as 'Talayara', 'Valayara' etc. were also abolished by the Proclamation of 990 M.E. (1815 A.D).³⁰ By another Proclamation in that year the taboo imposed on the Ezhavas and other low castes in carrying umbrellas, lights and knives chained with gold and in wearing ear-rings was removed.³¹ Even then the oppressive attitude of the high class continued.

Even though, through the influence of the Christian missionaries the Slaves continued to be bought and sold. The Government also owned a large number of slaves. Though the motives behind the proclamations were giving relief to the low castes, they indirectly aimed at the retention of slavery in Travancore for generations to come.

The Christian Missionaries while preaching among the common people came into contact with the slaves and learnt the gruesome realities connected with slavery. In 1841 Rev. J. Abbs, J., observed the plight of the slaves of in Parasala and other places of Travancore.³² The other missionaries also noticed the evils and wrote, "we cannot but feel sorry for these poor sufferers; and if consistency with their higher objects, we can produce for them some relief from their temporal distress, it is our delight to do so". The Missionaries also declared that the "State was priest-ridden and by no means a model it had long been represented to be". The

³⁰ Kunjan Pillai, *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. XXVIII Travancore, Part I, Report P. 330.

³¹ Proclamation of Rani Lakshmi Bai, 1812, Quoted Kusuman, K.K., p. 77.

³² Matteer, S., *Native life in Travancore*, London, 1883, p. 304.

missionaries believed that it was the inalienable right of the lower classes of Travancore as of any other people to fight for their rights and to enjoy the fruits of their toil.³³

Mrs. Mault gave a touching incident of a girl, who was educated in the boarding school and she failed to secure freedom from the master. A girl of about 11 years age was found near the residence of Mrs. Mault in a state of exhaustion due to hunger. After some relief, she told Mrs. Mault that she was a slave and due to her master's heartless flogging, she had run away.³⁴ So Mrs. Mault gave her asylum. After ten days, a morose looking man appeared and demanded his slave girl. All possible efforts were made by Mrs. Mault to induce him to show clemency by offering to accept the cost of her freedom; but this was in vain. He said that "I want not your money but my slave", and walked away with her.³⁵

The missionaries through a series of memorandums and petitions ventilated the grievances of the slaves and pressed the Indian Government to find out an early solution to this social evil. However, the government also felt that the earlier proclamations could neither be abolished nor could they contain slavery. Hence, a fresh legislation was issued in 1843.³⁶

³³ Augur, C.M., *op.cit.*, p. 890.

³⁴ The Evangelical Magazine and Missioanry Chronicle, p.51.

³⁵ Letter from Mrs. Mault to the Foreign Secretary, dated 2, June 1830, Nagercoil, Vol. III (New series December 1830) p. 511.

³⁶ Banaji, D.R., *Slavery in British India*, Bombay, 1933, p. 401.

7.2.2 Act of 1843

The India Government felt that all the efforts of the missionaries and laws that were in 1812 and 1815 enacted became ineffective. Hence, the Viceroy and his council decided to enact an act for the emancipation of slaves throughout India in 1843³⁷. The government could understand the problems and enacted the Act V of the government of India 1843. Some important provision for ensuring the slaves right for equality before law were included in the Act. According to those provisions:

1. No public officer had the right to enforce any Decree or order, of the court or demand of rent or revenue by the sale of slaves.
2. Slaves could acquire and possess property like all other classes and should on no account be dispossessed of such acquired property in the place where they were slaves.
3. Penal offences done to the slaves were to be treated as serious offence done to freemen³⁸.

This act was not applicable in Travancore because the kingdom of Travancore was under the sway of the Rajas of Travancore. Hence, it induced the missionaries to send more petitions to Raja, for emancipation of

³⁷ Letter of Viceroy, 1848.

³⁸ Resident Cullen to the Dewan of Travancore dated, 12th March, 1843, Travancore Government Records, Cover File No. 286, pp.15-16.

the slaves.³⁹ This prompted the missionaries to fight against the cruelties done to the slaves.

In this struggle, the Christian Mission Society's⁴⁰ Missionaries who had established their station in the Northern part of Travancore, joined hands with the L.M.S. Missionaries. They presented a joint petition to the Maharaja of Travancore Utram Thirunal Marthandavarma on 19th March 1847⁴¹. The response of the Maharaja was favourable. General Cullen, the Resident, informed the missionaries the Government would seek amelioration of the conditions of the slaves through improved regulations. However, he replied that in the existing circumstances, emancipation of slaves was not practicable. He further said that even in the East India Company's territories emancipation of slaves had not been introduced⁴². The Raja also feared that abolition of slavery would affect agriculture, whose existence depended upon the service of slaves. Hence he was hesitant to enforce any drastic measure that would upset the social equilibrium.

General Cullen, the Resident of Travancore forwarded the memorandum to the Maharaja for necessary action. On behalf of the Maharaja, the Dewan replied to the Resident, "His highness would never

³⁹ Resident Cullen to the Dewan of Travancore, 12th March, 1843, pp.115-116.

⁴⁰ C.M.S. was brought to Travancore, by Col.Muniro in 1816.

⁴¹ The petition of the British Missionaries in Travancore to H.H.Maharaja, 19th March, 1847, p.9.

⁴² Letter of Dewan V., Venkata Rao to Resident Cullen, dated 1st June, 1847.

fail to give his attention to the unfortunate class of people referred to in the missionaries petition"⁴³.

7.2.3 The Reaction of the Resident

The Resident was not satisfied with the reply sent by the Dewan. The continuous efforts of the missionaries compelled the Resident to address a memorandum in the early part of 1849 to the Dewan of Travancore, "Recommending certain measures for improving the condition of slaves and for the gradual abolition of slavery in the state."⁴⁴

In his memorandum to the Dewan, the Resident wanted the Dewan to observe the provision of the Act V of 1843 passed by the Indian Government. He also put forth certain suggestions like the Government to publicly disassociate itself with the perpetuation of slavery and to work for the abolition of slavery and also demanded the non – separation of father, mother and children and the restriction of slaves or transfer beyond a certain distance from the place of their birth. Security for the slaves, pay full amount when employed on Government work, prohibitions of child labour, and allowance to the slaves when they had no work in the fields of their masters were also found in the list of suggestions.⁴⁵ The Dewan of

⁴³ English Records, Dewan's reply dated 1, June, 1847.

⁴⁴ Saradhamoni, K., *op.cit.*, p. 220.

⁴⁵ English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 12 March, 1849.

Cochin was also given a copy of this memorandum regarding the same. Cochin sarkar expressed its consent to the said reform, but Travancore was wavering. However, because of the pressure of the Court of Directors, the Travancore authorities expressed their feelings to look into this vital issue, and they prepared a draft proclamation and sent it to the Resident. But the Resident found that the draft proclamation was inadequate. On 20th November, 1852, the Dewan sent a revised draft largely observing the guidelines laid down by the Resident in the memorandum dated 13 March 1849 and submitted it for the approval of the Resident. But the recommendations of the Resident were not fully found in the Proclamation⁴⁶.

7.2.4 The Proclamation of 1853

In September 1853 the Travancore authorities prepared another draft of Proclamation, and the copies of it were sent to the Dewan of Cochin and the Resident for their consideration. The Resident " Perfectly approved" the same.⁴⁷ The contents of this draft Proclamation congratulated the Raja for this beneficial and liberal policy.⁴⁸ He also justified the reluctance of the Travancore Government to free adult Sarkar slaves as they almost exclusively cultivated Raja's extensive paddy lands and commented the

⁴⁶ Saradhamoni, K., *op.cit.*, p. 230.

⁴⁷ English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 10 September, 1853.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12 September, 1853.

second clause as controversial since it blamed the missionaries making use of emancipation for conversion.⁴⁹

In the meantime, the Government of Madras wanted to see the proposed reform enacted at the earliest. This could be seen from M.S. Montgomery's letter to the Chief Secretary to the Madras Government.⁵⁰ It was against this background that the historic Proclamation of 1853 abolishing slavery was issued.

The Proclamation of 1853 was not devoid of loopholes and drawbacks. Despite the Proclamation, dealing in slaves continued and this could not go unnoticed by the English, Resident who was dissatisfied with the working of the controversial second and fifth clauses in the Proclamation.⁵¹

The drawbacks of 1853 Proclamation were very glaring. The Resident wrote a series of letters to the Dewan of Travancore stressing one clause or the other. In one of the letters he requested the Government to discontinue the tax levied on the Sarkar slaves.⁵² In another letter the Resident mentioned the cruel practice of selling free men as slaves at Eraniel.⁵³ But the Government of Travancore replied that the parties

⁴⁹ Saradmoni, K., *op.cit.*, p. 231.

⁵⁰ English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 14 September, 1853.

⁵¹ English records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 5 May, 1854.

⁵² English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 8th July, 1854.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

involved in the transaction were men who were perfectly unaware of the recent Proclamation.⁵⁴ At the same time the indifferent attitude of the Travancore Government became " well known to the authorities both in this country and abroad".⁵⁵ Formation of another Proclamation which was more definite than this one was felt necessary. In order to make the matters clear; the Government arranged for many discussions.⁵⁶

The main features of the discussion between the different parties were (a) abolition of slavery was to attempt 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 or amelioration of the condition of the slaves were eager not to stir the socio-economic system which had backed slavery.⁵⁷

7.2.5 The Proclamation of 1857

Despite the discussion 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 state of

⁵⁴ Resident's letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 11 July, 1854.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Resident's letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 12 August, 1854.

⁵⁷ Saradmoni, K., *op.cit.*, p. 233.

Travancore.⁵⁸ Finally yielding to the persistent pressure on the part of the Resident, the king withdrew the first Proclamation and issued another in its place on 24 June, 1855 and according to this Proclamation (a) slavery was totally abolished. (b) All those who came forward with the idea of abolition of slavery or amelioration of the condition of the slaves were accepted and agreed not to disturb the economic structure.⁵⁹

This proclamation declared that all those who were included in the denomination of Sarkar slaves shall be considered free as well as their posterity and the tax hitherto leviable on them abolished.,

2nd All slaves who may hereafter become the property of the Sarkar by the escheat of Estates without heirs shall also be free.

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

4th 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 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 bequest shall be dispossessed of such property or

⁵⁸ Shungra Warriar's letter to the Resident, 14 August, 1854.

⁵⁹ Saradmoni, K., *op.cit.*, p. 233.

prevented from taking possession thereof, on the ground that such person, of that the person from whom the property may have been derived was a slave.

6th 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.⁶⁰

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 the greatest direction and circumspection are necessary to avoid arousing the jealousies and suspicion of the pollution in a manner that 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."⁶¹

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 that

⁶⁰ Royal proclamation 1855, Quoted by Kusuman, K.K., *op.cit.*, p. 112.

⁶¹ Madras Political Dispatch from the Court of directors, London, dated 27 June, 1855
Foreign political dispatch 1885, No.4.

created awareness and enthusiasm. The enthusiasm was capitalised by the missionaries and the Resident alike⁶². 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 slave was comprehensively portrayed. In their attempt for social identity in Travancore, the missionaries had to face stiff opposition from the state authorities and the high caste people.

The history of the abolition of slavery in Travancore is closely associated with the English and their untiring and persistent efforts. The British Residents of Travancore like Colonel Munro and General Cullen openly interfered in the administration. Their pressure and persuasion virtually persuaded the authorities concerned into action. The Gospel and the 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 truth. 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 social balance cemented and fortified by age old customs and institutions. Yet unmindful of the orthodox public opinion, the most potent

⁶² Kusuman, K.K., *op.cit.*, p. 53.

obstacle that stood in the way of very reform the English insisted on the abolition of slavery and stage by stage they succeeded in realizing their object. Now the missionaries were happy that they could succeed to put an end to slavery. But they had a more serious and objectionable problem to civilized society was the problem of upper cloth and fight for equal rights.