Chapter 4

CHAPTER FOUR

AGRARIAN LEGISLATIONS AND CLASS RELATIONS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Remarkable changes happened in the realm of class formation and relations after independence and the consequent formation of the state of Kerala. The colonial domination and the socio-economic condition that it created were replaced by the native administrative control and the colonial bourgeois class was substituted by native bourgeois class. Even during the colonial rule there was wide spread demand and campaign for reforms in the agrarian sector which was full of exploitation and expropriation in Malabar. The peasant organisations like *Karshaka Sangha* strongly clamoured for legislations ameliorating the grievances of tenant cultivators of Malabar after independence. It was the climax of the political programmes and campaign made by the peasant organisations under the auspices of the Congress Socialist Party. Series of legislations and reforms were undertaken by the British themselves as a response to demands by the peasants for improving the socio-economic condition of the tenants and peasants. The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill and Kerala Agrarian Relations Act as land reforms were not the first step in this line of addressing the problems of the peasants of Malabar.

The tenurial system was subjected to drastic changes under the British during the nineteenth century. The zamindari system introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 and the ryotwari system had created a class of land owners with proprietary rights in the soil. These systems abominable as

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they are involved two distinct forms of private property in land – the great desideratum of Asian society²⁸⁶. William Logan as Malabar Land Tenure Commissioner undertook a study of agrarian relations and advocated land legislation. But efforts in this direction were thwarted by the landlords. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1929 granted some more concessions to the tenure holders like Kanam and Verum Pattam²⁸⁷. The land lords at the same time resisted such reforms and the best instance was the work of G. Sankaran Nair and Kutti Krishna Menon committee.

The Marxist historians and economists while analysing the social transformation from feudalism to capitalism greatly stressed the role of agrarian system in it. The Marxist scholars and early leaders of it emphasized the social and economic transformation based on the recognition of the historical necessity of full-fledged capitalist growth as the base for socialist transformation²⁸⁸. However in a colonial and semi-feudal system, the private property right did not contribute to a full-fledged capitalist growth in the agrarian system. Therefore the abolition of Landlordism and transfer of right in favour of the cultivating class was another desideratum for capitalist growth²⁸⁹. It was after independence a wide spread campaign and demand for radical agrarian reforms was advocated by the Karshaka Sangha and the Communist party by raising the slogan that ‘Land to the tiller’. The abolition of land lordism as a pre condition for

²⁸⁶ Karl Marx and F. Engels, On Colonialism, Moscow p.77.
²⁸⁸ P.C. Joshi, Marx and Agrarian Problems in India, in P.C.Joshi, ed. Homage to Karl arx, New Delhi, 1969, p-188.
²⁸⁹ K.K.N. Kurup, op.cit.n.81,p-136.
industrial development had been suggested by Namboothiripad even before such a policy was accepted by the Indian Communist party in its basic programmes\textsuperscript{290}. It is pointed out that thanks to the agrarian reforms of pre-independent colonial Malabar and legislations passed in this direction by the Kerala Government after independence the socio-economic and historic transition from semi-feudalism to capitalism was accelerated. During the nationalist movement the Congress socialists in Kerala gave leadership to organise the peasantry against the exploitation by the landlords. The immediate result was the emergence of an active movement of the peasantry in Malabar. Peasants as a class consisted of rich, middle and poor sections. The last segment included the landless agricultural labourers also. Although their interests were not identical, they joined together for a common purpose\textsuperscript{291}. It is pertinent that the movements for radical agrarian reforms and leaders in its forefront either failed to realise or did not address seriously the real but unique problems that the landless agricultural labourers faced or suffered in Malabar. It was unfortunate that similar problems were not even addressed after the abolition of landlordism during the post-independent period.

After the Second World War there were many problems for the tenants of Malabar to face. The scarcity of food grains, arrears of rents etc developed a tense agrarian situation there. It was Malabar \textit{Kisan Sangam}, a peasant organisation of the communist party that involved in the material problems of tenants and agriculturists. Under the auspices of this organ

\textsuperscript{290} Ibid, p-137.

\textsuperscript{291} Ibid, p-140.
they demanded to assign all waste lands for cultivation to them. There were series of agitations in different parts of North Malabar aimed to get the waste lands for cultivation. The agitation was described as a ‘agrarian revolution’ by Williams the then district collector of Malabar\textsuperscript{292}. The agitation for waste land for cultivation that developed at Koothali, Karivallur and Kavumbayi were epic part of the history of peasant agitation of Malabar. But the interests and aspirations of the land less agricultural labourers of untouchable castes were not duly discussed and addressed by those agitations. In 1948, communist party introduced a new political thesis at its Second Congress at Calcutta and adopted the slogan ‘Land to the tiller’ and strategy of militant mobilisation of the peasants for an agrarian revolution\textsuperscript{293}. The famous Calcutta Thesis had a major role to play in mobilising the peasants of Malabar and organising them in a militant manner and made them participate boldly in the series of agitations. This influence was responsible for the riots at Tillangeri, Onchyam, Korom, MunayanKunnu etc where several persons died in the police firing\textsuperscript{294}. As a result of series of peasant agitations under \textit{Kisan Sangam} a concrete feeling of class consciousness developed in the minds of middle class peasants who belonged in the upper and middle strata of caste hierarchy. When measures were being taken in the direction of the ideology of class cooperation immediately after independence, peasant organisations like \textit{Kisan Sangam}

\begin{enumerate}
\item A.K. Poduval, op.cit.n.67, p–87.
\item Bhowani Sen, quoted by K.K.N. Kurup, op.cit.n.81, p-144.
\item A.K. Poduval, op.cit.n.67, p–97-102.
\end{enumerate}
rejected it because politically their affinity was towards class conflict\textsuperscript{295}. Massive inter caste dinners, for which the peasants carried head loads of vegetables and rice, were a unique and recurrent feature of the conferences organised by the Karshaka Sangam., which went a long way in weakening inter caste barriers and promoting class solidarity. Staging of all plays with revolutionary themes often highlighting the evils of landlordism and the exploitation of the peasantry was another method for weakening inter- caste barriers\textsuperscript{296}. \textit{Pattabakki} (rent arrears) and \textit{Raktapanam} (the drink of blood) by K.Damadaran and \textit{koottukrishi}(collective farming) by Edasseri were most important of these Dramas.

The Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill passed in the Kerala legislative assembly on tenth December 1959, is an important legislation in the history of Land legislations in India during the post Independence period\textsuperscript{297}. It was the ministry headed by Achutha Menon which introduced and advanced land legislation, the Land Reforms Act in 1970. The act basically abolished landlordism in Kerala\textsuperscript{298}. Even after these progressive reforms the problems of peasants especially landless peasants still remain unsolved. In brief the land reform which was stated to be a revolutionary step benefited only a middle class which emerged to the upper strata of society. The land reforms of the 1970s were the most important factor in determining land ownership as it conferred ownership of a minimum of 10 cents of land to the agricultural

\textsuperscript{296} P.Radhkrishnan, op.cit.n.43, p–93.
\textsuperscript{298} K.K.N.Kurup, op.cit.n.81,p–147.
labourers. After all, agricultural land to the farmer was the rallying cry of land reform. But the question as to who was the farmer, despite being central to the initiative, was not quite clearly defined. As a result Dalits, who actually tilled the land, were not recognized as farmers in the new system and thus did not become land owners. The rich peasantry who had enjoyed the benefits of the reforms had turned to the capitalistic farming. Not only the reforms but the entire State mechanism such as water, electricity and financial assistance from nationalised banks had been employed for the benefit of rich peasantry. As a result an unusual coalition developed between the rich peasantry and the regional industrial capitalists in Malabar. This situation on one side helps the consolidation of capitalist agriculture and on the other culminates in the process of proletarianisation among the dwarf peasants. Therefore the abolition of land lordism had not contributed to a progressive and profitable agriculture in the lower strata of the peasantry.

This peculiar socio-economic scenario created a crisis that liquidated semi feudal and semi capitalist land lordism which even then managed to control the Governmental policy and as a result the dwarf peasantry. When the peasantry was mobilised as a force against imperialism the strata of land less agricultural labourers was also included in that class organisation as a matter of strategy. Then the popular ambition cherished by the participants was ‘land to the tiller’. But it is not materialised in the case of a major

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300 K.K.N.Kurup, op.cit.n.81.p–162.
301 Ibid, p–163.
section of the labour force\textsuperscript{302}. The incomplete elimination of semi feudal relations, the failure to solve the land question, the aggravation of contradictions in the country’s agrarian economy due to the development of agricultural capitalism these are all a basis for further sharpening of class contradictions and class struggle in the country side\textsuperscript{303}. In brief, the pre capitalist agrarian relations had been turned into capitalist agrarian relations by implementation of land reforms. The major achievement of the reform is that its implementation has brought an end to the big land monopoly system enjoyed by the traditional elite and erstwhile rulers. It has brought an end to the feudal relations in the agrarian system of Kerala. But its benefits have not yet come to the man behind the plough\textsuperscript{304}. It is not factually correct that the nationalist leadership ignored the differentiation among the peasantry and treated them as a homogenous class as Macro-Holists argue. While most of them might found it expedient to observe silence on the issue during the pre-independence days there were a few who did squarely recognize the heterogeneity of peasantry and who put forward cogent arguments to ignore this as a political necessity to avoid conflicts among them at any cost\textsuperscript{305}. In the pre-Independent Malabar also the peasant community was not a homogenous group but there interests and grievances were different. The peasantry is not a homogenous class. It has many class divisions among

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\textsuperscript{302} Ibid, p–163.
\textsuperscript{303} Gigory Kotovsky, Trans., Agrarian Reforms in India, New Delhi, 1984, p – 170; quoted by K.K.N.Kurup,op.cit.n.81. p-164.
\textsuperscript{304} K.K.N. Kurup,op.cit.n.81, p–164.
itself, whose interests are sometime conflicting. Our task today is to carry the whole peasantry with us.\textsuperscript{306} But the rationale behind this collaboration was informed of robust pragmatism and an astute strategy.\textsuperscript{307} The vanguard peasant organisations in Malabar applied the political expediency to organise peasants' movements by uniting all the sections albeit with discrepancies. In toto the agrarian reforms and Agrarian Relations Act effected a radical change in the material milieu that determined the dynamics of class formation and relations. While it became a boon to the rich and middle peasants of the then Malabar, its effects on the real life condition of landless labourers were baneful and pathetic. The bonded labourers of feudal and pre independent Malabar despite transformed into wage labourers they were not liberated from caste hierarchy. The oft quoted radical reform and its benefits were found to have been hijacked by the predominant and dynamic rich and middle class peasants by alienating the real tillers and sons of the soil. The leadership and their organisation, Karshaka Sangam did not succeed fully in the project of land distribution.

The Agrarian Relations Act was the culmination of centuries old struggles conducted by various organisations which put forward diverse ideologies. While the peasant struggles in the first phase were carried on by the Mappilas (the bulk of whom were verumpattom tenants whose demands were mainly prevention of eviction and payment of compensation at the full market value), those in the second phase were spearheaded by the kanam tenants, some of them substantial, who belonged mostly to the

\textsuperscript{306} Socialism and the National Revolution,Bombay,Padma Publications.,Acharya Narendradev,1946 p-46.

\textsuperscript{307} T.K. Oommen,op.cit.n.305,p-8.
Nair caste, though like the former, the latter were also stronger in South Malabar. While the Mappilas had waged their struggles all along, lacking proper organisation, leadership and ideology, the demands of the kanam tenants were backed by the nationalist movement. Moreover, most of the nationalist leaders themselves belonged to the Nair caste, which, as already seen, occupied the middle stratum of the social structure and the upper stratum of the peasantry\textsuperscript{308}. The class interest and economic aspirations of the rich and middle peasants were reflected obviously in the programmes and agitations of the peasant organisations of Malabar especially in the twentieth century. It was due to the modern English education that a new middle class came to be emerged among Nairs and Ezhavas. “The new class of educated young men and officers were politically and culturally far more advanced than their land lords, who however, were economically and socially dominant in the country side. The very state which made them politically independent of the Janmis made them much more dependent economically on those Janmis\textsuperscript{309}. This conflict had far reaching consequences. It led to the emergence of the second phase of the peasant struggles and provided it the necessary leadership mainly as attempts to protect the kanam tenants from exploitation and oppression by the Janmis\textsuperscript{310}. These developments and transformations in the social fabric of Malabar had far reaching implications to make in the process of class formation. In

\textsuperscript{308} P. Radhakrishnan, op.cit.n.43, pp–75-76.
\textsuperscript{309} E.M.S. A Short History of the Peasant Movements in Kerala, Peoples Publishing House, Bombay,1943, p-4.
\textsuperscript{310} Radhakrishnan, op.cit.n.43. p-76-77.
pursuit of the emergence of such a conflict the demand for agrarian reforms grew strongly. The earliest of the attempts to protect the interests of the kanam tenants in the second phase of the peasant struggles was probably in 1912, when T.M. Nair, a member of the Madras legislative council prepared a tenancy bill to confer fixity of tenure on kanam and verumpattam tenants\textsuperscript{311}. In the mean while the leaders of tenant organisations captured control of the Malabar Congress by ousting the Janmi members from it. The voice of the tenant organisations captured the attention of the congress members in the Manjeri and Ottapalam conferences. Another instance cited in the preparation of a conducive political environment for furthering the cause of the tenant class was the formation of Malabar Kudiyan sangam which also launched a News paper named ‘Kudiyan’ (tenant).

The Malabar Tenancy Bill of 1930 was another formidable measure serving as a background for agrarian reforms of independent Kerala. Malabar is one of the few places in India where land relations were intensely and effectively articulated by an educated middle class as early as in the first quarter of this century\textsuperscript{312}. The agitation of this phase was not a mass movement in the full sense of the term, in as much as the overwhelming majority of the verumpattakar were kept out of its purview and the demands were mainly confined to those that concerned with the Kanakkar. Nevertheless it was this agitation which gave the Malabar peasants ‘the first elements of class consciousness – the consciousness that they should unite

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\textsuperscript{311} Achuthan, K.R.; C. Krishnan (Jeevacharithram), National Book stall Kottayam, 1971,p–222. \\
\textsuperscript{312} P.Radhakrishnan,op.cit.n.43. p–87.
\end{flushright}
as a class and fight their enemy, the Janmī. Despite it is not an exaggeration that the tenants of Malabar before independence emerged as a ‘class for itself’, the real working class of Verumpattakkars was not being accommodated to the class of Kanakkars. In this phase the struggles were no longer confined to an interest or caste group, but took the nature of a well organized class struggle, with interests of the lower peasantry at the fore and the verumpattam tenants in the fore front. As the struggles got politicised they were transformed into a broad based social movement directed against land lordism and the caste system on the one hand, and imperialism on the other. In the rising peasant struggles of Malabar between 1935 and 1940 the Karshaga Sangam as a strong peasant organisation played a significant role by giving dynamic leadership. The variety of programmes and processions under the Karshaga Sangha were realistic manifestations of the grievances and discontent of the peasant class. Massive inter caste dinners for which the peasants carried head loads of vegetables and rice, were a unique and recurrent feature of the conferences organised by the Karshaga Sanga, which went a long way in weakening inter caste barriers and promoting class solidarity. Staging of plays with revolutionary themes often highlighting the evils of land lordism and exploitation of the peasantry was another. In the unique programmes of Karshaga Sanga apart from inter caste dining there were hunger – jatha and hunger – songs which had a profound mass appeal. Of course, as a

313 E.M.S., op.cit.n.287. p -132.
314 P. Radhakrishnan, op.cit.n.43. p–89.
315 Ibid. p–93.
result of these programmes and methods of mobilisation a class consciousness emerged among the peasants who belonged to different castes. Therefore it is not unreasonable to discern that the process of transformation from ‘class by itself’ to ‘class for itself’ happened in the political process and the propaganda efforts of Karshaga Sanga played a crucial role in it. It is hardly surprising that in North Malabar, where peasant struggles were the most powerful, caste distinctions have all but disappeared except in the case of the Namboodiris and the Harijans. Incidentally the role of these polar groups in the peasant struggles was also minimal for the obvious reason that the former were Janmis while the latter formed the bulk of the landless labourers. The predominance of the Congress Socialist Party and the leftists in the political activities of the pre-independent Malabar was not merely because of the radical methods of mobilisation and agitation they followed but also due to the failure of the Indian National Congress in addressing sincerely the problems and grievances of the peasant class. For instance when the Congress ministry in Madras in July 1937 under C. Rajagopalachari proved to be a failure in providing relief to the peasants, this betrayal on the part of the Congress leadership disappointed the leftists within its ranks and alienated the entire body of peasantry which soon came to realise that any improvement in their conditions was possible only through their own organised strength. In protest they launched massive struggles against the Janmis and the

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316 Ibid. p–93.
317 Ibid. p–95.
Congress Government backed by the Janmis. “Recalcitrant Janmis and others who have incurred the displeasure of the Sangams are subjected to social ostracism and boycotting by the barbers, washer men etc318. The decision to stop payment of ‘Akrama Pirivukkal’ (Feudal dues) by the peasants was a direct action curbing the powers of the landlords. But the Janmis as land owners resolved to organize enthusiastically to organise various associations under the leadership Kerala land owners association. Politically the KPCC appointed a land reforms committee to study the problems emanated after the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill. The protest movements against the land reforms and other innovations in the realm of education reached its climax in the so called ‘liberation struggle’ (Vimochana samaram) which culminated in the dismissal of the first communist ministry of Kerala under E.M.S. Namboothiripad as Chief Minister on 31st July 1959. However it led to a positive polarisation of society into two antagonistic divisions. The communist period so deepened the existing class struggles and liberated property less people from the old ties of subordination, that traditional relations of private property, tenancy and wage labour (could not) be made to work harmoniously319. Despite many criticisms land reforms that the first Ministry initiated was a radical step in the direction of providing land to the tenants. The dissolution of the Ministry did not end the lively issue of land reforms which became a subject of heated debate and political activity of Kerala. As a result the political activities such

318 Ibid.p–96.
as processions especially led by A.K.Gopalan from Kasargode to Trivandrum developed a positive consciousness among tenant cultivators of middle class. It was this consciousness that might have led to class consciousness in the minds of middle peasantry of Malabar. When the peasantry was mobilised as a force against imperialism the strata of landless agricultural labourers was also included in that class organisation as a matter of strategy. Then the popular ambition cherished by the participants was ‘land to the tiller’. But it is not materialised in the case of a major section of the labour force\textsuperscript{320}.

After the dissolution of the first ministry of Kerala and the formation of the next Government a regressive attempt started for the dilution of the terms of the KARB. The Kerala Agrarian Relations Act, a revised form of the KARB did not satisfy the Communist party and the Kerala Karshaga Sangam which further resorted to the mobilisation of the peasantry for protecting the favourable provisions in the original bill. Despite the greater magnitude in the change of agrarian relations and ownership of property the economic dependence of lower caste people to the Janmis made them subservient to the upper castes. Inspite of the various political and social changes, the traditional relationship of servitude persisted in a modified form in rural areas of Kerala. This occurred where a dominant caste retained possession of most of the land or where land was still used primarily for subsistence cultivation, and subordinate castes can find no superior employment outside their traditional services. Where population pressure and movement had not forced a complete breakdown of hereditary services,

\textsuperscript{320} K.K.N. Kurup, op.cit.n.81. P–163.
and there was no replacement of a labour market, caste still held some power. In these conditions the dominant caste can use its economic power to enforce observance of traditional inter caste laws\textsuperscript{321}. Hence it is not right to conclude that the agrarian reforms even though cultivated a positive consciousness, helped to break the caste taboos of Malabar and evolve antagonistic classes purely based on economic scenario. But in a rather feeble manner the Brahminical domination came to be debilitated and the fear of lower castes against their upper caste masters came to be discouraged in the post agrarian reforms of Kerala. Without some degree of economic freedom the under privileged communities are seldom able to take advantage of the social legislations conferring new privileges on them\textsuperscript{322}. More pathetic was the plight of the untouchable class especially Dalits and the rural Mappilas who were not benefited by the oft quoted Radical Agrarian Reforms. This was evident from the distribution of annual income derived from their economic sources which were merely their labouring capacity. Myriad literary forms of the period depicted graphically the sorrowful life of the untouchable wage labourers even after the agrarian reforms of Kerala. As part of self criticism the communist party and some Marxist scholars admitted the limitation of the land reform and its inability to address the problems of untouchables, who were the real tillers of the soil. Indian communists rarely accorded sufficient weight to the poor peasants and

\textsuperscript{321} Kathleen Gough, Criteria of caste ranking in South India, 1959, Man in India, 39(2), (June), p- 120.

\textsuperscript{322} A. Aiyappan, Social revolution in a Kerala Village, Asia publishing house, Bombay, 1965, p – 10.
landless labourers in their organisational strategy and revolutionary mobilisation\textsuperscript{323}. A.K.Gopalan who was one of the top leaders of CPM himself admitted it as self criticism thus: “We have to make them (the landless labourers) the hub of our activities. Reluctance to take up their specific demands, fearing that this drive the rich and middle peasants away from us will have to given up\textsuperscript{324} C.V. Sreeraman’s short story “\textit{Ponthan Maada}” illustrates the life condition of landless untouchable cultivators. When this short story became a movie the dialogue between two characters reveals it in an obvious manner. The dialogue states thus “your land! You have land! Here laws have come only this far. The land of those who slept in their homes was taken and distributed among those who merely walked across the field. Whereas, those tilled in the fields were given no lands. One whole life time this creature spent in water and marshy land – Ponthan Maada was given any land?” When it was pointed out to E.M.S. Namboodiripad that there is a viewpoint that Dalits have not got any agricultural land though the slogan of agricultural ‘land to the tillers’ helped to establish the party which implemented the policy, his reply was that people belonging to the Dalit sections were able to develop ‘a sense of self confidence in getting organised in the struggles against injustices’\textsuperscript{325}. N.V. Krishna Warrier another great poet, journalist and editor also pointed out the main drawback
of their land reform and land distribution was that an overwhelming majority of the land less labourers have not benefited by it. Even after all these land reforms, majority of the agricultural workers, and other marginalized groups were not the beneficiaries of the reforms. Changing governments, pressure tactics of some powerful groups within the political parties, stood in the way of proper distribution of land to the poor landless peasants. In addition to this social contradiction of the agrarian reforms had its expression in certain agitations and movements of Harijans during those periods. Of these, the Kattampalli agitation itself clearly showed how the political parties representing the landed interests made use even the hapless Harijans in furthering their cause. The agitation, from 17th October to 4th December 1957, was for the rehabilitation of nine Harijan families evicted by the Government from the government land occupied by them at Kattampalli (about 5 miles from Cannanore). Similar agitations are manifestations of the contradictory sides of the agrarian reform conceived and boosted by the first Communist Ministry of Kerala. Further it evidently reveals the limitation or inability to address the exploitation and property-less experience of the untouchable wage labourers of Kerala while highlighting the interests and demands of the dynamic middle class tenants and caste groups. It was this gross evil which became a bone of contention in the history of labouring class of Malabar and a subject of criticism against those who perpetrated the exaggerated land reform. “The aggregate impact, impressive though it is in...
terms of the diffusion of land ownership and reduction in the wide inequalities of the pre-reforms magnitude, however, obfuscates the differentiation of the peasantry and the emergence of a ‘neo rich’ class consequent on the land transfers. The highly surprising but striking impact of the post land reform agrarian scenario of Malabar was possession of land by those who remained on the side line of cultivating process and lack of land for the actual tillers. At one extreme is a small group of farmers who gained substantially from the land transfers. Many of them do not till their land themselves but only supervise the work of hired labourers. A neo rich class within these farmers seem to be fast emerging as socially and politically the most important group in the non plantation sector.

In this connection the question of which class is the most revolutionary becomes important. Scholars like Hamza Alavi and Eric Wolf developed the ‘middle peasant theses’. Both Alavi and Wolf theorise the limitations and inhibited attitude and behaviour of the poor peasants and the advantage of middle peasantry in their fight against the landlords and rich peasants. The revolutionary potential and the leadership of certain social classes are essentially the product of historical circumstances and objective forces. They (Alavi 1965 and Eric Wolf 1971) argue that the poor peasants are initially the least militant class of the peasantry and hence unlikely to play a vanguard role. The other line is that the potential for radical

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transformation in an agrarian society lies with the poor peasant rather than the middle peasant\textsuperscript{331}. Poor peasants are not afraid of losing anything. Many of them really have neither a tile over their heads or a speck of land under their feet. This great mass of poor peasants is the backbone of peasant association, the vanguard in the overthrow of the feudal forces and the heroes who have performed the great revolutionary task which for long years was undone\textsuperscript{332}. The middle peasant versus the poor peasant-cum-landless has been an issue of considerable debate in the study of peasant movements in India\textsuperscript{333}. It seems to have relevance in the discourses on the agrarian legislations of Malabar also. While David Hardiman\textsuperscript{334} and Robin Jefferey\textsuperscript{335} based on their specific studies endorse Alavi’s argument scholars like D.N.Dhanagare\textsuperscript{336}, Kathleen Gough\textsuperscript{337} and T.K.Oommen\textsuperscript{338} criticised the middle peasant thesis by upholding the role of the poor peasants and landless in the organisation of revolutionary movement in India. But Poucheapedass who studied in detail the role of peasant classes in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century agrarian movements of India outrightly rejected the ‘middle peasant...

\textsuperscript{331} Virginius Xaxa, Social Inequality and Peasantry: The Evolving Trajectory. in ‘Classes, Citizenship and Inequality,’ Emerging Perspectives. ed. T.K. Oommen; Pearson, Delhi. 2010.p.92.

\textsuperscript{332} Mao Tse-Tung; Select Works, Vol.1, Kolkata:Jabajatak Prakasan. 1973; pp.32-33.

\textsuperscript{333} Virginius Xaxa.op.cit.n.331,p.92.


\textsuperscript{336} 1983,Peasant Movement in India 1920-50,New Delhi:OUP.

\textsuperscript{337} 1968,'Peasant Resistance and Revolt in South India’, Pacific Affairs 41(4): 526-44.

\textsuperscript{338} 1984,Social Transformation in Rural India: Mobilisation and State Intervention, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
theses’ by stating that the middle class peasantry played no distinctive role. On no occasion did the middle category alone take the initiative in a movement. The main thrust of the classical works in Marxian tradition by Engels, Lenin and Mao clearly unfolds that middle peasantry is characterised by frayed edges, lose textures, ill-defined economic boundaries and political vacillations, in contrast to the proletariat on the one hand and rich peasants and land lords on the other. Nevertheless there are scholars of Marxist school who have analysed and evaluated this unique situation as if favourable for the emergence of a bourgeois class which is invariable in the direction of a socialist revolution. Another noticeable material dynamics of post reform society was the pauperisation of the rural masses and the emergence of a group of marginal and small farmers. The rise of wage labourers was another side of the social impact of agrarian reforms but employing wage labour was not profitable for many of the marginal owners since the organised agricultural labourers demanded more wages from the land owners. The ability of the rich farmers to corner the gains of the production and marketing processes and of the governmental measures, seem to indicate the emergence of a more parasitic agrarian situation in this state of ‘model land reforms’.

Another unique trend in the analysis of peasant movements in India is well demonstrated to connect the social structure and agrarian movements by stressing the role of caste

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341 P.Radhakrishnan,op.cit.n.43. p–194.
and religion. For instance Barrington Moore pointed out that the peasants movements in India have been feeble due to caste system, strength of bourgeois leadership and the pacifying influence of Gandhi on peasantry. In contrast to Moore, Kathleen Gough realizes peasant movements as a simple and direct mobilization of specific agrarian categories possessing certain class/occupational attributes. But class confrontations that take place in India are often conflicts between caste/religious collectivities which share certain class attributes; in so far as the congruity between caste and class is not uniform it often breaks down in concrete situations. This is the reason why much of the peasant movements in India are also caste/communal mobilizations. Therefore the primordial loyalty of those who took part in the peasant movements of Malabar has to be reckoned with much significance. Even after the series of peasant uprisings of 19th and 20th century Malabar it is not sufficiently proved that the peasants emerged as a ‘class for itself’ in a radical manner. While analysing the inalienable influence of caste on people of India there is an oft quoted statement shown as a model of Kumud Pawde, the author of “The story of my Sanskrit” who opined that, although “I tried to forget my caste, it is impossible to forget.”

There is increasing realisation, that an organised struggle against the caste system and oppression of women should accompany the class and mass movements. It is this realisation that has given rise to a controversy that in order to conduct such a struggle separate organisations of scheduled castes and tribes should be formed. Separate organisations of women of various

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Left parties are already in the field, though mainly led by elite urban women. There is no propriety in establishing new organisations of scheduled castes and tribes. Mass organisations of the agricultural labourers and industrial workers must devote as much energy to the struggle against the caste system as they devote to the struggle against the class system. But it does not mean that peasant class of Malabar acted and bound invariably by their primordial loyalty. In marked contrast to the upper caste autobiographies, the self definition of one's identity, as found in the autobiographies of the lower caste, is located explicitly in caste as a rational identity. Those who took initiative to establish peasant unions were themselves upper caste men (Namboodiris, Nambiars and Nairs) imbued with a revolutionary zeal. Most of these men were from middle peasant background with some exposure to modern education. Perhaps the cultural oppression which characterised Malabar at that time was such that men from lower castes (Thiyyas, Kammalans, Pulayas etc.) were not liberated enough from the clutches of social structure to challenge the upper caste Janmis. Another salient material aspect that dictated the dynamics of class formation and class relations in Malabar was that the majority of the leaders of peasant movements and trade union movements hailed from upper caste and middle class social structure. Theoretically and ideologically the tendency of the lower caste people who were subordinated

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343 Sharad Patil, op.cit.n.253.
345 T.K.Oommen,op.cit.n.305.p- 46.
to the dominant caste and class folk and role of dominant ideology to decide and control the course of social mobilisation and response pointed out by many scholars. Rather than the ideological conviction, subordination to the dominant class persuaded the lower caste people to take a role in the peasant movement of Malabar. In the revolutionary peasant movements and trade union movements a sublime space for democratic norms seemed to have been lacking. Therefore the ordinary peasant and working class had to suffer domination and exploitation of dualistic nature. When speak of this sort of crisis of the peasants and workers it is pointed out that, the work force of labourers vested in the hands of trade union leaders and the working class was used as a tool. The labourers became a symbol of permanent exploitation. In fact in the 21st century the identity crisis experienced by the labourers is thus a question of twin exploitation namely, by the Trade Unions and the Capitalists\textsuperscript{346}. While studying the polarisation of society in class direction after the land reforms some Marxist scholars are found to have characterised the communist party as upholding the interests of the peasant class and the Congress Party as the guardian of the landed interests. But it is not wholly right because the Indian National Congress was a multi class organisation (Bipin Chandra, Kapil Kumar) and the communist party was not exclusively a working class party with a working class leadership. The agrarian reforms effected the transition from feudal social formation to capitalist productive system by substituting capitalist land lords in the place of feudal land lords. Such a radical change was a desideratum because in

the history of the development of human society it is inevitable. By the legislative game of articulation of classes, the rich farmers who became owners of land cultivate their lands with the help of landless agricultural labourers. The medium or average size holders remain as they were in the pre reform period with the title of owners. Not much benefit except the tiny piece of land seems to be the gain of landless agricultural labourers. A significant social change that happened in Kerala somewhat parallel to or as a result of the agrarian reforms was flight of agricultural population from agricultural labouring process. Migration of agrarian population from Travancore to Malabar was a serious social phenomenon that changed and radicalised the social dynamism of agrarian Malabar. Its effects shall be discussed in another part of this study. During the period 1974 – 1975, 1983 – 1984, the percentage of increase of agricultural labourers was 24%, while that of non agricultural labourers was 67%. The impact of the land reforms on the society and politics of Kerala cannot be under estimated. The reforms swept away many of the old and well established practices connected with land lordism. It enabled the tenant farmers to become owners of the land they cultivated. It also enabled the farmers to relieve themselves from age old custom and bondage. Before the agrarian reforms passed during the government of post independent Kerala the agitation conducted by Karshaga Sangha had already created a conducive political environment for it. The paddy procurement agitation of Prapoyil and

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347 V.V. Kunhikrishnan, op.cit.n.37, p – 166.
Korom was the enthusiastic reflection of the spirit of unity and solidarity which could be read as class consciousness somewhat in a developed form. But it was the middle peasants and their class aspirations which demonstrated and resorted to be protected in those agitations. In the primary school teachers movement which developed parallel to the peasant movements both anti-colonial and anti-feudal aspirations were there. In the contemporary art forms also there are conscious but esoteric endeavour in Malabar to buttress the feudal hierarchy and hegemony. In 1980 – 1981 at Prapoyil chittari of Valiya Nayanar of Vengayil, ‘Karinchamundi’ in its fearful form was being played. It is assumed that Valiya Nayanar used alarming expressions of fearful goddess for developing his domination and practical process to regiment the tenants. Even in the Kayyur revolt such a thesis was presented. It is true that “Madathil Appu* questioned the Janmi who turned to receive the greetings of the Kandathil Amma* of Kayyur after the Kaliyattam*. Accordingly attempt is there to prove Kandathilamma as Theyyam* caused for Kayyur riot. Therefore the agitations of peasants and tenants were not merely a political struggle but a cultural resistance also. The leaders of Karshaga Sanga were not parochial by temperament and they did not hesitate to uphold broader nationalistic spirit. The instances of Kunchappa Nambiar who changed his name as ‘Keraleeyan’ and Vishnu Nambeeshan who accepted ‘Vishnu Bharateeyan’ as his name are the sublime instances of harmonising the cause of peasants with the event of

349  Vinod Kallolickal , op.cit.Tayola,p – 47.

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nationalistic struggle. Similar class aspiration is figured in the dialogue of one character of the popular drama the ‘Pattabakki’ of K.Damodaran. ‘Kunhi Malu’ the heroine of the drama preferred prostitution to seeking Janmi’s assistance to solve starvation. Hence the agrarian reforms represented all those anti feudal feelings of the middle peasants whose leadership strategically manipulated the cause of the real tillers of the soil who were mostly the untouchables. The Land Reform Bill (1969) which was envisaged to give land to the tillers, actually turned the Dalits into landless agricultural labourers and did not change their class position. It might have been this drawback of the reform which casually or deliberately perpetrated that caused for the political and cultural backwardness of the untouchables in existent even today. "Even as land became property, a significant section of the society has not been able to assert any authority over land because of the peculiar relations between their position in the caste hierarchy and their economic condition. In the newly evolving political economy of land control, it would have been difficult for the class of agricultural labourers drawn from the rich communities to become land owners unless they accumulated some capital to invest in buying land. In regions where Dalits could own land it happened through migration and similar contingent factors.

In the dynamic discourse and style of mobilisation as well as organisation of peasants and workers a striking lacunae is noticeable especially the stream of social and cultural life dominated by unusual caste

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351 M.Dasan, op. cit. n.104. Introduction.
hierarchy. The sociologists and historians who focussed on unique relationship of caste and class resorted to understand the organisation and mobilisation of working class greatly influenced by the so called primordial loyalties. It seems that a society in which primordial loyalties is very strong, universal mobilization, cutting across castes and communities, of a class category can be only rarely achieved. And what usually takes place is a sectoral mobilisation – a sector being a class category within a caste or community. In another sense it was not caste within class but class within caste working in the organisational activities of then Malabar. But it does not mean that all leaders and workers of working class organisations were under the unbroken ties of caste hierarchy. Nevertheless the instances are few for workers and leaders of such organisations who are found to have been breaking their primordial loyalties. The leadership of peasant movements of Malabar and the vanguard party of the agrarian legislations unquestionably upheld the cause of economic inequality, exploitation and the cultural hegemony legitimised by caste system. It is pertinent whether the organisational leadership consciously kept aloof from such ideological streams as a political strategy or expediency. They feared that the tenant class, who were cardinal support belt of the organisation mainly composed of the upper class of the caste hierarchy, would give up them. The serious lapse of the leftist outlook in undertaking the difficult task of enhancing the inevitable class solidarity in the struggle against economic inequality and the anti savarna ideology and practice in the cultural struggle led to ignore the...
cultural identity of the subaltern group and social discriminations they suffered. The middle class intelligentsia of colonial India from the late 19th century onwards constructed an inner domain of cultural identity. This lack of ideological standpoint to convert the problems of cultural identity and enable and strengthen the process of class struggle affected the revolutionary movements in a reactionary manner and the probability of creating conducive material milieu to establish a world of less or no exploitation was being debilitated. Notwithstanding this ideological failure it is also pointed out that the leadership of those organisations belonged to the upper caste with a middle class penchant. “The leaders of the farmers’ association sponsored by CPM were mostly middle aged men educated up to matriculation or above. Often one might note that the labour leaders and farmer leaders at the grass root belong to distinct socio economic groups, although both belong to CPM and this often creates problem in their coordinated action programmes. The local labour leaders are important because of their mass following but their less educated and skilled and are drawn from lower castes (pulayas) and backward class (Ezhavas). While organisationally the labour union has precedence over farmers association the leaders of the latter are more important in the party hierarchy. This situation created internal contradictions and inconsistencies in the working of these organisations since both of them are sponsored by the same party: the

Another striking contrast in the organisation and mobilisation of peasants and working class was that they scattered in different organisations affiliated to various political parties. Myriad occasions were there for reciprocal struggle between workers of one organisation against another controlled opposite political parties. To a great extent instances where many for utilising and manipulating the real working class interests for attaining parochial and ephemeral political gains of the parties. Needless to say these undesirable retrogressive tendencies affected negatively and weakened the material forces dictating the lot of working class. But in the last decade of the colonial rule and the first decade of Independent India the mobilisation of peasantry was political in orientation and the peasant organisation under the CPI successfully took up the agrarian issues such as black marketing in food grains and non availability and poor quality of foodstuffs in the government sponsored fair price shops. It was part of the direct action plan that series of struggles happened in different parts of North Malabar. In pursuit of it agitation against the refusal to allot land for cultivation and the struggle to seize forcibly the excess land developed in Malabar. Although inter-union rivalries between the peasant organisations sponsored by different political parties are a persisting feature in India, certain crisis situations bring them together. The mobilisation against inflation in 1956 was such an instance. The *Kisan Sangh*(CPI), *Kisan Panchayat*(ISP), RSP, Muslim League, elected representatives of local self-government and several cultural associations conjointly demanded, among

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other things, the opening of fair price shops to combat the menace of inflation. But in the meanwhile those organisations and the political parties sponsoring them began to take up similar issues from a narrow minded power centred viewpoint. It was natural in all given social fabric that dominant communities strategically and successfully manipulated all movements of agitation in accordance with their rigid class interests. T.K.Oommen after detailed study of the dynamics of agrarian movements of Kerala observes that it was common trend in the state that dominant communities enjoyed monopoly of leadership in agrarian movements. Fredric Jameson by using Hegelian formula suggests that “the truth of ruling class consciousness (i.e. of hegemonic ideology and cultural production) is to be found in working class consciousness and that the index of all class consciousness is to be found not in the latter’s “contents” or ideological motifs, but first and foremost in the dawning sense of solidarity with other members of a particular group or class, whether the latter happened to be your fellow landowners, those who enjoy structural privileges linked to your own, or, on the contrary, fellow workers and producers, slaves, serfs, or peasants. In the organisation and mobilisation of peasantry and agrarian class the arrival of independence both in the national and regional level played no fewer roles because the Indian national Congress and CPI took up contrasting positions in the problem. As regards Malabar the peasant movements under CPI were dynamic and radical which resulted in the

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357 T.K.Ommen, op. cit. n.305. p-89.
aggressive organisational and revolutionary movements of them. While recognizing and upholding the revolutionary potential of peasantry emanated from class consciousness the domination of middle class leadership and participation remain unquestionable. The middle peasantry which initiated and led to the movement against feudal landlords got sufficient representation in the political activities and programmes of the peasant organisations under CPI. Instead of continuing and strengthening the problems of landless peasants in a radical manner after the Agrarian Relations Bill and Act the dominant peasantry degenerated to be a conservative force of vested interests. Understandably, the former tenants who are now transformed to owner – cultivators became the greatest vested interest force in resisting the movements and legislations which favoured the agrarian poor. Perceiving the threat from their erstwhile slaves, now turned into a militant agricultural work force, the middle farmers took the initiative for counter mobilisation. In the tenancy abolition movement the middle peasantry in Kerala participated as a ‘progressive force’ but in the context of the movement of agrarian proletariat it operates as a ‘conservative force’, initiating counter mobilisations against the poor. Hence to argue that the middle class in any given society act as a progressive radical force will be futile. Their relationship with the agrarian poor of Malabar could be discussed as what has been stated by Marx is one of domination and subordination. The Land Reform Bill (1969) which was envisaged to give land to the tillers actually turned the Dalits into landless agricultural labourers

and did not change their class position. Those communities that had been cultivating leased lands were given ownership and the landless Dalits who had actually tilled the land were pushed to the periphery. The National Sample Survey (37th round) has some interesting data on the land distribution in Kerala. Even after the land reforms, while 76.3 per cent of the Kerala population, owning merely 0.00—0.99 acres of land per household, hold merely 21 per cent of the total land in Kerala, 9.3 per cent of the population own a whopping 54.2 per cent of the land. It is quite clear from this that the land reforms in Kerala happened at a superficial level. Therefore the slogan ‘land to the tillers’, or ‘slaves became masters’ remain empty rhetoric and the proverb that the poor still had only rice gruel (“Koranu kangi kumbilil thanne”) remained unquestioned.

Another notable change happened in the process of the class formation and relations is the formation of a new radical organisation of communists who came out from the CPI(M) in protest against the ideological degeneration of it. The emergence of the Naxalite Movement has a progressive role in the process of reinterpreting and redesigning the strategy of class struggle and socialist revolution of India as a whole and Malabar in particular. After the first split in the Communist Party of India another challenge developed in the organisational level of the CPM in the form of an ideological rift that led to formation of radical leftist parties like Naxalites and Maoists. Unlike the organised communist parties’ strategy of appropriating power in parliament these radical groups did not take part in the election from its very inception believing that ‘revolution through the barrel of gun’.

360 M. Dasan, op. cit. n. 104. General Introduction
With Maoist politics there was an attempt to break with the leftist progressive politics in parliamentary garb. In the Naxalite Movement of the 1970s, there was an intense awareness of the feudal social structure of society that was linked to colonial bureaucratic machinery. Maoist leadership in Kerala was in the hands of urban, educated upper-caste intellectuals who fought the feudal form of material and labour reproduction ignorant of the way they themselves reproduced the same social relations at the organisational level. The policy of individual annihilation of the Naxalites caused for the filling of some feudal chiefs in Kerala and it followed state oppression and police excesses. Whatever be the quantum of the inherent tendency of recurrent split its involvement in the politics of Kerala has a appositive impact to make in the revolutionary left movement. At the same time the cruel killing of the class enemy brought severe criticism against them. “Their political praxis, with the bloody killing of petty local landlords in the most backward parts of Kerala, alienated a large chunk of the middle class from their zeal and convictions and has had terrible consequences for latter -day Dalit politics in Kerala.” Even if those movements practically failed it has great relevance in the history of working class and its formation. This dichotomy in the Leftist organisations amply threw light to the ideological crisis and aberrations that these organisations faced and the inability of their leadership to put forward a working class strategy and mobilisation in a country like India. In the early 1980s, the Janakiya Samskarika Vedi saw

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361 Ibid.
362 Ibid
itself as a cultural resistance movement involved in establishing its own cultural sphere of ideas and ethics as opposed to the earlier bourgeois ethos. Revolutions do not begin with the thunderclap of a seizure of power – that is their culmination. They start with attacks on the moral-political order and the traditional hierarchy of class statuses. They succeed when the power structure beset by its own irresolvable contradictions can no longer perform legitimately and effectively. Thus, apart from the fight against the remnants of a feudal culture and a growing consumer capitalist ethos in the state, the Vedi accorded a high priority to the struggle against “modernism” and “revisionism”. For the revisionists, human beings get satisfied with the acquisition of consumer goods...Those who see the accumulation of material goods as the sole basis for human emancipation are, in effect, trying to convert the working class into capitalists. Here, the mechanical culture of the revisionists capitulates to the consumer culture of capitalism. The revisionists do not realise that even within culture there are elements of class struggle. That is why they commodify art and culture and sell them in the market; that is why they mechanically attach art and culture to their party politics, and fail time and again. The Dalit politics and discourse in general approached and conceived the Maoist movement with much hesitation like other organised communist parties who are spokesmen of classical Marxism. With the death of Maoist resistance

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364 Franz Shurmann, op.cit.n.363.
365 Thiruthalavadum Viplavasamskaravum', unsigned article,Prerana,No-8,July1980,p-3.
politics in the 1980s and the consolidation of the middle castes and middle class following the liberalisation policies of early 1990s, Kerala too shed its ‘progressive’ masks\textsuperscript{366}.

In addition to the mediated class interest due to the rigid power centred political motive of trade unions controlled by various political parties, another pathetic condition was mutual physical encounter among working class people themselves. Unfortunate denouement of that practises was killing of hundreds of workers of different political parties which unhesitatingly vindicating those unwanted killing as if part of class struggle. No statistics is necessary to establish conclusively that those political killings happened in different parts of Malabar were parts of perpetrated conspiracies in order to protect puerile organisational interests and not part of the sublime class politics and struggle. No such similar social scenario would be favourable for the emergence of class politics and relations. The verbal callisthenics and worst political campaign undertaken by those political organisations to justify such killings would create mockery of class consciousness and class politics. It might have been this sort of opportunistic political gimmicks shown under the guise of class politics and sublime ideology of socialism that debilitated the working of such organisations which claimed to have been upholding socialism and communism as if the logical end of class formation and class politics. Again it also caused the loss of faith in the slogans and programmes of the organisations which claimed to have been applying class politics. In short

\textsuperscript{366} Dasan op.cit.n.104. General Introduction.
an unusual socio political situation in which the working class instead of fighting for a world of no exploitation and other material evils was dragged to the incessant meaningless individual killings conceived and organised under the auspices of political parties which claimed to have been upholding class politics. The unusual thirst for power or revisionism and aberration from class politics even led to the unfortunate split within the Communist party of India, the repercussion of which was felt deeply in Kerala. It not only weakened the prospects of class politics and organisation but even led to the worst encounter killing of the comrades of two communist parties. It was because of this sort of bourgeois power politics that it became unreasonable to question the relevance of those who criticised the class politics and class solidarity. The ‘true bourgeois does not exist except in representations of power and domination\textsuperscript{367}.

Migration was another social phenomenon which restructured and destabilised the material forces of class formation and class relations of Malabar. The migration of peasants in mass scale from southern parts of Kerala into Malabar changed the socio-economic life and attitude of the people of Malabar. It naturally affected the class structure and relations of Malabar because the emigrant people were led by land hunger for cultivation and better economic life in the unexplored virgin lands of Malabar. The wave of migration consisted of rich and middle peasants who were in search of new environment of a sound economic life\textsuperscript{368}. It not only dynamicised the

\textsuperscript{367} Dipesh Chakrabarty, Limits of the bourgeois model?, op.cit.n.105. p – 198.
\textsuperscript{368} K.K.N. Kurup, op.cit.n.81. p – 151.
productive system but caused to emerge a new economic life in Malabar.

“The migration involved a process of transformation of land-poor peasantry into middle or rich farmers. The Malabar land lords welcomed them as the migrants who brought capital for them in the form of Manusham, an advance or gift, for obtaining leaseholds and permanent land alienation369. The majority of migrants from Travancore were small farmers. Among the earliest pioneers there were some big farmers. Later, from around 1940, more big farmers who had experience in plantation agriculture in Travancore went to Malabar, to open up estates there also. While the pioneering big farmers did not settle down in Malabar, those who arrived later shuttled between their possessions in Malabar and Travancore. As against this, most of the small farmers who migrated stayed in Malabar permanently though they retained strong links with their parental villages in Travancore370. Side by side with the emigrants new cash crops like rubber, Liberian coffee, cocoa, vanilla etc reached Malabar. The cultivation was stimulated by the emigrants who were hard working and it could be regarded as scientific cultivation. The Christian migrants into the high lands had been responsible to initiate ‘the green revolution’ and urbanisation371. A good instance of the efforts made by Dalit communities to acquire land is the internal migration of the 1950s which can be seen as a movement for control over land, though

371 Ibid, p-156.
other socio-economic factors continue to delimit this process\textsuperscript{372}. It was due to the effect of migration that developed transportation and communication facilities which rated as a criterion of urbanisation reached in the rustic hilly areas of Malabar. When the population of migrants and their children increased in Malabar, a net work of educational institutions had been started by the missionaries of Calicut diocese\textsuperscript{373}. Since the educational and charitable health centres were opened in different parts of high lands the literacy standard and life condition of Malabar changed radically. But its reflections in the intellectual firmament in the form of reflection and reaction were rather reactionary and retrogressive. It was followed by an effective communication system with district head quarters and an extensive scheme of rural electrification. The Christian had played actively in the social transformation through their collective demands and mobilisation for an effective tenancy legislation\textsuperscript{374}. The rich tradition of peasant organisation and struggles of Malabar was also being subjected to some changes albeit reactionary due to the migration effect. A new political organisation known as ‘Karshaka Thozhilali Party’ was formed in 1962 to represent the interests of the peasants in the high lands. These activities finally led to the abolition of landlordism in Kerala in 1970 and the peasants enjoyed absolute ownership over their land holdings\textsuperscript{375}. Of these emigrants who were tenants and agriculturists were mostly from Travancore and Cochin and they were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{372} Sanal Mohan, op. cit. n.104. p- 271.
\item \textsuperscript{373} Ibid, p –156–157.
\item \textsuperscript{374} Ibid, p – 157.
\item \textsuperscript{375} Ibid, p – 158.
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known as ‘People from states’. In addition to the ‘Karshaka Thozhilali Party’ the emigrant cultivators formed an organisation named ‘Malanad Karshaga Sanga’ which became an organisation of Christian orthodoxy as against the erstwhile Karshaka sanga under the communist party and non political, independent and church sponsored peasant organisations such as Karshakarakshasamiti and Malabar Karshakasamithi came to the forefront. “The migration of cultivators in large numbers from Travancore to Malabar increased the number of cultivating tenants. They actively participated in all movements against land lordism and demanded permanent tenancy right during the post independent period\textsuperscript{376}. In fact the political ideologies of the peasant settlers in Malabar are generally the politics of temporary gains for them. Majority of them lacked strong political commitments or political bias\textsuperscript{377}. The migration as a social phenomenon undoubtedly radicalised the social and political scenario by introducing a new productive culture as well as an enthusiastic organisational effect. But unfortunately the social and economic interests of the emigrant class were not in harmony with that of the real peasant class of Malabar who were mostly untouchables. The migration of Travancorean settlers to Malabar adversely affected the life of the Tribals of Malabar. Whatever be the arguments for and against migration, tribal alienation is a fact. The Adivasis who were the real owners of the land earlier, became refugees in their own land. The Tribals often have an inferior social status and they are ruthlessly exploited by their employers (migrant

\textsuperscript{376} Ibid, P-142.

farmers) and by moneylenders and local merchants\textsuperscript{378}. Moreover the political aspirations of the emigrant Christian community were not in conformity with those of the middle peasant and tenant class of Malabar who were boosted and directed by the communist party.

Like the internal migration i.e. from Travancore to Malabar the migration from various parts of Malabar to other parts of the world especially the Middle East changed dynamically and radically the material social milieu from which emanated class formation and class relations. When the results of external migration are being subjected to analysis the positive economic impact can be seen in the remittances from the emigrants and the income levels in the state have generally improved. “Migration has been a key engine of social, political and economic change in Kerala in the last 30 years. Migration patterns and their socio-economic impact have significantly influenced the culture and political process in Kerala. High remittances helped decrease unemployment and poverty whilst also paradoxically giving rise to a consumerist culture and commoditisation of public services such as education and health\textsuperscript{379}. It was due to migration a considerable increase in wage rate and development of construction work created new work scenario and labour culture in Malabar. Local generation of employment, particularly in construction, and increases in the wages rates, partly due to local shortages of skilled workmen\textsuperscript{380}. Another social change albeit a negative

\textsuperscript{378} Ibid. P-344.


one which developed after the gulf migration was the gross consumer culture. Buying and dumping profusely consumer goods and building palatial houses become the norm. This consumerism had a negative impact on class formation and class relations because it led people to think in terms of consumer goods and the consequent mechanization created a comparative reluctance to do manual labour. “Migration is leading to increased inequalities within and between sending communities and regions and areas where there is less or no migration\textsuperscript{381}. In terms of impacts, the main changes that have shown up in regularly conducted surveys have been rises in expenditure and consumption, taking the figures for Kerala above the Indian average\textsuperscript{382}. In the socio-economic dynamism of Malabar the presence of emigrants caused to develop a new chapter of inequality in the prevailing episode of organic inequality. As a result a new social class appeared in the working class history of Malabar and the consequent contradiction unfortunately did not develop to the positive class polarization and struggle. Malabar, as consequences of migration are concerned on the threshold of socio-economic transformations compared to other parts of India. “These patterns of migration and their consequences influenced every aspect of society: land relationships, decline of agriculture, growth of consumer and service sectors, rise of education as an industry (capitation fees, self-financing, etc), and a relatively less skilled and knowledge-based young leadership pool for political parties. This had a deep impact also in

\textsuperscript{381} CDS W.P. 303, 2000.
\textsuperscript{382} S. Ramachandran, Indian Plantation Labour in Malaya. Kuala Lampur, Institute of Social Analysis; 1994.
terms of the structure and leadership of political parties. Communities with a relatively greater stake in the power structure of Kerala (Nair-Namboothiri), that were economically well-off through access to land and feudal relationships, got into leadership positions in political parties. It obviously demonstrates impact of migration on the material forces of the formation of the class and its relations. In association with the migration a stagnant productive sector and a comparative delicacy towards manual labour developed in Malabar and the long term impact of which was the degeneration of it to a mere consumer state. It was this sorrowful decline of the domestic production that further vitiated during the epoch of globalization and liberalisation which will be discussed in detail in another chapter of the thesis. It was in this context of remarkable growth in the peripheral sectors of education and health without adequate progress in the productive sector the often referred Kerala Model has to be discussed. “. . Stagnation in the agricultural sector in Kerala following the wage hikes and agrarian and other reforms of the 1960s introduced without the necessary follow-up reforms such as agricultural mechanization. This has been another element in the determinants of migration from the State, especially internal (out) migration.

It was under a wrong notion that some organizations of labouring class tended to question and protest against the introduction of mechanization in some sectors. “After the agrarian reforms, especially the wage reforms, and in the context of a militant opposition to agricultural

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384 Ibid.
mechanisation, agriculture, particularly rice and coconut cultivation, had lost much of its profitability. Rice land lost much of its value as a source of income or an investment option in the mid-land and the coastal regions of the State. Though migration has been a significant factor in helping reduce poverty, unemployment and relative deprivation in Kerala, it created a sort of social crisis in Malabar. “At the local level in Kerala, Osella and Osella (1999) have noted that, while the lower caste groups have been able to participate in migration to the Middle East, they have not yet been able to accumulate sufficient resources to become socially mobile. Their work focuses on members of the Izhava Community, ex-untouchables who have taken advantage of the opportunities available for migration to the Gulf States. Both those who migrate to work and those who labour at home compete for status through the purchase of consumer goods and fashion items as a means of objectifying the family's progress. It is pointed out that northern districts which are parts of erstwhile Malabar are in the forefront of the process of migration when numbers of migrants are taken into consideration. It effected fundamental change in the modus Vivendi and modus operandi of the people of Malabar who had the rich tradition of militant peasant uprisings. The ideological framework that Malabar acquired through such agitations found to have thrown to the winds and degeneration to engagement with peripheral issues happened. “Different patterns of

385 Ibid.
migration from various communities also shaped the political sociology and sociology of political leaders. It influenced the film industry too as remittance money and Gulf-based businessmen began investing in films. The painkilivalkaram, or popularisation, can also be seen as the dissolution of feudal relationships in Kerala, a relationship that was significantly challenged by the fourth wave of migration and patterns of remittance. But though feudal relationships changed, the feudal mindset did not. This, along with the consumerist status-quo and the vanities of the neo-rich, created a conducive environment for painkilivalkaram, which can partly be seen in the popularisation and democratisation of literature from high-class ‘culture’ to products of mass consumption. Nevertheless “Migration has contributed more to poverty alleviation in Kerala than any other factor, including agrarian reforms, trade union activities and social welfare legislation. The prevailing cultural milieu of Kerala in which its people believe that anything can be achieved through agitation and any rule can be circumvented with proper political connections, must change and be replaced by a liberalised open economy with strict and definite rules of the game. Therefore succinctly the net result of the migration, both internal and external was reactionary and retrogressive so far as the political scenario that led to class formations and relations of Malabar was concerned.

388 John Samuel, op.cit.n.383.