CHAPTER IV

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

Slavery was a social evil. The institution of slavery existed in Travancore even from the early period of her history. Its impact was felt throughout Travancore. The origin of the institution of slavery is closely associated with the beginning of the caste system in Travancore. The people of Travancore were divided into Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the Sudras. Of these, the Sudras might have been reduced to the status of slaves. From this slavery began to grow in Travancore.¹

4.1 Origin of Slavery

There were many responsible factors for the origin and growth of slavery in Travancore. The early period of history of Travancore was fluctuating. The social set up too was unsteady. It was during the fluid situation, the foreign incursion took place from the North. These invaders

subjugated the original inhabitants and settled down in Travancore. But these slave communities assumed importance and then formed their own class of ruling dynasty and established a form of government that suited to them. During the second Chera Empire (800-1102) the Pulayas enjoyed rights equal to that of the high class people. Pulayanar Kottai, now a suburb of Trivandrum was the centre of Pulaya ruler who established his sway over the surrounding parts. It is evident from inscriptions that the pulayas enjoyed all privileges of high class people.

Tradition states that a Pulaya princess Kotha by name is said to have ruled over Kothamangalam of Vellanad Pukuthi of Nedumangad taluk. It is understood that she might have extended her sway to a certain portion of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks. As years passed by, this community lost its power, and were reduced to the status of slaves by the conquerors or victors.

The Brahmins from the North who got settled in Travancore were responsible to create caste rules and barriers, to obtain superiority in the
society.\(^6\) In course of time, they had established their undisputed dominance over the land as well as the people of various regions of Travancore.\(^7\) The opposition of the original inhabitants created many problems for the Brahmins in the early stages. After securing a safe footing, the Brahmins claimed superiority over the inhabitants in all walks of life. Their religious and social customs and fair complexion fascinated a section of the natives who considered it as a privilege to be in close association with the Brahmins. As a result the Brahmins extended special treatment to those inhabitants who accepted their supremacy and were called Sath-sudras or Good Sudras.\(^8\) The other group who refused to accept their supremacy continued to be outside of the new social setup.\(^9\) “The joining of the dejected local people with the invaders, resulted in a social convulsion of far reaching consequences. It destroyed the harmonious life of several centuries and paved the way for the introduction of inequalities based on casteism”. Thus, the caste system came to Travancore.

4.2 Factors Responsible for Slavery

Many factors contributed for the growth of slavery in Travancore. Most

\(^7\) Kushman, K.K., *op.cit.*, p.25.
of the castes below the Nadars and Ezhavas, such as Pulayas, Parayas, Paravas, Kuravas and Vettuvans were generally regarded as slaves. Wars and conquests between petty chieftains and princes were always followed by the capture of the vanquished. These vanquished were afterwards made slaves. During the times of famine, parents used to sell their children for petty sums of money to work in the houses or in the fields of the rich. Later, they were converted as slaves by these rich people. Women of higher castes, in case of association with men of low caste, were invariably reduced to slavery and were removed from their parental community.\textsuperscript{10} This was well depicted by Francis Day in his book “The Land of Perumals”.\textsuperscript{11}

The Practice of “Pula Pedi”\textsuperscript{12} also pushed many into slavery. Debtors who could not pay back loans sold themselves to creditors and served them as slaves till their liability was over. In a caste dominated society, individuals had no respect at all. The Brahmins were at the apex.\textsuperscript{13} They claimed descend from Brahma who created them from his head, while the low castes were created

\textsuperscript{10} Kusuman, K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.28, Francis Day rightly observes, should the conduct of Brahmins women have been light with a low caste and she was tried by Brahmins, and if found guilty, became Raja’s slave.

\textsuperscript{11} Francis Day, \textit{The Land of Perumals}, Madras, 1863, p.62.

\textsuperscript{12} According to Gundert, Pula Pedikalam (The period of Pulaya terror) was held in the month of Karjadakam (15\textsuperscript{th} July - 15\textsuperscript{th} August). During these period if a person belonging to a low caste, like Pulayas touched or threw a stone or a stick at a women of high caste after sunset would lose her caste as well as her connection with relativism, and to accompany him, for ever.

\textsuperscript{13} Jacob Canter Visscher, \textit{Letters from Malabar}, Madras, 1862, p.68.
from his feet.\textsuperscript{14} In order to give capital punishments to the criminals, they were made as slaves. That was the custom in ancient times. Even Rajas sold the members of the defeated king’s family as slaves. The women and children of the Eight Knights who were extirpated in 1732 were handed over to fishermen as slaves.\textsuperscript{15} Another source of supply of slaves consisted of the high caste females who were exposed to punishments when detected in immorality or breach of caste rules. According to caste rules, a Brahmin woman who lived with a low caste man, immediately became the Raja’s slave. Nair women, who violated the laws of their community were liable to be sold by the sovereign when they came for transgressions before her relations. Taking advantage of the economic sufferings of the poor peasants, the slave traders seduced the people, purchased them and transported them to any other parts of the world. Kuravas were another set of slaves who claimed higher status over Pulayas and Parayas.

4.3 Mechanism of Possession of Slaves

In Travancore, the people followed a peculiar custom in transferring the slaves. The first was ‘Jenmum’ or sale, by which the slave became the property of the master. The value of the slave was given and the property of

\textsuperscript{14} James Hough, \textit{The History of Christianity in India from the commencement of the Christian Era}, VolII, London, 1839, p.221.

the slave was transferred to a new master. It was the duty of the new master to look after the slaves in the same manner as done by the former master. The second method was ‘Canum’ or mortgage. The procedure of Canum was that the proprietor would get two thirds of the value of the slaves. Besides, he was entitled to get a small quantity of rice yearly as a token of his partial claim over the slaves. He could reclaim and recover the slaves on repayment of the money that he had borrowed. He was not liable to pay any interest. If a slave died while he was in the custody of the new master, he was responsible for returning a slave of equal value.

The third way of possession of slave was by letting them for Pattom or rent. The annual hire was eight Panams for a man slave and four Panams for a woman. The second and third tenures were highly abominable for the person who exacted the labour and furnished the subsistence of slaves. He was only interested in grinding his own axe than in protecting and helping the latter. The slaves received no education. The house of a slave was called ‘Madam’, means a hut and his children ‘Monkeys’. He could not look at the face of his master and speak freely. “When he wanted to speak, he had to place the hand over the mouth lest the breath should go forth and pollute the

person”. Heavy taxes were imposed on them. A special fee was levied on their marriages and on special occasion they were squeezed of their hard earnings.

The slaves were compelled to pay for the hair they grew, and moustache they had. Women were compelled to pay a tax called the breast-tax. Even though the government was informed of these harassments no steps were taken by the government to ameliorate their sufferings. Utilising the situation the officials too tried to extract much from them, but did nothing for their welfare. The masters considered the slaves as their property and their position was less than that of animals. In the later periods, the masters employed their slaves in their fields and kept them away from their houses. The masters never permitted the slaves to touch them. Death punishment was given if they happened to touch them accidentally. Even in the fields, their work was supervised from certain distance.

If a Pulaya wanted to marry he had to convey his desire to his master, who however was bound to meet the expenses connected with the marriage.

As long as the wife remained with the husband, she worked for the husband’s master, who maintained her children till they became capable of earning their bred.

All children born of slaves belonged to the master. If the husband wanted to meet the wife that too was done with the permission of the master. If the master wanted to sell them, that was done without any human consideration. The husband, wife and children were driven to the market like cattles and sold or sometimes auctioned. In the fields when they were at work, the slaves starved and lodged like buffalos. They had to work all day from dawn to din under the schorching heat of the sun for rice and that too was kept at a distance. Thus in a caste dominated society, the caste masters had the right to sell or kill the slaves.

The Parayas were another group of slaves. Like other slaves, they were also maintained by their masters who extracted labour from them. The Vettuvans were hunters who belonged to the slave caste and there were several denominations and sub-divisions among them. The value of a Vettuvan woman was very low as compared with that of many other slaves.

24 Kusuman, K.K., op.cit., pp.33.
The slaves underwent great hardships and social disabilities under the high caste.

4.4 Social Disabilities

The slaves had to observe certain approved distance in their dealings with higher caste people. They also had to get provisions without moving to the market. The slaves were strictly forbidden from entering the market for selling their goods. The agrestic slaves belonged to the lowest strata in the Hindu hierarchy. They were not only untouchables; but also were unapproachables too. They were non-caste Hindus. Barbosa says that if a Nayar woman was touched by Pulaya she was made an outcaste for life. The system of unapproachability was also very severe in South Travancore. Caste rules imposed restriction on the low castes to approach the high castes. They had to keep a stipulated distance from the high caste people in proportion to their stage in the social order. Francis Day says that an Ezhava must keep 36 paces from a Brahmin and 12 from a Nayar while a Kaniyan would pollute a

26 Saradamoni, K., op.cit., p.456.
27 Sobhanan, S., Genesis of the social Emancipation among the Ezhavas, vol. II, Madurai, 1984, p.3.
30 Yesudhas, R.N., A People’s Revolt in Travancore, Trivandrum, 1975, p.32.
Nampoodiri Brahmin at 24 feet.\textsuperscript{31} Matteer gives 36 paces as the distance a Shanan must keep from a Brahmin and 96 paces as the distance for a Pulayan. From a Nair a Pulayan should keep the distance of 60 paces, a Nair must not come within 3 feet of a Nampoodiri Brahmin, and Ezhava or Shanan within 24 paces and a Pulayan or other untouchable within 36 paces.\textsuperscript{32} In the Malabar Gazetteer, C.A. Innes, writes that the artisans must keep about 24 feet from a Brahmin, while a Nayadi must keep 74 feet away.\textsuperscript{33} Dr. A. Ayappan gives a scale of distance pollution for several castes. A Nair must keep 7 feet from a Nampoodiri Brahmin, a Ezhava must keep 32 feet. Chemman 69 feet and a Nayadi from 74 feet.\textsuperscript{34} They believed that, the approach beyond these limits would pollute the caste Hindus.\textsuperscript{35} Mecaulay writes, “If the poor wretched who tills the soil had ignorantly to cross any Nair on the road, the Master had the right to draw his sword and kills him on the spot with impurity.”\textsuperscript{36} Thus the presence of slave was polluting. Because of this the distance that they had to

\textsuperscript{31} Francis Day, op. cit., p.322.
\textsuperscript{32} Samuel Matteer, op. cit., p.80.
\textsuperscript{33} Hutton, J.H., op.cit., p.80.
\textsuperscript{34} Ayyappan, A., Social and Physical Anthropology of Nayadis of Malabar, Madras, 1937, p.18.
\textsuperscript{35} Samuel, V.T., One Caste, One Religion, One God, (a study of Narayana Guru), New Delhi, 1847, p.23.
\textsuperscript{36} Sobhanan, S., Rama Varma of Travancore, Calicut, 1978, p.72.
maintain from different high castes was fixed by a kind of arithmetical
prescription.\textsuperscript{37}

4.5 Feudal Rules

The feudal lords of South Travancore were selfish and they exercised
untold cruelties upon their peasants. The peasants did not have the right to
worship in the temples of the high castes. In temples there were regular scales
of distance beyond which certain castes must remain at a prescribed distance.
The caste polluting distances varied, so also the distance to be kept to avoid
temple pollution also varied from caste to caste. No Ezhava must come within
325 ft, of the curtain wall of the temple of Guruvayur.\textsuperscript{38} The road to the
Temple at Vaikkom was forbidden to the untouchables and the same was
applied to the road leading to the Suchindram Temple.\textsuperscript{39} But they had to
supply paddy, rice, vegetables, milk, products, coconuts and jaggery to the
temple festivals.\textsuperscript{40}

The economy of the country centered on agriculture and the caste
people were the sole custodians of all arable as well as waste lands. For a

\textsuperscript{37} Saradamoni, K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.182.
\textsuperscript{38} Hutton, J.H., \textit{op.cit.}, p.82.
\textsuperscript{40} Western Star, June, 1881.
slave, the possession of a piece of land was a day dream.\textsuperscript{41} They had to cultivate the land and take the yield to their masters. In spite of the commendable social service rendered by them, what they could get in return was “contempt, neglect, and indifference” from their masters. Thus they were largely left to nature during ailment, and the most ignominious treatment was meted out to them.\textsuperscript{42}

The people who were governed by \textit{Marumakkathayam} laws had to oblige to pay to the Government a succession fee called Adiyara. It amounts to one fourth of the value of the property.\textsuperscript{43} This custom was prevalent in South Travancore and it caused severe hardship to the people. They had to pay a fee to conduct and arrange marriages. A special tax called ‘\textit{Kuppakkache}’ in the nature of poll tax was imposed on Parayas and Ezhavas in the Taluk of Thovalai.\textsuperscript{44}

The agrestic condition of the slaves in South Travancore before the 14\textsuperscript{th} century was not as bad as it was in the other parts of India. But after the 14\textsuperscript{th} century their condition was deteriorating. The social and economic

\textsuperscript{41} Saradamoni, K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.370
\textsuperscript{42} Ward and Corner, \textit{op.cit.}, p.40
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{The Resolutions and Proclamations of Travancore}, 1010-1097, M.E (1835-1922), Vol. I., p.254.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Travancore Land Revenue Manual}, Vol. V., p.76.
arrangement fostered mutual dependence between the castes. The same
dependence was there between the landlord and the tiller.45

The family life of a slave was still miserable. There was no prescribed
rule against the separation of husband and wife while selling.46 The condition
of the runaway slaves was still worse. After reclamation, even the children
born during their wandering used to be divided between the
old master from where they were freed and the new one to whom they were
restored.47

Another burden imposed on slaves was oozhiyam service. All the slaves
must work certain days in a year in the land of the upper class without pay.
those who did not perform oozhiyam was punished severely. A villager, by
name, Arumainayamgam refused to do oozhiyam service and he attended the
Sabbath worship. This was not liked by his masters and they cruelly beat and
tortured Arumainayagam.48 He suffered gracious injuries, complained this
matter to the Tahsildar. The offenders were fined Rs.5/- each only and the
injured slave was sent to Trivandrum for medical treatment. Cullen, the
Resident also visited him.49 The Durbar physician Dr. Reid saw the

46 Ibid., p.363.
48 Buchanan, Francis, op.cit., p.461.
49 Peter (ed), D., Years of Challenge: Charles Mead, Nagercoil, 1994, pp.9-12.
seriousness of the injuries and pleaded that a fresh enquiry should be made by the Magistrate. Then an appeal was made to the Madras Government. So the Madras Government instigated the Travancore Government to pass an Act for the emancipation of slaves. After analyzing the position, the Rani issued two Proclamations in 1815. One Proclamation declared that Christians were exempted from taxation.\(^{50}\) Another proclamation said that Christians were exempted from forced labour-\textit{oozhityam}.\(^{51}\) But this proclamation had no effect in the society because large number of low class Hindus, suffered the same as before. People raised their arms but it was in vain. No one came forward to help them. It was in this circumstances, the Christian missionaries came for the rescue of the slaves.

4.6 The Efforts of the Missionaries

The Christian missionaries while preaching the love of god, came in touch with the slaves and knew the social, political and economic disabilities of the slaves and their sufferings. They felt that the slaves should be liberated at the outset. To make them to understand the predicament of the slaves, the missionaries started to educate the people first. The responsibility of educating the people and their attempt to fight for the liberation goes to Rev.

\(^{50}\) Selected propagations by the sovereign (from 1811 to 1936 A.D) Sri Chitrodaya Huzur Central Vernacular Records Series No.1, Trivandrum, 1937, Proclamation of Rani Lakshmi Bai 990 M.E. (1815 A.D.)

\(^{51}\) Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, p.563.
Mead, Mrs. Mead, Rev. Mault and Mrs. Mault and a group of other Christian missionaries who sacrificed many of their comforts to liberate the people of the slave community. Rev. Mead also felt that education should not be the monopoly of the high caste. So he concentrated on establishing schools attached to the Churches. Mrs. Mead only worked on this line to open Boarding Schools for girls.

The regard for establishing the first English school goes to Rev. Ringletaube in 1806. Inspite of opposition, he opened an English school in the church premises at Mylaudy. When Mead took charge of the London Missionary Society, he shifted the mission station to Nagercoil\textsuperscript{52} and shifted the school also. It was the first institution to give regular English education in South Travancore.

The admission of slave children in the schools of the missionaries began in a very interesting manner. The school master of Ponnani adjoining the Manalicaud church got a slave boy and admitted him in his school.\textsuperscript{53} The Missionaries made inquiries with regard to this and they got pleasing facts. Then Mead published it as a rule that all school masters who collected slave children, would get an addition of one Panam (2 annas) in their monthly pay

\textsuperscript{52} Triple Jubilee Magazine, Scott Christian High school, Nagercoil, October, 1970, p.5.

\textsuperscript{53} Augur, C.M., Church History of Travancore, Madras, 1903, p.892.
for every slave boy and one and half Panam for every slave girl, they collected and admitted into the Christian schools for education.\textsuperscript{54} It was understood that within a year, after Mead had made this new rule, more than 1000 slave children were collected and brought into education in all this schools in the Neyyoor area.

The work of the lady Missionaries like Mrs. Mead and Mrs. Mault among the slaves, made a turning point in the history of South Travancore. The slaves progressed rapidly because of their dealings.\textsuperscript{55} They started a Boarding school at Nagercoil in 1820, for admitting slave girls. Their idea was to secure freedom for the slaves. They paid the cost of the slaves to their masters for freeing them from bondage.\textsuperscript{56} But some masters refused to receive the amount from the missionaries, and their only aim was to retain their slaves.

Slave owners oppressed the slaves too much, and so they protested for their rights and privileges. Slaves were not allowed to use public roads. They used only by-lanes outside the village. But the slaves resented the same.

\textsuperscript{54} Ivy Peter and Peter, D., \textit{Samaya Thondarkalum Samudaya Marumalarchiyum} (Tamil), Nagercoil, 1999, p.115.


4.7 The Proclamation of 1823

By the treaties of 1795 and 1805, that were concluded between the English East India company and Travancore, the company became a decisive political power. It empowered the British with the right to interfere in the administrative and political affairs of the state.\textsuperscript{57}

The administrators could very well understand the existence of the obnoxious institution of slavery. They could do nothing to abolish it. When Col. Munro became the Resident Dewan of Travancore, he learnt that the whole of Travancore was infested with slavery, which was an unfortunate institution. He made use of his good office to influence Rani Lakshimi Bai (1811 – 1815) to introduce several social reforms which helped the slaves to get certain privileges denied to them.\textsuperscript{58} By the Proclamation of 1812, Rani Lakshmi Bai issued a notification to the abolition of slavery. This proclamation was published on the 21\textsuperscript{st} Virichikam 987 ME “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 a inhuman and disgraceful custom, which ought to be checked, we hereby notify that no person shall, for

\textsuperscript{58} William Logan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.149.
purpose of cultivation buy or sell Kuravars, Pariahs, Pulayahs, Malayars, Vetars and others in mortgage, janmam or pattam, as is done in many places or get title deeds with the prominent landholders of the place concerning them or engaged such people for cultivation and that no people of any other caste shall beyond this natural customs, buy or sell children of their own 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”.

Subsequently several obnoxious taxes such as ‘Talayara’, ‘Valayara’ were also abolished by proclamation of 990 M.E. (1815 A.D.). By another proclamation of 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. Even then the oppressive attitude of the high class continued.

On 5 May 1816, Paktiyudayan, a Christian according to his custom proceeded in pomp and show to the Church of Mylaudy in order to celebrate

60 Proclamation of Rani Lakshmi Bai, 1812, Quoted Kusuman, K.K., op.cit., p. 77.
his marriage. But on the public roads, he was stopped by caste Hindus, who ordered him to proceed along a lane outside the village. As a result, the marriage was postponed. Subsequently a number of Christian marriages of the season were put off. At once with the help of Vedamonickam, who fought for the just cause of the Christians at Mylaudy, Paktiyudayan lodged a complaint in the court.

Several inhabitants of Mylaudy were summoned as witnesses. The investigations proved beyond doubt that from the period of the Protestant Church was erected in Mylaudy, it was customary for all protestant marriages and funerals to pass through the public streets and roads of Mylaudy. This enquiry was done by Everest, Judge of the Appeal court. According to his report, the British Resident of Travancore granted permission to the Christians to continue the privilege they had hitherto been enjoying. Thus by 1816, the Christian public of Travancore secured the right to use public roads.

But the same right was denied to the non-caste Hindus. The caste Hindus wanted to maintain the age old barbarous customs at all cost. On one occasion, a number of Brahmin travelers met a set of coolies carrying a heavy

62 Ivy Peter and Peter, D., op.cit., p.122.
63 Augur, C.M., op.cit., p.631.
64 Thankappan, T., op.cit., pp.2-3.
log of timber, the Brahmins ordered them to put it down and run off the road. The coolies refused. This attitude infuriated the Brahmins and they started to beat them, and the infuriated slaves laid down their load and retaliated and gave the Brahmins a good beating. In another incident, a high caste man, a drunkard and of violent character, happened to pass by the road from the market, saw a slave women fatigued with footsore, sitting down on the roadside to rest for a while. This was not liked by him, and assaulted and struck her to go away from that place. Her son, who was present, defended his mother by giving two strokes in return to the high caste man. So this case went to the court. The judge gave the judgment that “……. It may be grievous offence for a low caste man especially a slave, to strike one of the higher caste, according to the Dharmasastram”. The slaves protested the prevention of low castes by the high caste.

However all these Proclamations had nothing to do with the abolition of slavery. Slaves continued to be bought and sold. The Government itself owned a large number of slaves. Though the motives behind these

65 Samuel Matteer, op.cit., p.335.
68 Political Consultations, Vol.124, Col. Munro to Chief Secretary of Government, Fort St. Geroge, 7 March 1818, Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras.
Proclamations are to be appreciated, 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. Abbs, J., observed the plight of the slaves of Southern Travancore in person. The other missionaries also noticed the evils: “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 declared that the “State was Priest ridden and by no means a model which it had long been represented to be”. The missionaries believed that it was the inalienable right of the lower classes of South Travancore as of any other people to fight for their rights and to enjoy the fruits of their toil.

Mrs. Mault narrated 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 astute of exhaustion due to hungry. After some relief, she told Mrs. Mault that she was a slave and due to her master’s heartless flogging, she had run away. So she

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was given asylum by Mrs. Mault. After ten days, a morose looking man appeared and demanded his slave girl. Every possible effort was 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.\textsuperscript{72}

Missionaries through a series of memorandums and petitions ventilated the grievances of 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 contained, hence, a fresh legislation was issued in 1843.\textsuperscript{73}

### 4.8 Act of 1843

The Government of India felt that all the efforts of the missionaries and laws enacted became ineffective. Hence, the Viceroy and Council decided to enact an act for the emancipation of slaves throughout India in 1843. By this Act, slave owners were severely punished if they retain slaves. 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 the slaves.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} Letter from Mrs. Mault to the Foreign Secretary, dated 2 June 1830, Nagercoil, Vol. III (New series December 1830), p.511.

\textsuperscript{73} Banaji, D.R., Slavery in British India, Bombay, 1933, p.401.

\textsuperscript{74} Memorandum of Missionaries to the General Cullens, 1843, p.5.
In 1847 the missionaries submitted a memorandum to Utram Thirunal Maharaja portraying the plight of the slaves for considerations. It was with this petition that the demand for the abolition of slavery in Travancore began. The missionaries pleaded to the Maharaja, “to pass a law in reference to the slave population of Travancore, similar to that passed by the Government of Bengal and now in operation”. 75

4.9 Reaction of the Resident

It was General Cullen, the Resident of Travancore who forwarded the memorandum to the Maharaja for necessary action. On behalf of the Maharaja, the Dewan replied to the Resident that “His highness would never fail to give his attention to the unfortunate class of people referred to in the missionaries petition.” 76

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.” 77

75 Ibid., p.5.
76 English Records, Dewan’s reply dated 1, June, 1847.
77 Saradamoni, K., op.cit., p.220.
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. Securing for the slaves, the full amount when employed on Government work, prohibition of child labour, allowance to the slaves when they had no work in the fields of their masters were also found in the list of suggestions. Dewan of 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. Therefore on 20 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

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78 English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 12 March, 1849.
Resident. But the recommendations of the Resident were not fully found in the Proclamation.  

In September 1853, the Travancore authorities prepared another draft of Proclamation, and the copies were sent to the Dewan of Cochin and the Resident for their consideration. The Resident “Perfectly approved” the same. The contents of this draft Proclamation congratulated the Raja for this beneficial and liberal policy. 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 second clause as controversial since it blamed the missionaries for making use of emancipation for conversion.

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

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80 *English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore*, 10 September, 1853.
81 *English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore*, 12 September, 1853.
82 Saradamoni, K., *op.cit.*, p.231.
83 *English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore*, 14 September, 1853.
was in this background that the historic Proclamation of 1853 abolishing slavery was issued.

However, 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, the Resident, was dissatisfied with the working of the controversial second and fifth clauses in the Proclamation.\textsuperscript{84} The drawbacks of 1853 Proclamation was so glaring. The Resident wrote a series of letters to the Dewan of Travancore stressing one clauses or the other. In one of the letters he requested the Government to discontinue the tax levied on the Sarkar slaves.\textsuperscript{85} In another letter the Resident mentioned the cruel practice of selling free men as slaves in Eraniel. But the Government of Travancore replied that the parties involved in the transaction were men who were perfectly unaware of the recent Proclamation. At the same time, the indifferent attitude of the Travancore Government became “Well known to the authorities both in this country and abroad”.\textsuperscript{86} As a solution to this problem that the Resident suggested the re-publication of the Proclamation of 1853 by Her Highness, the Maharani for the formation of another Proclamation which

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{84} \textit{English Records, Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 5 May, 1854.}
\item \textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{86} \textit{Residents letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 11 July 1854.}
\end{itemize}
is more definite than this. In order to make the matters clear; the Government arranged many discussions.  

4.10 The Proclamation of 1857

The main features of the discussion between the different parties were (a) abolition of slavery was not to attempt after a full understanding of its origin, nature and extent and the institution’s impact on the slaves, (b) all those who come 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.

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 Travancore. Finally yielding to the persistent pressure on the part of the Resident, the king withdrew the first Proclamation and issued another in the place on 24 June, 1855 and according to this Proclamation (a) slavery was totally abolished 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

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87 Resident’s letter to the Dewan of Travancore, 12 August, 1854
88 Saradamoni, K., op.cit., p.233.
89 Shungra Warrier’s letter to the President, 14 August, 1854.
of the condition of the slaves were accepted and agreed not to disturb the economic structure.\textsuperscript{90}

This proclamation declared that all those who are included in the denomination of \textit{Circar} Slaves shall be considered free as well as their posterity the tax hitherto leviable on them being hereby abolished. All slaves who may hereafter became the property of the Sarkar by the escheat of Estates without heirs shall also be free. No public office 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. 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. 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 prevented from taking possession there of, on the ground that such person, of that the person from whom the property may have been derived was a slave. 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.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{90} Saradamoni, K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.233.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Royal proclamation} 1855, (Quoted Kusuman, K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.112.)
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.”

4.11 The Last Blow

A final blow to slavery in India was struck by section 370, 371 of the Indian penal Code, which came into force in January 1862. Following this, any person found to possess slaves became punishable.

The zeal and enthusiasm of the missionaries in the amelioration of slaves must be duly appreciated. It was their drive and initiative which shook the conscience of all. Their enthusiasm was later championed by the Resident. It was the missionaries who drew the attention of the public as well as the authorities to this social evil. The memorandum which they submitted in 1847 was the first of its kind, in which lamentable plight of the slaves was comprehensively portrayed. In their attempt for social equality in

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92 Madras Political Despatch from the Court of directors, London, dated 27 June, 1855 Foreign political dispatch 1885, No, 4.
93 Kusuman, K.K., op.cit., p.53.
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 untiring and persistent efforts of English 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 concerned authorities into action. The Gossip that these benevolent measures owed their origin to the enlighten of the then rulers-and not to the political power exercised by these Resident – is far from true. At the same time, the initial reluctance displayed by Utram Tirunal, the Raja of Travancore on this important social reform should not be interpreted as a reactionary attitude. He being a symbol of the period in which he lived, wanted to preserve the status as far as possible. The Travancore authorities knew that the abolition of slavery would surely disturb the social balance cemented and fortified by age old customs and institutions. Yet unmindful of the orthodox public opinion, the most potent obstacle that stood in the way of very reform of the English insisted on the abolition of slavery and stage by stage they succeeded in realizing their object.