

CONCLUSION

Travancore one of the princely states of India is a beautiful land richly endowed with natural sceneries and water resources. But during the regal period, Travancore presented a bundle of problems. The kings and the subordinate officials flouted the noble dictum "the end and aim of a legislature should be the happiness of the people". But the people were not at all happy. This was due to the communal divisions and caste hierarchy that were prevalent in Travancore. They realized this mistake only after the advent of Christianity in Travancore.

In the social life of the people caste and communal hierarchy played a significant role. There were seventy castes in Travancore with internal divisions within the frame of the major castes. The term Savarnas was applied to the privileged castes. The privileged castes included the Brahmins, Namboodiri Brahmins, Ambalavasis, Kshatriyas, Nayars, the Syrian Christians and the Muslims. The Avarnas or under privileged class consisted of the Ezhavas, Nadars, Mala Arayans, Kammas, Chettis, Parayas and the pulayas and other lower castes.

The Brahmins stood at the top of the society. They dominated the court life of Travancore. The Nayars were the warrior class and

protectors of the kings. They enjoyed grants of lands and by virtue of that they became the feudal lords. There were other communities who were less significant in the social order. The Ezhavas, or chogans were the important group among the Avarnas. They were followed by the Nadars and other communities with lesser importance in the society. The Kuravas and the Paravas were lower than the Nadars and other communities. The Pulayas, the Nayadis and the Mala Arayans were at the bottom of the social ladder. The caste system was the Pandora's box, that brought all the evils in the social life of Travancore. Distance pollution, unseability, unapproachability and untouchability were the outcome. The rigid social customs, conventions and practices that were in force in Travancore added to the misery of the people. Thus the caste system, the caste hierarchy, the matrilineal groups and the patrilineal groups disturbed the social harmony.

The high castes took the caste system as a convenient instrument to suppress the low castes and introduced new caste rules. These caste rules were nothing but their own creations. They have no statutory bearing on any code of conduct or laws of the land or the Manu Shastra. The high castes used the caste rules to their own benefit and caused misery to the depressed classes.

Because of the political ups and downs, the Jenmi system came into existence. The Nayars became land lords and thus feudalism came into existence. The feudal system in the social life became more oppressive. The oozhiam or free service was one element of the feudal system. The code of conducts that were formulated then and there to suit the feudal lords and the compulsory exactions were the characteristics of the oozhiam service.

Viruthi service was another element of feudal obligation. Those who were under the viruthi services were compelled to supply to the temples what were needed for daily poojas. Supplying all the needs during temple festivals was thrust upon the Viruthikars. Thus the feudal obligations and numerable land taxes drove the peasants to poverty.

The institution of slavery was universal through out the world. But the compulsory and obnoxious taxes such as breast tax, moustache tax and puberty tax were peculiar to Travancore alone. There may be problems but they were not so glaring in the other parts of India. The highly objectionable practice was that women should not cover the upper part of their body with a piece of cloth called the Thol Cheelai. Even though Baghavan Muthukutty Swamigal and Sri Narayanaguru educated the people, nothing spectacular could be achieved. At the time when people were disappointed and disgusted

with the oppressive attitude of the feudal lords Christianity came into Travancore. The early form of Christianity was Syrian Christianity. They did nothing to save the people except establishing churches. After the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in 1498 Catholicism began to spread, but they were interested in mass conversion along the coastal belt of Travancore. They established churches, seminaries and schools in places of their interest. They neglected the social life of the people due to various internal dogmatic problems. But only after the advent of Protestantism Social awakening took place.

Though protestant missions stepped into south India as early as the 18th century, it came to Travancore only in 1806. Ringletaube reached Mylaudy, a remote village situated at the southern extremity of Travancore. He established a church at Mylaudy and from there he started his work. The establishment of schools in the church compound was the beginning of the enlightenment and social awakening in Travancore.

After the departure of Rev. Ringletaube, Rev. Mead came to Travancore in 1818. Rev. Mead, saw the deplorable social condition that prevailed in Travancore especially in south Travancore. He understood that the prime need of the hour was education and enlightenment of the people. In the fight for the obnoxious social

evils. Rev.Mault and Mrs.Mault joined hands with him in his fight against social evils.

Rev. Mead and Mrs. Mead worked from Neyyoor, and Mrs.Mault and Rev. Mault worked in the Nagercoil area. The people had great aversion towards the white people because they felt that they would drive away their Gods and Goddesses. But the missionaries patiently educated them and made them to realize that they were not working for salvation alone but they were fighting for the uplift of women and to give education to all, so that there would be social awakening among them. Because of the consistent, selfless and untiring works of the missionaries, the Neyyoor medical mission was established to serve the people in better ways. Thus the process of social awakening and enlightenment started in the midst of strong oppositions from the caste Hindus. While the early missionaries were working they could understand the deplorable condition of the women. Hence they wanted to educate the women first and through them spread the message of social awakening among the depressed people.

The lady missionaries who came after Mrs. Mead and Mrs.Mault also worked for the upliftment of women. Their educational endeavours were praise worthy. The lady missionaries such as Mrs.Leah James Duthie, Miss. Annie Lee Duthie, (Mrs.

Allan) Miss. Beatrice Jessie Duthie, and Miss. G.H. Harries were note worthy. Their works at Neyyoor and Parasala division were highly praise worthy. Neyyoor was filled with backward areas. Marthandam under Parasala division was the most backward area in the whole of Travancore. The work of Mrs. Jessie Thompson, Mrs. Baylis Thompson Mrs. Hacker, Mrs. and Rev. James Emlyn, Mrs and Rev. Abbs, Rev. Sinclair, and Mrs. Sinclair, Mrs. Hacker in the Marthandam were note worthy. Because of the educational endeavours of the lady missionaries, women got their economic independence. The slave women were freed by the money they earned from lace work. Women's education received greater attention. The educational endeavours of the missionaries created a sense of social awakening in the minds of the people. The barriers to social identities were shattered into pieces. The people realized that the high caste domination brought all the evils. Hence they decided to work hand in hand with the missionaries. They understood the intention of the missionaries and supported the missionaries in all their endeavours.

At the outset the fight was started against the denial of social identity under the garb of feudalism. The oppressive taxes reduced the peasants to poverty. The Viruthi holders got only bare minimum from the Viruthilands after paying all dues to the land lords and to

the government. The provartikars of the villages and the government officials created discontent and sullenness among the peasants, to an alarming extent. Consequently they rose in revolt at various places in Travancore. It was not the fault of the people but the government. The Government's reaction was unfair and arbitrary. The people and the Viruthi realized their degrading position. The adamant nature of the Government drove the Nadars to submit a petition to col Munro. Moved by the heavy oppression of the riots, the missionary workers sent frequent petitions to the government about the sufferings of the feudal labourers. Because of their pressure the proclamation of 1815 was issued.

The protestant missionaries exerted pressure through the Resident. Because of that Dewan Ramayyengar attempted certain measures but nothing substantial could be materialized. But it was Dewan Rama Rao who issued a notification in 1888 against the Oozhia Viruthi services. But on 7th August 1893 a final decision was taken and it brought an end to the Oozhia Viruthi services. This paved the way for a revolutionary change not only in the social life of the oppressed but paved the way for a new system of administration. Those who were under the clutches of feudal levies got their freedom and social identity.

Slavery an unfortunate institution was also a stumbling block to the social identity of the oppressed. The conditions of the slaves were deplorable. They were paid very low wages. In the absence of a common law, the slave owners applied their own laws. The social reforms of Rani Lakshmi Bai, the proclamation of 1812 could not do much for the abolition of slavery. At the instance of the missionaries the 1815 proclamation was promulgated but that did not change the situation. The Thaliaruthan Chanthai incident was a classic example for the atrocities of the high caste against the Christians and slaves. The Government took various steps to control the situation. The pressure from the Governor of the Madras Presidency and the missionaries were of no use. The subsequent Proclamations of 1843, 1853, 1855 and 1862 were not only due to the efforts of the L.M.S. Missionaries but also of the CMS Missionaries who have established their stations at Kottayam and other places in Travancore at the time of Col.Munro. Bureaucrats of Travancore also helped them in their venture and thus social identity was achieved.

The denial of wearing upper cloth was abhorable and barbaric in a civilized world. One group went with modest dress and another group went without upper cloth exposing their bosoms. This injustice was strongly opposed and fought stoutly. Consequently the proclamations of 1823, 1829 and 1859 were promulgated because of

the efforts of the LMS as well as the CMS Missionaries. The benevolent Dewans like Mahadava Rao also helped them and so the oppressed got the right to wear modest dress on par with the high caste women.

Travancore is even now epitomized as Gods own land, where definite scales of distance was maintained to worship Gods in their abodes by the depressed class. The depressed communities violated the rules to enter into the temples. There were protests throughout Travancore. The Kakinada session of the Indian National Congress, 1923, espoused their cause. Propaganda meetings were conducted. In 1924 Vaikam Sathya graha was organized. E.V.R. took part with volunteers. Mahatma Gandhi made a visit to Vaikam. Yet there was no improvement. Suchindram Sathyagraha took a serious turn. The agitators courted arrest. Harijan Seva Sang was organised to uplift the low castes. Owing to the popular agitation the Government appointed a committee, with Subramonia Aiyer as the Chairman. The Committee submitted its report in 1934 recommending temple entry to the low castes. C.P.Ramaswami Aiyer, the then Dewan also recommended the same and consequently the temple entry proclamation was promulgated in 1936 and that gave the depressed class their right to entry into the temples. Thus, the popular agitation, and the enlightenment brought a success. It was much

against the wishes of the high Caste. Now they could understand that popular struggle could not be resisted and accepted the temple entry proclamation. They learnt that denying basic human rights cannot be withheld further.

All these things happened because of the educational endeavours of the Christian missionaries. The social awakening created by the missionaries worked out well and the social identity of the people was achieved and that paved the way for right to wear upper cloth and entry into the temples. Thus, the missionaries won great acclamation and their work will be remembered for generations to come.

The advent of protestant Christianity and its fight for social identity and equal rights have achieved social, and economic changes in Travancore as a whole. Socially the people were relieved from the psychological effects of humiliation and torture. The oppressed could obtain social identity equal to that of the high castes. Feudalism and slavery were vanished, depressed class could get equal rights in public places. Their children could be admitted in schools and institutions of higher learning.

Economically the people made far greater advancement in life than before. They could get fair share even in the pattam lands.

They could get fair wages for the labour they did. This augmented the rural economy. Thus economically also there was better growth than before. Thus the fight for social identity converted the neglected depressed rustic people into enlightened angular human beings.