THE TEACHING COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR

Chapter-V
THE TEACHING COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALABAR.

The struggle by different sections of people for social, political, economic and educational rights was rampant in the early part of the 20th century. In this chapter the activities of a major and influential group - the teaching community - in the 20th century Malabar is being examined. Their life, political leanings and participation in the Freedom Struggle are examined here. Above all an enquiry is made into the process of teaching and how it influenced the student community and eventually, the society.

As we have already pointed out, the role of the British in imparting mass education was negligible. The colonial Government was not interested in encouraging mass education. They did not spare any money to introduce a uniform education that was available to all sections of population, since they had plans only to exploit India financially. They thought that those who received proper education would be equipped with new ideals; the British Government feared this. Moreover, the educational activity of a Government, which was not accepted by the people, would have no effect.1

At the same time it is rather interesting to look into the role of the so-called educated class in India.

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Aparna Basu writes:

"The educated Indian did little to reform the education system as they were its products and were conscious of the benefits they derive from it."^2

The educated Indians enjoyed the privileges that education provided. At the same time they did not take up the responsibility of educating their fellow beings. The educated Indians and the British Government ignored education of the masses alike.

Teaching Community in Malabar: Life and Work.

Most of the people in the traditional society were illiterate. So the presence of a literate person in the society was inevitable. People depended on him to read and write. He had high position among the people. Every body respected him. In most cases, the literate person in the village was the schoolteacher.

As mass education was not at all the aim of the colonial regime, the teaching and learning activities did not receive any serious attention. We have seen in the previous chapters that the Government virtually stood away from the responsibility of imparting education. It entrusted many agencies with this responsibility. As teaching and learning activities were given little importance, the teaching community was marginalized altogether.

In the beginning of the 20th century, majority of the teaching community in Malabar belonged to peasant families, and many of them were Kudiyans of the Janmis. The families of the teachers were so poor that they wanted to earn as much money as possible to support the poverty stricken family. The

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traditional sources often failed to provide income to make their both ends meet. The majority of them belonged to the Hindu Community.³

They were never rich. The rich and the upper class never accepted the job of teachers.⁴ They formed the literate group among the poor. People became teachers because a small regular income was better than nothing at all. Since many teachers came from families that had rights on land, the steady salary from teaching, added to a small income from land, allowed families to lead a moderate life.⁵

Even though the traditional Kerala Society was strongly opposed to women’s employment outside the household, many women had taken the job of teachers in the beginning of the 20th century. They violated the proscription because of the fact that though a woman teacher was not the sole earner of a family, her earnings supplemented the family income.⁶

Even unqualified men were recruited for the job. The teachers inducted in this way were not considered equal to others. They were divided on the basis of educational qualifications. The teacher who had passed fifth standard, without teacher training was called Lower Untrained Teacher; if trained, they were appointed as Lower Trained Teacher.⁷ Those who passed eighth standard or third form were called Higher Untrained Teachers, and if trained, they were called Higher Trained Teachers. Those who passed

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³ Interview with Assainarkutty, Tanur.
⁴ Interview with Ms. Suvarna Kumari Menon.
⁵ Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being, p.69
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid, p.70
S.S.L.C, but not trained, were called Secondary Untrained. Salary also was according to qualification.\(^8\)

Classes from one to five were called Lower Primary, and from six to eight Higher Elementary. Primary Education was for eight years this system continued till 1957.\(^8\) Certificates for the fifth and sixth standards were given to the students.\(^9\)

A large number of people took up the job of teachers in the 1930s because in 1930s Malabar witnessed grave unemployment problem. The introduction of the Public Service Commission made it even worse. The examination was according to its pleasure. People failed to get in to Government service. Many took refuge in private schools. So a large number of them, who were affected by economic crisis, became teachers in Aided Elementary Schools.\(^10\)

In early days, in Malabar, the running of school was a business.\(^11\) The private managements accepted the Grant-In-Aid from the Government. They gave the salaries of the teachers after receiving the annual Grant-In-Aid. Many of the managers gave only a small amount to the teachers as salary and they withheld the rest. The managers often required teachers to sign receipts for larger sums than they were actually paid.\(^12\)

\(^8\) P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam, (T.C.Smaranika)*, T.C.Foundation, Kannur, 1999, p.41
\(^9\) Ibid
\(^11\) P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam*, p.41
\(^12\) Robin Jeffrey, *Politics Women and Well-being*, pp.68-69
The Grant-In-Aid was not received properly. Only after 17 or 18 months the Grant-In-Aid was given. If the authorities were not satisfied with the functioning of the school, the Grant-In-Aid was denied.  

The schools were almost Aided Schools. The teachers were paid as per a Grant-In-Aid code that came into force even before the Minto-Morley reforms. The salary amount of the teachers was given to the school managers. The annual Grant-In-Aid cheque would be highly confidential. It could not be made public. The managers were given full right to appoint, dismiss or punish the teachers.

Many teachers had to work in the houses of the school managers because the salaries were given according to the pleasure of the managers. The ire of the managers would inevitably lead towards non-receipt of the salary or drastic reduction in it, and a dismissal at any moment. Teachers and managers had servant-master relationship.

To begin a Higher Elementary School, one trained teacher was necessary. So he got more salary than his colleagues received from the Government.

By the 1930s teachers were caught between Government and the managers of the private schools. Seeking to curtail increasing expenditure, the managers were anxious to pay the teachers as little as possible and were also keen to pay irregularly. Many managers were also Janmis in villages and some of the teachers were Kudiyans. There were instances in which the

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14 M.N. Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, p.98
15 Ibid, p.13
16 P.R. Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam (T.C. Smaranika)*, p.41
17 Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being, p.68
Salaries of the teachers were taken from them as rent arrears. This resulted in many unruly scenes in schools.\(^{18}\)

These forms of ruthless exploitation by the managers have been described by many writers. The Janmi dared to do whatever he wanted to do with his school.

He would declare that if the school did not run according to his wishes, he would close it down.\(^{19}\)

S.K. Pottekkat describes the painful life of a ‘typical’ private school teacher in his celebrated short story ‘Inspection.’ (1940)

The character of the story, Appunni master, is very poor. He is one of the puppets among the 14000 and odd Aided schoolteachers in Malabar. He passed the 8\(^{th}\) standard about fifteen years back and joined in an Elementary school at a salary of Rs.7/- per month. After eight years, he got an opportunity for getting teacher’s training. Then he took up the job in the Karimuringapuram Higher Elementary School. He worked there for five years. During that period he got married. His wife gave him four children. At the time of the delivery of the last baby, he had no money with him to meet the expenses.

More over the baby was suffering from severe fever. He had no money to consult a doctor. He had not been receiving salary for months. In the next day itself he approached the school manager for help. The manager was not in a position to help or pretended to be so. At last he got Rs.3/- from the manager, but it was not enough for him.

\(^{18}\) M.N. Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, p.113
\(^{19}\) Cherukad, Atimakal Swathanthrar, Chintha, Trivandrum, 1978, p.37
The manager said: "I shall give the rest, when the Grant is received."

No body helped him in this crisis since all the people -even the children- knew about the condition of an Aided schoolteacher. He was a debtor. The grocer, the proprietor of the textile shop etc. were waiting for the grant.

He would console them: "Let the Grant come."

There was an inspection in the school that day. He ran after the children because his job depended on the number of children attending the classes.

Inspection!

The manager, Ramakkurup had two _manjals_ one was an ordinary and the other was something special. The latter was used only to bring the inspector to the school once a year. On the _manjal_ it was written- ‘God save the King’ and ‘Welcome’ on silk.

During the inspection, Appunnimaster could not perform well. He was ill.

After the inspection two things happened:

He was dismissed from service; his ailing baby died.20

Cherukad gives another touching description about a schoolteacher in his famous short story-‘Absent.’

Koman Nair master explains the Head master of the school why he could not attend the school the previous day:

“I had kept Rs.10/- from the last Grant after dismissing the debtors. I gave the amount to somebody who went to Calicut for buying an umbrella. They replied that no umbrella could be bought for that amount. At least Rs.25/- was needed for an umbrella. I waited for it till yesterday. Yesterday I went to the _Pana_ and ordered

20 S.K.Pottekkatt, Complete Short Stories, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, 1978,p.313
two palm leaf umbrellas. I was absent because I had no umbrella to use since it was raining yesterday."\textsuperscript{21}

The school inspectors were the officers who could enhance, reduce or withhold the Grant-In-Aid to the schools. His pleasure would decide the fate of the teachers working in a school. If there were no sufficient children in the school during his visit, the Grant-In-Aid might be cut. So the managers would give great respect to the school inspectors. Various ranges were also fixed like the Hindu Range and Mappila Range. There were inspectors for each range. Both the managers and the inspectors threatened the teachers. The teachers had no right to sit before the inspectors; they had to stand until he left. Some of them had tested the knowledge of the teacher. No appeal was allowed on his decision.\textsuperscript{22}

The Grant-In –Aid system also was defective. The salaries of teachers in the 1920s were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Trained Teacher salary</td>
<td>Rs.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5\textsuperscript{th} standard + training)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Untrained 8\textsuperscript{th} standard</td>
<td>Rs.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Trained 8\textsuperscript{th} standard + training</td>
<td>Rs.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Untrained 10\textsuperscript{th} standard</td>
<td>Rs.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do 10\textsuperscript{th} standard+training</td>
<td>Rs.16.67 \textsuperscript{23}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Government schoolteachers had job security, leave benefits and

\textsuperscript{21} Cherukad, Cherukathakal, Current Books, Trichur, 2001, p.29
\textsuperscript{22} M.N. Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. thesis, p.13
\textsuperscript{23} P.R. Nambiar, Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam (T.C. Smaranika), p.42
favourable working conditions. Board schools too had better conditions.\textsuperscript{24}

The salary of teachers in Government Schools in 1923.\textsuperscript{25}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Trained</th>
<th>Untrained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Elementary</td>
<td>20-1-30</td>
<td>Rs. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Elementary</td>
<td>25-1-50</td>
<td>Rs. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>35-35-1.5-50-1-60</td>
<td>Rs. 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Elementary</td>
<td>22.5-1.5-45</td>
<td>Rs. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Elementary</td>
<td>27.5-1.5-50</td>
<td>Rs. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>45-3-90</td>
<td>Rs. 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But in the Aided Elementary schools, there was no regular form of scale of pay.\textsuperscript{26} The salary and service conditions had no uniformity under different agencies.\textsuperscript{27} The job safety of the teachers was also a big question. They were not appointed as permanent employees. So the situation was so poor for the teachers. Even when the National Movement was in full swing during the 1930s, the Indian National Congress took no effort to better the condition of the working class. As far as the poor teacher was concerned, the Janmi-Government nexus was much oppressive. So the teachers could not expect any favour from the Government.

\textsuperscript{24} M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, pp.9-10
\textsuperscript{25} Malabar Gazette, 1923, p.2
\textsuperscript{26} M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, p.10
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid,p.9
Politicization of the Teaching Community.

A strong political movement had developed in Malabar during the first decades of the 20th century. As a major literate class, the teachers were the integral part of the village life. They could be seen as activists of the freedom struggle, social and health services, despite their agonizing life.28

A.K.Gopalan writes thus in his autobiography:

"The life of teacher was miserable. Poverty, helplessness and disappointment haunted them. But later they rewrote history. They became idols of self respect, nationalism, courage and public service."29

Many teachers had strong links with the Indian National Congress, but they never openly admitted it. They were afraid of the fury of the Government and the school managers alike.

At Tanur there was a Higher Elementary School with classes from 5 to 7. The brother-in-law of V.T.Bhattathiripad was the head master for some period. Some of the students used to visit him. He was a Congress supporter. When Mahatma Gandhi was arrested, there was a procession. Assainarkutty spoke (he was a student then) on the occasion. Three students participated in the procession. The teachers had favoured the same, but they did not take part.30

In 1927 on his way to Mangalore Gandhiji was given a warm reception by the teachers and the students of the Rajas High School, Gandhi gave a compliment written by his own hand.31 In those days 'God Save the King'

29 A.K.Gopalan, Ente Jeevithakatha, p.15
30 Interview with Assainar kutty, Tanur
31 Nileswaram Gramapanchayath Vikasana Rekha, pp.14-15
slogan would be exhibited on all walls and windows of the schools. The photo of the King, decorations etc. were also there.32 The school was supposed to be a place where the supporters of the colonial regime were brought up.

By that time there were no unions for the teachers and the students. In the anniversary celebrations of the schools, the students would speak about the glory of the British Government. There was no scope for talking about political issues.33 But political consciousness of the teachers could well be witnessed even before the beginning of intensive political activities in Malabar. During the Non Co-operation movement of 1920, the participation of the teachers was less. But some found their way into the movement. Many took part in Civil Disobedience Movement.34 (Appendix-II).

A remarkable event took place during the Civil Disobedience Movement was in 1932. E.M. Sankaran Nambudiripad was arrested, when he was in the St. Thomas College, Trichur. M.P. Paul, who strongly criticized the inactivity of the college authorities in the college magazine, was dismissed by the college authorities.35

This was a very significant event, since the teachers were considered to be slaves and also was supposed to be hapless creatures. They knew no other jobs than teaching. They had no rights to complain or protest.

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32 Thikkodiyan, Arangu Kanatha Nadan, p.110
33 Interview with Sri. Assainar kuty, Tanur
34 M.N. Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, p.18
35 E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Oru Communisitinte Ormakkurippukal, p.42
In those days the schools directly run by the Government were less in number. Fisheries schools and labour schools, and a few Government schools were there. The municipalities, Boards and persons had run schools. Twenty pupils had one teacher. The teachers had direct link with the parents of the students.36

Gradually the teachers moved towards the National Movement,37 as they began to engage in political activities. Many teachers were jailed for various reasons. When they came out, they realized that the private management was the only weapon in the hands of the British imperialism. So they were more attracted towards the National Movement. But the teachers' movement gained greater momentum only with the formation of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party.38

The teachers were very much inclined towards the Congress Socialist Party because it took up the demands of the peasants, industrial workers, teachers and the students alike. So it was quite natural that these groups came forward to supporting the Congress Socialist Party. The Socialist ideology was getting keen attention all over Malabar. The Government got infuriated.

The Government began to consider the teachers a dangerous group due to various reasons. Their frustrations coupled with their broader general knowledge, made them pivots in politics.39 The developments in the Soviet Union and the struggle for democratic changes made them more powerful.

36 P.R. Nambiar, Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam(T.C. Smaranika), p.42
37 Ibid.
38 M.N. Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, p.19
39 Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being, p.69
At the same time most of the teachers were fearful to support the National Movement. This was due to the fear of being dismissed from schools. They wanted their jobs so dearly. So only a minority among them came out to speak about the political situation.

There were meetings at D.M.R.T school, Tanur opposing untouchability and other social evils. At the same time no word was uttered about the Government or the British. Even though some of the teachers disliked the Government, they never dared to speak it in public. The teachers never spoke about the National Movement or its impact. The parents were responsible for any political awareness among the students. Majority of the teachers normally kept away from politics even at their homes. It is also important that there was no organization for the teachers then.

But there were exceptions as well. M.P.Govindamenon, the history teacher who taught E.M.S.Nambutirippad, would link the history classes with the anti-British feeling and the National Movement. He also provided the students with proper books to get knowledge about politics and the National Movement.

The more the atmosphere became tense, the more the teachers became interested in politics. They wore and spread khadi, which was considered to be a symbol of patriotism. When the D.M.R.T. School was established at Tanur, khadi was popularized. The teachers themselves gave the same to the students. In Trichur, M.P.Paul and Narayana swami used to come to the

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40 Interview with Ms.Suvarna Kumari Menon
41 Interview with Assainarkutty,Tanur
43 Interview with Assainarkutty,Tanur
college wearing *khadi*.\(^{44}\) P.Raman Nair master wore only *khadi*.\(^{45}\) Rama Poduval and Raman Nair master were supportive of the National Movement.\(^{46}\) In the Native School, Vallikkunnu, Unnikrishnan Master was a strong Congressman.\(^{47}\) C.K.Gopalan remembers that C.P.Kunhiraman Master was the first to introduce the Indian National Congress and Gandhiji to them (in north Malabar). He always wore white *khadi*. Another teacher who had strong link with the National Movement was Ramar Kurup Master. He had once lost his job for taking part in a *jatha* and shouting slogans. He had to go to jail for that.\(^{48}\)

**Teachers Unions and Radicalization of the Teaching Community.**

In 1906 the South Indian Teachers Union was founded (S.I.T.U.). Its branch was founded in Malabar as well. Teachers from the primary classes to the colleges were members of the union. Those who had interest in the field of education could also be the members.\(^{49}\)

This Union had no links with the National Movement. Moreover it had not expressed interest in political matters. The teachers unions founded later in Malabar were definitely the products of the National Movement.\(^{50}\)

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\(^{44}\) Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, *Ariyappedatha EMS*, p.155

\(^{45}\) Ibid, p.111

\(^{46}\) Ibid

\(^{47}\) Interview with Pannatt Kunhiraman Nair

\(^{48}\) C.K.Gopalan, *Quit India Samarakum Njanum*, Freedom Fighters, Kerela, 2000, p.32

\(^{49}\) P.R.Nambiar, *Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam* (T.C.Smaranika), p.43

\(^{50}\) M.N. Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil.Thesis, pp.66-67
The first attempt to found a Union for protecting the rights of the teachers was in 1931, a teachers' organization was founded in Ponani taluk, Manappuram, this was the first Teachers Union in Malabar.

The oppression by the Government and the school managers was so brutal that the teachers wanted to tide over this crisis. They got impetus from the political movement that was sweeping all over India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

From the mid 1930s, vigorous teachers' unions spread new ideas and forms of protest to distant corners along with the National Movement.51

It was in 1934, the Malabar Elementary Teachers' Union decided to fight for the legitimate rights. The union raised its voice against bribery and torturing.

About 70% of the teachers were of the opinion that they should join the union. The second place after Ponnani to form the union was Chirakkal.

In February 1935 the first conference of the Malabar Aided Teachers Union was held at Tellicherry.52

The union put forth two demands:

1. Salary should be given every month.

2. Job security should be ensured.53

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51 Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being, p.70
52 P.R.Nambiar, Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam(T.C.Smaranika), p.43
53 Ibid, 44
Then the Union activities were begun in Kurumbranad (Badagara and Quilandi) Kottayam (Tellicherry), Valluvanad (Perinthalmanna and Ottappalam) at last in Calicut where the salaries were very low and were not given properly. The number of schools was also less in Calicut. The Government saw the organization by the teachers and their politicization a serious offence. So prohibition orders for the teachers not to participate in the political movement came into force. On 06-06-1934, the Government issued orders against teachers, working in Government Aided Schools, forbidding them from contesting elections. The municipal council of Cannanore passed resolution requesting the authorities to withdraw the order. The Government replied that the decision had been taken after thorough studies hence, the Government was not ready to reconsider.

This was an organized attempt to depoliticise the teaching community. The teachers, who took part in the political activities, were asked to explain the reason. If the reply was not satisfactory, their certificates were suspended.

The most remarkable progress of the Teachers Unions witnessed after the formation of the Congress Socialist Party. The Congress Socialist Party wanted to mobilize all sections of people. As most of the teachers were aware of the developments in the Soviet Union, they were much elated when a political party was founded with revolutionary ideas.

The primary teachers were also organized by the Congress Socialist Party during 1935 to 1940. A.M.S.T. Union grew as part of National Movement.

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54 Ibid
55 Malabar Gazette, 1939, pp. 16-18
56 T.C. Narayanan Nambiar, T.C. Smaranika, p. 37
Some of them were the Congress activists in the villages.  

The Government teachers had no right to organize or raise their voice against. Those who had any indirect link with the Union were dismissed. So majority of the Government teachers were silent during the National Movement. Another major retaliatory measure was about the Grant-in-Aid. The Grant-In-Aid could be stopped if the teachers participated in political activities. P.C.Raghavan Nair master was expelled from the school for participating in the political activities. M.V.Chandumaster was a teacher of the Kottakkara Girls High School till 1935. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, he shouted the Gandhian slogans along with the students and held a procession. In 1936 he was dismissed from service and the school was stopped.

The people began to support the teaching community, since they were fighting against an alien Government. In 1936, T.C.Narayanan Nambiar was the Head Master of Kannadipparambu Elementary School. He was also the Teacher's Union president of Chirakkal taluk and the secretary of the Malabar Union. The manager of the school served dismissal notice through the police. The notice was later withdrawn, when the teachers and the local people strongly protested.

The teachers who took part in the social reform movements were also punished. Ramunni Ezhuthachan, who made the low castes bath in the

57 M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil.thesis, p.18
58 P.R.Nambiar, Malabarile Adhyapaka Pustanasam(T.C.Smaranika), p.43
59 M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. Thesis, pp.63-65
60 Kakkodi Grama panchayath Vikasana Rekha, p.6
61 Panangad Grama panchayath Vikasana Rekha, p.20
62 T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, T.C.Smaranika, p.36
temple pond, had to flee following threat on his life. He was expelled from
the Peringode School.\textsuperscript{65} The Malabar Aided School teachers conducted bitter
struggle for his intake. They held a procession in protest.

Achutha Warier, who gave a reception to the procession, was dismissed
from the school. He was the craft teacher of the school.\textsuperscript{64} In 1936, the
Congress ministry was formed but the teachers had no benefit. The teachers
in villages were spreading the message of the Congress.\textsuperscript{65}

By 1936 teachers unions were formed in all taluks except Wynad.\textsuperscript{66} The
teachers of the Kottayam union imbibed the spirit of the National Movement
and also were against untouchability. Finally they founded A.M.A.S.T.O in
their fight for the legitimate rights of the community.\textsuperscript{67}

As the left wing in the Congress was a strong group with socialist ideology,
majority of the teachers favoured it. In 1937 there was an ideological split in
the union, the left and right leanings. T.C. Narayanan Nambiar was a
supporter of the Socialist Congress. He wrote an article in the \textit{Prabhatam} that
the teachers should be part of the anti imperialistic movement. This
conception became controversial. But the executive committee of the union
accepted this view. In the election of 1936, the union issued a statement that
the people should support the Indian National Congress.

\textsuperscript{65} Nagalassery Grama panchayath \textit{Vikasana Rekha}, p.7
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid, p.8
\textsuperscript{65} T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, \textit{T.C.Smaranika}, p.35
\textsuperscript{66} M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil.Thesis, p.58
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, p.55
They explained that the Congress should come to power to end poverty. If poverty could be alleviated, education would better.\textsuperscript{68}

The teaching community believed in vain that their grievances would be met favourably with the coming of the Congress Government. But the experience was otherwise. \textit{Rajaji} Government in 1937 did not like teachers in political and cultural activities. The objective of the Government was clear. It wanted to curb the political freedom of the teachers.\textsuperscript{69} In 1939 an order was promulgated in which it was clearly observed that the participation of teachers in the political activities was more in Madras than in other states. Thus there existed many problems, the Government believed. So an order banning the teachers participating in the political parties, such as the Indian National Congress was invoked.\textsuperscript{70} In spite of repeated warning by the Government, many teachers continued to take part in the elections.

There rose a question in the Malabar District Board meeting 1940 about the participation of teachers in the elections:

"Are there any employees of the Board contesting the elections?"

"Some teachers from Cherukunnu School and from some Elementary Schools of Thalipparambu, Tirur, Kattumunda and Wandoor contest elections." \textsuperscript{71}

By then the schools had become centers of political activities. Most of the meetings of the Indian National Congress were in schools. The furniture and other facilities of the schools were used for this purpose.

\textsuperscript{68} P.R.Nambiar, \textit{Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam (T.C.Smaranika)}, p.44
\textsuperscript{69} M.N.Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil.Thesis,p.62
\textsuperscript{70} P.R.Nambiar, \textit{Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam (T.C.Smaranika)},p.45
\textsuperscript{71} Malabar Gazette, 1943, p.5
There were many questions in the District Board regarding the political activities of the teachers:

"Is there any order by or decision by the president to ban the use of buildings and furniture of the Schools for political parties?"

"Yes"

"Was there a meeting of the Congress party at Araekode Mappila School?"

"There was one meeting"

"A Congress meeting?"

"No" (Qn.225) \(^{72}\)

The teachers also were part of struggle against social evils such as bribery and other bureaucratic atrocities.

Another question in the Malabar District Board meeting was:

"In the Kallyasseri Board Higher Elementary School anniversary under the Chairmanship of the president on 13-04-1940, was there a song sung by children instigated by the Head Master about the bribery of the Kallyassery Police?"

"Don't remember." \(^{73}\)

The Congress meetings were held in Valapattanam Mappila Higher Elementary School and Perinthalmanna Board High School, \(^{74}\)

Many of the women teachers were also politically conscious.

Roda, Mistress of Chalat Board Higher Elementary School, joined the Congress in 1937 and began to wear \textit{khadi}. For that the Girls' range School

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\(^{72}\) Malabar Gazette, 1940, pp.15-16  
\(^{73}\) Ibid, p.317  
\(^{74}\) Ibid, 1939,p.8
Assistant Inspectress of Kannur, called her to the office and talked in a harsh manner for wearing khadi and working in the Congress Party. 75

These atrocities were discussed in the District Board meeting. The irate members questioned the Congress ministry for being punitive towards the teaching community.

"Many teachers suffer a lot, even though the Board is ruled by the Congress. The proud teachers are being humiliated."

"Is there any restriction to khadi?"

"No." 76

There were also reports about the teachers acting against the spirit of national feeling.

"The Mathrubhumi reported that the head master of the Cherukunnu High School removed the Gandhi cap of a student by force."

"At Kallyassery, the Head Master of the school removed a stone laid by the Congress President Babu Rajendra Prasad?"

"No knowledge." 77

As the retaliatory measures of the Government continued, the teaching community was also on a way to protest. The certificate of P.R. Nambiar was debarred and thousands of teachers held a protest rally in Kannur. 78 Many of the teachers had the same fate. When they were dismissed from the schools many schools were founded with the help of the local people.

75 Ibid, p.3
76 Ibid
77 Ibid
78 T.C.Narayanan Nambiar, T. C. Smaranika, p.37
K.P. Padmanabhan, the secretary of the teachers union, working at the Madathil elementary school in Quilandy was dismissed from the school.  

Another school was started in the vicinity of the old school with the help of the local people.

The Janmis and the police tried to suppress the movement of the teachers. When they failed in their attempt, they brought down the schools. P.Narayanan Nair describes about demolition of a school by the Janmis and the police. The peasants made another school nearby and the teachers were also posted.

These incidents indicate the popular support to the teaching community. The people were also aware of the fact that the teachers too had the right to form unions and fight for their right and, both of them were fighting the common enemy—imperialism.

On 28, September 1939 a hartal was observed in Chirakkal. Many teachers participated in it. They were dismissed from service. There was strong protest among the teachers. The teachers could not strike altogether as they never wanted to obstruct the learning process at school. So they decided to boycott the Gurujanasamajam (the Saturday meeting). One Saturday of every month would have such a meeting; the deputy inspector would preside over the meeting. The meeting would end with the speech of the inspector about the activities that were to be done in the school. The Sanian Sabha (Gurujana

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79 Ibid
80 Ibid
81 P.Narayanan Nair, Ara Noottantilute, p.120
82 T.C.Narayanan Nambar,T.C.Smaranika,p.38
83 Thikkodiyan,Arangu Kanatha Nadan,p.130
Samajam) was boycotted in some places.\textsuperscript{84} In many places the boycott was complete; in some other places picketing was held. The certificates of many teachers were suspended following this incident.\textsuperscript{85} Thikkodiyan was dismissed for being with the strike.\textsuperscript{86}

In those days about 90\% of the teachers were the members of the Teachers' Union.\textsuperscript{87} This indicates the trust of the teachers in the union. The teachers' union activists were aware that they were holding some kind of freedom struggle. P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar declared that they were inaugurating a second generation in the freedom struggle.\textsuperscript{88}

Though the resignation of the Congress ministry due to political differences put an end to the fight against the Government, the teaching community believed that the real winning of independence only would solve their problems. Then the struggle was directed against the British. They never wanted to disturb the learning process.

The people supported the strike since it was against the British Government. Many teachers were jailed. The Government wanted to withdraw the strike to make an atmosphere for discussion. The strike was withdrawn and a discussion was held. Many favourable decisions were taken by the Government for favour of the teaching community. "The Grant- In- Aid would be given four times a year; The Education Department was given the privilege to take action against the manager who withheld the salary of the teacher; the teachers who were jailed were brought back and job security

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid, p.133  
\textsuperscript{85} P.R.Nambiar, Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam(T.C.Smaranika), p.45  
\textsuperscript{86} Thikkodiyan,Arangu Kanatha Nadan,p.141  
\textsuperscript{87} P.R.Nambiar, Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam(T.C.Smaranika), p.45  
\textsuperscript{88} Thikkodiyan,Arangu Kanatha Nadan,p.130
was partially established; the system of serving notice to the teachers before three months of dismissal was brought in to practice.*

Participation of the teachers in many struggles was more evident in the 1940s.

Here are some questions asked in the Malabar District Board meeting about the political stance of the teachers. The questions that rose in the Board meeting:

"The Mathrubhumi of November 15 had brought about a problem in the Chavakkad High School?"

"Yes."

"On 05-12-1940 Chavakkad, there was a meeting of teachers and students. The Chairman spoke in English. Did the translator, E.P.Pillai speak politics?"

"Did he rebuke the Indian political leaders like Gandhiji and others?"

"A complaint from some parents and a report of the District Educational Officer received in this connection." 90

The teachers were also behind the complaint. They instigated some of the parents to do so.

Even though all the demands of the teachers were met by the 1940s, the District Board acknowledged the presence of the Teachers Unions. The opinion of the Teachers Unions was sought while taking important decisions.91

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90 P.R.Nambiar, Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam(T.C.Smaranika), p.46
91 Malabar Gazette, 1940,p.5
Meanwhile both the police and the Congress politician.s regarded most of Malabar’s teachers as Communists or allies of the Communists.\textsuperscript{92} They were threatened under the pretext that they were Communists. The teachers, who were not liked by the managers, were rebuked as the Communists and were punished either by dismissing from the schools or by putting in prison.\textsuperscript{93} It was only after the strike in 1940 that the primary teacher began to be considered very strong\textsuperscript{94} and his voice was heard with some respect.

The teaching community also believed that the interest of the nation was more relevant than their own interest.\textsuperscript{95} So their activities became more political. The teachers had no hesitation to participate in political struggles and to go to the jails. From June 6, 1940 T.C.Narayanan Nambiar was in jail as per the National Security Law. In 1942, he was released from jail. He soon realized the absence of a strong organization among the teachers in Malabar. So he convened a meeting of the representatives of the taluks.\textsuperscript{96} In 1942, P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar was also put in jail following his participation in the Quit India struggle.\textsuperscript{97}

From 1942, Congress, the Communists and school management competed for the loyalty and obedience of both the teachers and students. Schools, which most \textit{Malayali} children attended by the 1940s, became centres of political conflict and public challenge.\textsuperscript{98}

The Teachers Unions took up other social activities in large scale.

\textsuperscript{92} Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being, p.69
\textsuperscript{93} Cherukad,\textit{Muthassii}, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1989, p.157
\textsuperscript{94} P.R. Nambiar, \textit{Malabarile Adhyapaka Prasthanam (T.C. Smaranika)}, p.43
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid, p.45
\textsuperscript{96} T.C. Narayanan Nambiar, \textit{T.C. Smaranika}, p.38
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid, p.39
\textsuperscript{98} Robin Jeffrey, Politics Women and Well-being, p.69
The teachers Union founded night schools and reading rooms in Malabar. P.R. Nambiar, T.C. Narayanan Nambiar, P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar, Vallathol Damodaramenon, and V. Ramunni were the leaders. They became full time political activists.99

The teachers had participated in Quit India Movement as well (Appendix-III). Morazha, Kayyur peasant movements also had greater participation of the teachers.100

In brief, the teaching community could be categorized into four distinct groups considering their political stance.

1. Those who belonged to this group opposed the political struggle and were supportive of the existing colonial administration. They always supported the Government and tried to dissuade others from being part of the on going political struggle.

2. The second group did not support the existing system but was not ready to express their opinion in public. This group had majority among the teaching community.

3. The third group belonged to the class that opposed the regime and wanted change. They wore khadi and read the Congress literature but were not ready to come out in public to lead the struggle.

4. The fourth group was mainly responsible for any political radicalization in the school. They publicly participated in the political struggle and went to the jails. They had great a role in leading the peasant struggles especially in north Malabar. The obvious result of their activities was expulsion from the

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99 Narayanan Nair, Ara Noottantilute, pp. 120-21
100 M.N. Padmanabhan, Nationalism and Teachers Movement in Malabar, Mphil. thesis, p. 68
schools and forfeiting of the certificates. However, this group was a minority among the teaching community. They started schools with the support of the local people, when they were expelled from the schools.

Even though the teachers belonging to the last two groups tried to mobilize the minds of the children towards making them politically conscious, the textbooks and the curriculum were improper to satisfy this purpose.

The Textbooks and Education at School

The Missionaries were the first to introduce textbooks in Kerala. They realized that it would be a real problem since there were no textbooks in Kerala. They soon introduced textbooks so that the teaching would no longer be hazardous. Hermann Gundert of the Basel Mission was the man behind the introduction of textbooks in Kerala. Unlike other parts of Kerala, the British directly ruled Malabar. So they really wanted to introduce a system of education in which a message to consolidate the rule of the western life and Government in the territories conquered by them. Even though proselytization was the hidden agenda of the Missionaries, they really put forth a system, which contained all the ingredients of modern education. Now that the Government wanted to escape from the burden of education, they depended mainly on the Missionaries to create the 'Brown Europeans'.

The consolidation of the British hegemony in Malabar had its impact on education as well. The textbooks were made in such a way that they were in favour of the western culture. The situation prevailing in Kerala also was much favourable.
The textbooks thus introduced never had uniformity, as they were not similar in various schools all over the Malabar region. The Department of Education approved textbooks and never tried to circulate them, instead they were printed and circulated by the agencies like Basel Mission. Individuals like Karimpuzha Ramakrishnan and T.P.Varghese wrote the textbooks thus circulated. The education department approved these textbooks.

The content of the textbooks were more or less same in the primary classes. The lessons in Malayalam had a number of poems, essays and stories. The poems were of Kunjan Nambiar, Cherussery, Poonthanam and Ezhuthachan. Most of the poems were rather devotional. One poet appears in the same textbooks more than once. Kumaran Asan was the modern poet who appears predominantly in the textbooks.

The textbooks did not contain any radical ideas. But they included strong messages. Many of them contained sharp criticism on caste system prevailing in Kerala in its most notorious rigidity. One such poem was *Brahminyum Pulayasthreyyum* (The Brahmini and the Pulaya Woman). This poem has a strong message against the undesirable caste system. Once a *Pulaya* woman and her son were going to the market with bundle of logs on their heads. After some time the child got tired and he wanted to drop it down somewhere. But at the same time, the mother never allows it since the area was under the control of the Brahmins who would never come near or touch the low castes. However, the child was unable to hold it any longer. At last the mother allows him to put it somewhere. All of a sudden a sharp shouting was heard saying that how a *Pulaya* woman dared to do such an anti religious thing. So saying the Brahmini took the bundle of firewood
away. The *Pulaya* woman cried for mercy saying that the firewood was their food for the day. The lady showed no kindness and the poor woman and her children were deprived of their food for that day.

The poet curses thus ‘don’t cry sister; let her take it since it would help her to burn the fires of the hell when she reaches there.’

The struggle for independence and its reverberations can never be seen anywhere in the textbooks. The major historical figure who appears in the various textbooks is the Maratha warrior Shivaji. In more than one textbook he appears with much glory.

The teachers, who wanted to get a patriotic lesson from the textbooks, were unable to find one.

The History textbooks were rather similar. They never contained what they really had to. The textbooks had descriptive lessons about the Indian History beginning from the *Vedic* era to the modern day of the *Mahajana Sabha* or the Indian National Congress.

While describing about the Indian National Congress, the author of the text has shown much care in not going to the extreme. The description is rather simple and never stresses the role of the Organization in the ongoing Freedom Struggle. The teachers really had chances here to elaborate the distinctive position of the Indian National Congress, which was holding a do or die struggle with the colonial power. But they were frightened as they belonged to the most fragile group of the social hierarchy. The job security was also a concern.

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See what the textbook has said about the Indian National Congress:

"In the early times it had lawful speeches and activities hence the Government was in favour of the organization. Later it changed it stand and involved in activities that were unlawful as far as the Government was concerned. So the Government tried to suppress it. The more the Government tried to quell it, the more the organization got flourished. Many people joined it. Many prominent personalities were imprisoned. As there were some changes in the constitution they were released. Then the organization had some say". 102

The History textbooks also contained the coming of a large number of Governor Generals and their important achievements from Robert Clive to the last ones.

Another remarkable approach is that the textbook propagated the idea that the Mappilas of Malabar were loyal to the Crown except an uneducated minority. They were responsible for the outbreak of the Mappila revolts that rocked the Malabar region for more than one century. It also observed that the revolt of 1921 was created by a minority of uneducated Mappilas. The Mappilas are peace loving, thus explains the textbook.

There is a belief that the Mappilas are rebellious and vandals since there have been a number of rebellions in Malabar. This belief is not correct. Like other people, the Mappilas are also patriots and loyal to the king. The main reason for some of them becoming vandals is the lack of education and modernity. 103

It also describes the basic qualities of the citizen-belief in god, loyalty towards the king, patriotism etc. There is a proverb in English highlighting that these are the beginning of learning. 104

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102 Indian History, Standard V, 1940,
103 Malabar Bhoomisastram, Standard V, 1929
104 Ibid.
The history textbook for the First Form in 1939 also has the same structure. The first war of independence has been included in the textbook saying that it was the act of rebellion by some of the Rajas who had lost their kingdoms. The national leaders were not given respect. The activities of the Indian National Congress are not given any attention; instead, a description of King George and his achievements are given extreme importance. Even though the freedom struggle was in full swing in 1939, no traces of the same could be seen in the textbook. So it is obvious that the textbooks totally ignored any kind of activities related to the National Movement, though they had greater importance. Moreover the Government ordered that the teachers should not take part in the political or trade union activities. The politicization of the teaching community was however made by the Congress Socialist Party and then the Communist Party.

The most significant thing is that the teachers, despite being politically conscious, did not radicalize the school. The school remained what it had been. Many of the teachers were active politicians in the villages and they led many mass movements. At the same time they never tried to politicize the school. The school was a conservative institution, even when the entire country was in political struggle. As the teachers got politicized and they began to interfere in political affairs, the student community too did not lag behind in making their minds in favour of the National Movement.