RADICALIZATION OF THE STUDENT COMMUNITY IN MALABAR

Chapter-VI
RADICALIZATION OF THE STUDENT COMMUNITY IN MALABAR

The student community got due importance when mass education was given more attention in Malabar during the 1930s and 1940s. The students were a social group that influenced the society as a whole not only in Kerala but also elsewhere in the world. In this chapter it is examined how the student community developed itself in Malabar into an influential group like the teachers, the peasants and the working class. The politicization and radicalization of the student community, and the struggle for their legitimate rights are also examined.

In those days the educational institutions were conservative in many ways. The main reason for this phenomenon was that the colonial education system was meant to create a class subservient to the British rule. The system did not allow any alteration in its conservative fabric by an external force. To break this equilibrium, immense work had to be undertaken.

The school being a social organization, it had to accept the pulses of social and political changes of the society. The radicalization of Kerala society took place in the 20th century and it disturbed the equilibrium that it had been maintaining for many centuries. Consequently this affected the school system as well.

This was a result of the activities undertaken by many educated men. What they did was that they interpreted the society with a new perspective. They
utilized education a means to understand the problems of the common people.

As we have already discussed literacy was a fundamental feature of Kerala’s political culture; a crucial element in the creation of the public opinion and essential to the consciousness of individual and political rights that was a conspicuous feature of social and political life in Kerala.¹

At the same time it was not the picture when the whole country was considered. The British completely neglected the spread of primary education among the masses. Thus, even after almost 150 years of the British rule, only 12.2% population of India could become literate. Consequently, whatever social change occurred during this period also remained confined to this small urban upper and middle classes.² Only a minority enjoyed the fruits of all development. They acted on the basis of what they considered to be right in their perspective. The Colonial education system was designed in such a way.

The colonial education did not represent the true picture of the Indian life. It had no realistic understanding of the political, economic and social problems of Indian society.³ The system of education followed by Indians was one that the Europeans had left behind. When the educated class in Europe changed from one method of education to the other continuously, the Indians stuck to the systems rejected by them.⁴

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¹ V.K.Ramachandran, Kerala’s Developmental Achievements, p.45
³ Ibid, p.147
⁴ M.K.Gandhi, Education, p.64
A group of prominent Englishmen held that the English education would make the Indian people gladly accept the British rule.5

The ultimate aim of the British was, no doubt, to consolidate the colonial rule in India for which they wanted to use education a tool.

So the British rulers did not make the education system in consonance with the needs of the Indian people. They developed it to suit their own political, economic and administrative motives.6 Thus it perverted Indian history and tried to obstruct the development of Indian Nationalism.7 The education system by building up an educated elite and neglecting popular education helped to preserve and strengthen the barrier between upper classes and the masses. The use of English raised the class barriers even higher.8 Any how the British succeeded in creating a class of westernized elite and white collar job seekers from among the Indians and in keeping it small and confined to upper and middle classes.9 Moreover he colonial education had always provided the idea of cultural superiority of the west.10 According to A.R.Desai, it was a political necessity for the colonial regime.11

Aparna Basu writes:

"Education forms one distinct component among the various forces which contributed to the growth of political activity in India. It was of particular importance during the first two decades of this (20th) century, when the Indian nationalists were dominated by anglophile politicians who relied on western inspiration for their ideals. In these years the political and social reform movements

5 A.R.Desai, The Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.141
7 Ibid, p.147
9 B.V.Shah and K.B. Shah, Sociology of Education, p.106
10 K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social Change in India, p.xvii
11 A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism,p.141
were limited to the educated Indians in their leadership and sometimes their following.\textsuperscript{12}

But the picture began to change. Soon they stood for western scientific education, freedom of the press and social reforms. They established the ideas of democracy, nationalism and rationalism.\textsuperscript{13}

Aparna Basu further comments:

"Many of the social reformers also belonged to the western educated class. Educated one detained the ideals of reform, and those ideals reflected the particular needs of and desires of their supporters, who also came from the educated classes."\textsuperscript{14}

But the earliest educated elite produced in Bengal did not constitute much to the growth of nationalist politics.\textsuperscript{15} Later in Bengal and Maharashtra one can find a fairly close relation between the growth of English Education and the pattern of political activity throughout this period.

In Madras, on the other hand, though western education had an early start, political organization did not start functioning effectively at a provincial level till about 1915.\textsuperscript{16}

The three most educationally advanced communities, the Bengal Bhadralok, the Chitpavan of Maharashtra and the Tamil Brahmin had assumed the political leadership in their respective geographical areas.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{12} Aparna Basu, The Growth of Education and Political Development in India 1898–1920, p.189
\textsuperscript{13} K.K.N.Kurup, Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change: The role of Malayalam literature, p.23
\textsuperscript{14} Aparna Basu, The Growth of Education and Political Development in India(1898-1920), p.232
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, p.5
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, p.231
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p.232
The western educated people read the literature produced in different parts of the world. They derived divergent views, as they were capable of understanding the system that existed in many European countries. Hence a conflict became imminent between the dissatisfied section of the Indian society and the colonial regime.

So it was not mere accident that the pioneers and all subsequent leaders of Indian nationalists came from the educated classes of the Indian society.\(^{18}\) It is assumed that the political development was not uniform all over the country and thus had something to do with the uneven rate of educational growth.\(^{19}\) The political system of a country obviously influences educational system, and educational system also influences political system. Education plays an important role in political development of a society.\(^{20}\)

Realizing this quality of education, the national leaders worked for a national education based on Sanskrit tradition and culture. They also propagated mother tongue.\(^{21}\)

Political consciousness is not a separate factor in the history of any country. It is not considered in isolation from other historically evolved structure and process.\(^{22}\) What was attempted about was a general assessment of the condition in which the student community in India was formed. These conditions also gave shape to the growth of political consciousness among student community.

\(^{18}\) A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.157  
\(^{19}\) Aparna Basu, The Growth of Education and Political Development in India(1898-1920), p.5  
\(^{20}\) B.V.Shah and K.B.Shah, The Sociology of Education, p.120  
\(^{21}\) K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social Change: The role of Malayalam literature, p.xvii  
\(^{22}\) Manu Bhaskar, Press And Class Consciousness in Developing Societies, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi,198, p.27
The college students in India were politically conscious even in the 19th century. In the first meeting of the Indian National Congress many college students participated. Among the two hundred or so present in the foundation ceremony of the Indian National Congress one hundred and fifty were college students. Their wide knowledge gave them better awareness about the situation in India.

The political consciousness was a gradual process in which the print media had a crucial role. Literacy and the print media were responsible for guiding people towards the Nationalist Movement and its constructive programme of transmission of nationalist ideology to the masses.

Towards the second part of the 19th century evolved out of a conflict between the British imperialism and the literate class especially those belonged to the National Movement. As the educated group began to interpret the society and Government according to their perception, the conflict between the two groups became inevitable. This was the condition prevailing all over the country.

The situation in Kerala has also to be examined in this general context. Of all the changes destructive of the traditional order in Kerala, education has particularly been the most important. The state’s addiction to education and its achievements in their place most notably in literacy has contributed to its distinctive political culture. The districts and castes and communities, which had a lead in English Education, were politically more advanced and the leaders of the new style of politics had been products of the western type

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27 Tapas Basu, Probing into the History of Indian Student Movement, p.20
24 K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social change: The role of Malayalam literature, p. XVI
25 Tapas Basu, Probing into the History of Indian Student Movement, p.11
26 T.J.Nossiter, Communism in Kerala, p.23
of education.\textsuperscript{27} The gap between Malabar and Cochin and Travancore in respect of literacy widened during the period of British rule in Malabar.\textsuperscript{28}

It was only from the second decade of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century that education made marked progress in Malabar. Those who got educated in the higher institution of learning imbibed the spirit of democracy and equal citizenship rights.\textsuperscript{29}

The division of Kerala into Kasaragode, Malabar, Travancore and Cochin prevented the growth of nationalism. The growth of western education and the emergence of new middle class was a late development in this region.\textsuperscript{30} But with the gradual spread of education, political awareness of the populace also increased.\textsuperscript{31}

The social and political growth necessarily related to the growth of education. The illiteracy and the resultant ignorance of the masses had inevitably obstructed social and political and economic progress.\textsuperscript{32}

Since education in Kerala was what we have already seen, the British Government was frequently alarmed at the spread of extreme political ideas among the educated Indians, which they imbibed from the political literate of Europe due to the knowledge of English.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{27} Aparna Basu, The Growth of Education and Political Development in India (1898-1920), p.231
\textsuperscript{28} V.K.Ramachandran, Kerala's Developmental Achievements, p.57
\textsuperscript{29} N.I.E.P.A, A History of Educational Development in Kerala, p.75
\textsuperscript{30} K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social Change: The Role of Malayalam literature, p.27
\textsuperscript{31} P.R.Gopinathan Nair, Universalisation of Primary Education, p.28
\textsuperscript{32} A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p.153
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p.157
The British were keen to bridle the growth of political awareness all over India. They saw direct link between English education and the rise of nationalism. As in Bengal and other parts of India, English education was a major factor in articulating the political consciousness and nationalism. But it was confined to the elite class only.

Till about 1910-15, there was hardly any organized political life at the provincial level. The Madras politics, till the first decades of this century, were more localized. It was the people of Malabar who confronted the British colonial power directly. They had to suffer much at the hands of the British and their allies—the Janmis and the bureaucrats. At the same time the people of Travancore and Cochin faced the British indirectly.

The development of political consciousness and nationalism was a slow process in Malabar. The English Education with its cultural hegemony had completed the stratification, emerging from the depressed communities like the Thiyyas and on account of their caste grievances, they showed loyalty towards the foreign rule.

Therefore the professional groups and the educated elite in areas like Kannur, Calicut and Thalassery became an inseparable part of comprador petty bourgeoisie even in the khilafath and Non Co-Operation movements.

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34 Aparna Basu, The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, p.9
35 Ibid, pp.4-5
36 Ibid, p.221
37 Ibid, p.190
38 V.K.Ramachandran, Kerala’s Developmental Achievements, p.68
39 K.K.N.Kurup, Nationalism and Social change: The role of Malayalam literature, p.35
Politicization of the Student Community.

Politicization of the Kerala society happened in different ways.

In Malabar it was the secular national movement that had politicized the people but in Travancore, this process was undertaken by the caste oriented reform movement.40

The students began to involve in political activities even from the very first decades of the 20th century with the announcement of the Non Co-operation Movement. Moulana Yaqub Hassan, K. Madhavan Nair, Gopalamenon and P.Moidu were arrested. A strong hartal was observed in Calicut in protest. Students boycotted the schools and the colleges as a spontaneous response.41

The call of Gandhiji to students to boycott the schools-Government or aided by the Government- and the people their jobs by the Government had tremendous influence. Many students enthusiastically responded.

K.P.Kesava Menon portrays one such student:

"During the first phase of the Non Co-operation movement, a young man came to the Congress office, one day. He was a student in Bombay. He had left the college to join the political activities. The same person who was clad in shirt and coat was no one else Mr. K.Kelappan."42

Many college students had shown great interest in the organizational activities. They stopped their studies and joined the Congress. K.P. Appa Nair, R.V.Sarma, Chathukkutty Nair, Manikkath Gopala Menon, K.V.Balakrishna Menon Mathanni, S.K.Combrabel, Kurur Neelakantan

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40 N.K.Jose, Vaikom Satyagraha, p.77
41 Moidu Moulavi, Moulatitude Atmakatha, p.122
42 K.P.Kesavamenon, Kazhinha Kalam, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, p.80
Nambudiripad etc. were prominent among them. Some of them had even become the presidents of the Indian National Congress later like A.K. Pillai. He left college, when he was a student at the Oxford. He joined the Indian National Congress; he started the celebrated newspaper- *Swarat* from Kollam.

When the Non Co-operation Movement began, Mohammed Abdurahiman was a student in the Aligarh College. He also joined the movement. He attended the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress as a representative of the students. Moulana Mohammedali sent him to Kerala for political activities in the state. He came to Calicut and began political activity there.

The student life in Payyannur was the factor that helped Kunhappa (K.A. Keraleeyan) to get attracted towards the National Movement. Payyannur was a centre of National Movement then. It was during the Simon Commission boycott in 1928 that any activity as part of the freedom struggle took place.

With the demise of Lalalajpat Rai more students came to join the movement and boycotted the schools and colleges. Kunhappa Namibiar was one among them. They led processions at many places.

In the 1928 meeting of the Indian National Congress at Payyannur Keraleeyan

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43 Ibid, p.79
44 Ibid, pp.79-80
45 K.P. Kesavamenon, *Kazhinho Kalam*, p.80
46 Moidu Moulavi, *Moulavitude Atmakatha*, p.19
47 Dr. V.V. Kunhikrishnan, *Keraleeyanum Karshakaprasathanum*, Chitha, Trivandrum, p.10
48 Ibid, pp.10-11
became a volunteer and thus entered in active politics.\textsuperscript{49}

The atmosphere in Malabar was so much challenging for a student.

E.M.S. Nambudiripad describes his experience as a student. It was during the study of the Vedas, he happened to hear the names of Annie Bessant, Tilak and Gokhale. The name of Gokhale was especially well known.\textsuperscript{50}

E.M.S. Nambudiripad joined school in 1925. The atmosphere in the school was quite new. He had to mingle with the children belonging to the low castes. They were sardonic at him. He studied for three years in the Perinthalmanna Board School. The school life was almost against casteism and other religious discriminations. This co-operative mentality gave fuel for the social activities in his later life.\textsuperscript{51} The school provided an over all new milieu. Some of the teachers were in favour of providing political education to the children.

Once Govinda Menon (He was the teacher at the Board School, Perinthalmana) was taking a lesson, the District Education Officer, Lobo visited the class for inspection. He had strong dislike towards Govinda Menon. Menon continued the lesson. The topic of discussion was the revolutions in France and other countries, which the colonial masters found in vexation. Lobo went back without any comment.

Govinda Menon had given examples, which were really effective. They touched the core of the mind.

While teaching the usage of 'All', E.M. Sankaran Nambudiripad answered:

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. p.12
\textsuperscript{50} A.V. Kunhambu, \textit{Kayyurum Karivellurum}, Chitha, Trivandrum, 1986, p.35
\textsuperscript{51} E.M.S. Nambudiripad, \textit{Atmakatha}, p.74
"All were sad when C.R. Das died."

The teacher was very happy to hear that.52

The ultimate aim of the middle class parents in educating their little ones was to get an employment in the Government service. They also believed that the British were formidable. The downtrodden of the society never had the means to bear the expenses of education.

Even though the situation was quite unsuitable for the students because of the pressure from the parents, teachers and the Government, many of them had strongly supported the National Movement negating the proscriptions built by the conservative elements.

There were boycott of the classes in many places during the visit of the Simon Commission. The decision to boycott the class was taken by some students. But some changed the mind.53 In January 1928, seven students boycotted the classes. They were N.P. Narayanan Nair, A.C. Ponnunni Raja, Krishnan Nair, K. Ayyappan Nair, E.T. Appukuttan, Balakrishna Panicker and N. Sankunni Nair. M.K. Raman, who was a teacher, also took part.54

The Head Master of Palur Aided elementary school was P. Gopalan Nair. He was from Pattambi. He lived in the Cherukare Pisharam. He taught the children there and also at the school. He was a strong Congress activist.55

Many children had heard about the political leaders and their brave activities in fighting the British domination. In January 1928, S.K. Kombravel

52 Appukuttan Vallikkunnu, Ariyappedatha EMS, p. 113
53 Ibid, p. 120
54 Ibid, pp. 120-21
55 Cherukad, Jeevithappatha, pp. 183-4
and Kurur Neelakandan Nambudiripad came to Perinthalmanna. A meeting in protest against the Simon Commission was conducted at the school ground. The responsibility to translate the speech of Combrabel was given to E.M.S.Nambudiripad.56

The students of the Municipal High School, Kannur also boycotted the classes. Among them included Pamban Madhavan. A meeting was convened at the Vilakkunthara and a hartal was observed in the town.57

Besides the teachers, many students had also great interest in the National Movement, they became great friends of E.M.S.Nambudiripad. Students from Mankada Ayiranazhi, Kadannamanna and Aripra Kovilakams had studied in the school. They had in mind the ideology of the Indian National Congress and Gandhi, especially Ponnuni Raja of Aripra Kovilakam, N.P Narayananan Nair and Subramanian, though they were not belonging to the Kovilakam. They used to meet in the library and discuss the movement against the British all over India. All these meetings and reading made Kunju (E.M.S.Nambudiripad) a new person.58

Cherukad describes the political situation in Valluwanad and the way by which he was attracted towards the Indian National Congress.

"We had read the Mathrubhumi even in those days and discussed matters appeared in it. Slowly Pulamanthol village Congress committee came in to existence. Poverthi Ezhuthachan, the founder of Vilayur Vidhyabhivardhini Sanskrit School, was also a member of the Pulamanthol Congress Committee."59

56 Appukuttan Vallikkunnu, Ariyappedatha E.M.S., p.74
57 A.V.Sreekanta pothuval, Athyudhararakeralam Swathantrya Samaratil,p.43
58 Appukuttan Vallikkunnu, Ariyappedatha E.M.S.,p.111
59 Cherukad, Jeevithappatha.p.138
Till then the institution had accepted the Grant-In-Aid and was conservative in every respect. The students with moustaches had studied there. They spread the message of the Congress outside the school, thus they revolutionized the school. V.P. Balakrishnan Nair, the teacher in charge of Sahityasamajam, was younger to me. He taught history in the sixth and the seventh standards. He tried his best to inject patriotism to the minds of the students.60

In 1928, while A.V.Kunhambu was at the Payyannur High School, he came to contact with the political movement. He became a volunteer at the Payyanur meeting of the Indian National Congress.61

M.S.Devadas describes thus:

“As far as I was concerned, I never had interest in learning subjects for the coming examination but I found great interest in reading the news of the political struggle taking place in different parts of the country. I was much elated.”62

At the Municipal High school, Kannur, the Gandhi cap of a student was forcibly taken away by the head master. But the parent of the student served a notice to the head master that if he would not give the cap back, legal measures would be taken against him. The head master then gave the cap back. This was an interesting episode in the National Movement.63 All over Malabar, the participation of the students was less. But it was only a beginning.

Generally, it was the calm period before the students jumped into the mainstream political struggle after being inspired by the prevailing situation

60 Ibid, p.166
61 A.V.Kunhambu, Kayyurum Karivellurum, p.14
62 M.S.Devadas, Jeevithathinte Thalukal, Chinta, Trivandrum, pp.110-111
63 V.R.Menon, Mathrubhumiyute Charithram, Mathrubhumi, Calicut, 1998, Vol.1, p.266
in Cochin and Travancore. The storm of protest had not appeared in the schools and colleges hence the approach of the Government and police were not much oppressive.64

It is however important that there were no student unions to impart the spirit of political awareness in an organized manner. All the activities were undertaken in the name of the Indian National Congress.

During the Civil Disobedience Movement a great number of students jumped in to political struggle. The procession of the students usually started from near Manikantanal in Trichur. They would round the town and ended from where it began. They sang the patriotic song Pora ...Pora...Nalil Nalil... written by Vallathol Narayana menon. The procession comprised mainly of the college students. The people exclaimed how freedom could be attained through the processions of the students.65

The students also sold khadi visiting each and every house in Guruvayur.66 Those who spoke on the occasion declared that the youth were not ready to suffer the slavery any more; they would struggle and win independence.67 Some of them were directly linked with the Indian National Congress. It was a privilege for a student to get permission to attend the meeting of the Indian National Congress then. As he got a ticket to attend the Madras session of the Indian National Congress, E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad became a representative at the age of 18. At many places the students passed the total independence resolution. On 26 January 1930, the resolution for

64 Thikkodiyan, Arangu Kanatha Nadan, p.96
65 Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, Ariyappadatha E.M.S, p.196
66 Ibid
67 Ibid
complete independence was signed by E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad and others.\textsuperscript{68}

The Salt \textit{Satyagraha} was an important incident in the history of student community in Kerala as a number of them took part in it ignoring the many hurdles. But the Indian National Congress was very cautious in admitting students to the movement. Gandhiji was opposed to the students to participate in the strikes. So the leaders sent many of the students back.

The St.Thomas College, Trichur was a centre of intellectually advanced students like E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad, V.R.Krishnan Ezhuthassan and P.Sankaran Ilayathu. They had formed \textit{Vidyarthisamiti}.\textsuperscript{69}In April 1930, students struck work in connection with the \textit{Uppu Satyagraha}. Many went to Calicut to participate in the \textit{Satyagraha}. M.S. Krishnan Nambudiri was one among them, but he was sent back saying he had not attained age enough to participate in the movement.\textsuperscript{70}

The leaders of the Indian National Congress told the students that the time to join the struggle for boycotting the schools and colleges had not come and so they were sent back.\textsuperscript{71} In March 1931, during the time of the intermediate examination, processions were conducted almost every evening in Trichur. This was in protest against the assassination of Bhagat Singh. The assassination of Bhagat Sing and others caused great pain for the students.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, p.197
\textsuperscript{69} Perunna K.N.Nair, \textit{Keralathile Congress Prasthanam}, p.165
\textsuperscript{70} Appukkuttan Vallikkunnu, \textit{Ariyappadatha E.M.S}, p.196
\textsuperscript{71} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, \textit{Atmakatha}, p.133
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, p.103
The northern part of Malabar also was under the fever of freedom struggle. A.K.Kunhirama Pothuval and Kunhiraman Adiyodi were brought to the Congress by Ganesa Pai, and they were students then.

The former was sent to Payyanur and the latter to Calicut. This measure was taken to equip the K.P.C.C office with people. K. Balan and K. Abdulla were suspended from the High School saying that they had sung the Vande Mataram. They were taken back after A.K.Gopalan and others strongly protested. Kunhiraman Adiyodi took part in the salt Satyagraha as well.

T.C.V. Kunhirama Poduval was taken away by the police and was brutally assaulted as he participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and shouted the slogan Bharat Mata Ki Jai. He lost his teeth in the police attack.

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-1933 drew students into the mainstream of political organization such as the Congress and the Socialist, but it also promoted the founding of the students organization.

Many students took part in the activities after boycotting the colleges. They reached the seashore to participate in the protest movement.

During the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru the students of the schools boycotted the classes and held protest rallies at Payyannur.

T.C Kunhappan Nambiar, Kuppadakkan Kunhiraman Nambiar, R.Narayana Poduval, N.Subramania Shenoy and Andhra Kannappoduval were expelled

73 A.V.Sreekanta pothuval, Athyutharakeralam Swathantrya Samarathil, p.64
74 Ibid, p.63
75 Ibid, p.64
76 Robin Jeffrey, Politics, Women and Well-being, p.64
77 Moidumoulavi, Moulaviyude Atmakath, p.136
from the school. But all these actions brought about the opposite result. They became more and more attracted towards the National Movement.78

In 1930, the Madras Governor was to visit the St. Aloysius College in Mangalore. The college students were prepared to face the situation in a 'befitting manner'. Sadananda Shetty, Abdulkareem, A. Achuthan etc. wore Gandhi cap and reached the college. Those who wore the Gandhi cap were attacked by the Circle Inspector of police and were dismissed from the college. But the Chief of Education K.P.G. Menon swore that he would wear only khadi in future. Achuthan also vowed that he would never take up any job under the British.79

As the students were not given permission to visit Gandhi on his way from Mangalore, the students under the leadership of P.Kunhiraman Nair boycotted the classes and met Gandhi. This was a remarkable incident.80

In 1931, many women in Calicut decided to hold a procession in protest against the cruel treatment of police on woman Satyagrahis in Bombay.

There were orders of prohibition. They peacefully violated the orders and were arrested. The schools and colleges observed a hartal on the 17th. Not a student of the Municipal Girls' School at Chalappuram, Calicut attended the classes. They held a procession, which was led by Jayalakshmi.81

The influence of political leaders especially Gandhiji was significant.

P.C.Kuttykrishnan(Uroob) describes how he met Gandhi during his school life:

78 Payyannur Nagarasabha Vikasana Rekha, p.136
79 A.V.Sreekanta pothuval, Athyuathara Keralam Swathantrya Samarathil, p.19
80 Ibid, pp.21-22
"I was studying in the 8th or 9th standard in the A.V. High School, Ponnnani. Then the news was spread that Gandhiji had come to Guruvayur to camp there. I walked almost sixteen miles to reach the place where Gandhiji had been camping. There were guards to restrict the entry. Nobody was allowed to go in. At that time a team from Sri Lanka came to visit Gandhiji. There were five members in their group. They had visiting cards. Gandhiji gave permission to see him. I entered the hall as one among the group."

He continues:

When I entered the room Gandhiji looked at us and asked 'I see you are not five: you are six' he stared at me and asked who I was.

I replied: 'I am a student, Bappuji.'

'What brought you here?'

'I came by walk from sixteen miles away to worship you.'

I fell at his feet. He was so kind to bless me. Then he looked at me and gave this admonition:

'Mr. Student, never trespass in your life.'

Cherukad has this to add about his school life:

"Gandhi comes!"

"One day Sekhara Pisharody told us. He came to Kerala in connection with the Guruvayur Satyagraha. There is a reception for him at Pattambi tomorrow. Though a Head Master can't tell this, still I recommend that all of you may go and see the great man." 83

The following day he collected four annas and went to Pattambi to see Gandhiji. 84

The students voluntarily attended the political activities and they were about to become an important factor in determining the direction of the

82 Grandhalokam, Kerala Grandhasala Sangham, Trivandrum, Sept., 2004, p. 15
83 Cherukad, Jeevithappatha, p. 166
84 Ibid, p. 167
National Movement. Keraleeyan participated in the Guruvayur Satyagraha. In January 1932 after the school was opened after the Christmas, E.M.S.Nambudiripad jumped in to the freedom struggle. The students as a whole boycotted the classes. They left the college after meeting the students, who boycotted the classes.\textsuperscript{85}

The Guruvayur Satyagraha had great impact on the students. Meenakshi, Madhavi, Padmavathi etc. (they were students then) hac. visited the camp of the Satyagrahis.\textsuperscript{86}

The school authorities in some places strongly forbade their students from participating the political activities. When Babu Rajendraprasad came to Chundampatta, Kuttikrishnan Nair went to see him. He had to stop his school education for this.\textsuperscript{87}

When P.C.Joshi and E.M.Sankaran Nambudiripad were going to Pattambi by car, many students gathered there and presented jasmine buds put in vaseline bottle to Joshi.\textsuperscript{88}

The political atmosphere got turbulent and the people especially the youth were put in prison. The educational status of the prisoners indicates that there was an increase in the education among the prisoners from the early years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century to the middle of the century.

\textsuperscript{85} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Atmakatha, p.147
\textsuperscript{86} A.K.Gopalan, Ente Jeevithayatra, p.50
\textsuperscript{87} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Oru Indian Communistinte Ormakkurippukal, p.41
\textsuperscript{88} Cherukad, Jeevithappatha, p.489
By 1930s 90% of those jailed were below 30 and had good education.89

(Appendix-IV)

**Radicalization of the Student Community.**

Till the 1930s there were no student unions in Malabar. The students took up political activities of the Indian National Congress and thus there were no independent unions for them. During this period the students were recruited as volunteers for the activities of the Indian National Congress.90

The national daily *Mathrubhumi* sowed the seeds of patriotism in the young minds.91 Many were attracted towards the political movement as they read the *Mathrubhumi*. Thikkodiyan became aware of the Civil Disobedience Movement when he began to read the *Mathrubhumi*.92

While Keraleeyan was studying in Tanjore, somebody informed the principal about his link with the Congress, and they were preparing to oust him. He knew it well before and left the college otherwise they would have dismissed him.93

When the report came about the arrest of Madhavan Nair, U.Gopala Menon and others, the students from the Native High School, Calicut took out a procession. It passed in front of the Samudiriri College. Many students joined them. All of them shouted 'Madhavan Nair Ki Jai' and 'Copala Menon Ki Jai'. As they reached near the Malabar Christian College, a large number of students followed them.

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89 Robin Jeffrey, Politics, Women and Well-being, p.64
90 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Student Movement-Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, p.4
91 Dr.V.V.Kunhikrishnan, Keraleeyanum Karshaka Prasthanavum, p.10
92 Ibid, p.10
93 Ibid
They at last reached near the town police station and were about six hundred. This procession was in violation of the Government orders. It was a great success and a brave attempt by the students. The students from the fifth standard to the fourth form of the Madrassathul Mohammedan High School came out of the class to protest the arrest of the leaders. The students from the Chalappuram Girls High School, Calicut boycotted the classes and held a procession.

When Yaqub Hassan, Gopala Menon, Madhavan Nair etc. were released from jail, a reception was given to them at Thalassery. A.K. Gopalan and others jumped out of the schools and pulled the vehicle in which they were travelling. The teachers punished them. As part of the political Conferences of the Indian National Congress there were students meetings as well. An attempt to found a student union was made by the Congress Socialists.

While in Travancore a strong movement was on against the diwan rule, a Student Union was founded in Malabar. In 1936, an effort was made to convene a meeting of all the Student Unions working all over India. In that meeting the All India Students Federation came into being. The same year the Calicut based Calicut Students Union was also formed. Parallel to this the Muslim students in Calicut published a manuscript magazine namely Vidyakusumam. They at once became the members of the Students Organization. This union was entirely confined to Calicut.

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94 Thikkodiyan, Arangu Kanatha Nadan, p.11
95 The Mathrubhumi Daily, July, 9, 1930
96 A.K. Gopalan, Ente Jeevithakatha, p.13
97 C. Bhaskaran, Keralathile Vidyarthi Prasthanam, Chintanath, Trivandrum, 1991, p.18
In 1937 the first conference of the A.I.S.F was convened, which was presided over by Soumyendra Nath Tagore. A charter of rights was agreed in the conference.

They were:

1. The retention should be dispensed with
2. Cruel punishments should not be continued
3. Library and laboratory facilities be improved.\(^98\)

Then the Malabar regional meetings were conducted in Malabar. In Thalassery an all Malabar Student's Conference was held. Battliwalla, who was to preside the meeting, was arrested on his way on 2\(^{nd}\) October 1937. A strong protest movement was started for getting his release.\(^99\)

Robin Jeffrey says:

"The whole experience of being a student changed people; they became simply improved version of their elders, but people with different ideas about right conduct and public organization."\(^100\)

The students began to feel that they had a greater role to play in the political sphere for which they got inspiration from the situation in Malabar.

When Kelappan was the president of the District Board, some students hoisted the national flag at the Payyanur High School. They were suspended at once. A strong protest was raised against this illegal activity. The suspension was owing to their initiative to found a unit of Students'

\(^98\) Ibid, p.19
\(^99\) Ibid
\(^100\) Robin Jeffrey, Politics, Women and Wellbeing, p.59
Kelappan was totally opposed to the idea of the Student Unions and their participation in various political movements. There was a strong argument between E.M.S. Nambudiripad and K.Kelappan through the *Mathrubhumi* in which Kelappan strongly objected the founding of student unions. E.M.S. Nambudiripad argued that the students themselves should safeguard their interests, and for that purpose student unions should be formed.¹⁰²

In 1938, the All Kerala Conference of the A.I.S.F was convened in Palakkad under the leadership of Nariman. The third conference was in Calicut in 1939.¹⁰³

In 1938, in the Madras conference a strong difference of opinion was emerged between Masani and M. Farooqi which caused a split.¹⁰⁴

But the activities of the Federation went on.

Three types of activities were to be implemented:

1. Anti imperialistic propaganda to be beefed up.

2. Make the college and school students politically conscious.

3. Become more active among the masses. ¹⁰⁵

Political classes were conducted for students. Political leaders were invited to schools and colleges and arranged their speeches. In 1938, during the Christmas vacation, the Federation activists selected some villages for their

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¹⁰¹ C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidyarthi Prasthanam*, p.20
¹⁰² E.M.S.nambudiripad, *The Mathrubhumi*, October, 21,1937
¹⁰³ C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidyarthi Prasthanam*, p.20
¹⁰⁴ Ibid
¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp.20-21
activity among the masses to boost the ant imperialistic mood of the people. Students from the colleges of Tellicherry, Calicut and Palakkad participated in these activities.\(^{106}\)

In 1939 Gandhi started individual *Satyagraha* in protest against the decision of the British Government to drag India to the Second World War. Students also took part in the anti war activities. In different colleges in Malabar there were vigorous anti war meetings in which Mr. Mohan Kumaramangalam took part, who was the son of Subbarayan, the then education minister of the Madras state.\(^{107}\)

In 1941 Hitler attacked Russia. The war became anti imperialistic. The Patna session of the A.I.S.F. discussed the change of policy.

The Kerala branch of the A.I.S.F. tried to get the loyalty of the students in Kerala in favour of the Soviet Front. Meanwhile Gandhi declared Quit India struggle in 1942.\(^{108}\)

Even though the Congress Socialist Party and the Communists were not at all in favour of the Quit India struggle, a large number of the students participated in it. During the August Struggle, students held processions in Trichur. Students from the *Vivekodayam* High School, C.M.School, St. Thomas College and Malayan college took part. Many schools were closed for weeks. The students struck work and went to the home of the dead to hold *Satyagraha*. The police lathicharged and many girls were also wounded.

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\(^{106}\) Ibid, P.20-21

\(^{107}\) Ibid, pp.21-22

\(^{108}\) C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidhyarthiprashtaunan*, p.22
Kallyanikutty, the daughter of late Kongattil Raman Menon was one among them.\(^{109}\)

On 2 October 1942, the children of the Nileswaram Raja’s School celebrated Gandhi’s 74\(^{th}\) birth anniversary by hoisting the national tricolour. When they were about to sing *Vande Matharam*, the Puthukotta Sub. Inspector, who was already in position, attacked the children in a brutal way.\(^{110}\) For this incident Naranthatta Kunhambu was jailed for about six months and was expelled from the school.\(^{111}\) On 2 October 1942 on the *Gandhi Jayanti* day students from Thalassery and Kathirur shouted *Quit India*, *Bharath Matha Ki Jai* and boycotted the classes. O.G. Balagopalan, Thayat.B.Sankaran, M.P. Govindan, K.M. Balakrishnan Nambiar, M.C.V. Bhattathirippad, Holi Balakrishnan, A.M.Viswanathan and Sadananada Mallar were the leading personalities in the struggle. Most of them were expelled from the school. They also suffered cruel assaults and were put in jail. The action taken by the Government could not desist them from political activities. P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar conducted secret trips to spread the importance of the August struggle in the minds of the students and the common people.\(^{112}\)

On August 12 1942 a *hartal* was observed by the students of the Rajas High School in protest against the arrest of Gandhi, Azad and Nehru.\(^{113}\) On August 26, children did not go to school.\(^{114}\) They voluntarily kept away from the school. On the same day the children of the Rajas High School hoisted  

\(^{109}\) Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, p.165  
\(^{110}\) K.K.N.Kurup, *A.C.Kannan Nair Oru Padanam*, Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 1985, p.125  
\(^{111}\) Ibid, p.126  
\(^{112}\) A.V.Sreekanta potheruval, *Athyuatharakeralam Swathantrya Samarathil*, p.86  
\(^{113}\) K.K.N, *A.C.Kannan Nair Oru Padanam*, p.124  
\(^{114}\) Ibid
the national flag. One student, Sreedharan Nair was arrested. The police attacked the students even in the hostel, as they had hoisted the national flag. About six or seven students were expelled from the school.

In 1946, in a bid to protest the arrest of Sankaranarayanan Thampi, the Malabar Vidhyarthi Federation decided to hold a protest march. Curfew was clamped in Palakkad. E.M.S.Nambudiripad participated in the meeting. Krishna Kurup, who was studying in the Purameri High School, also took part. In Kochi, there was lathi charge and Krishna Kurup was wounded and was arrested. In protest the first book down strike was taken place at Purameri school.

During the anniversary celebrations of the Neeleswram Rajas High School, the Kasaragode Munisiff was in the chair.

After the Vande Matharam, Munsiff shouted "God save the king...."

No response was there from the audience. They shouted back "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai" ... and "Bharata Matha Ki Jai."

In 1947, India won independence. No change in the situation of the students could be felt in addressing their demands. The promises remained unfulfilled. Strikes were held against these policies. The aims of the strike were to end detention and also to bring down the fees. To make it real the students of the Malabar area struck work on November 18, 1947. The Vidyarthi Federation, Muslim Vidyarthi Association and Vidyarthi Congress

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115 Ibid, p.127
116 K.K.N.Kurup, A.C.KAnnan Nair Oru Padamam,p.125
117 Ibid
118 Ibid, p.64
119 Ibid.
participated. All these organizations held the first combined strike. In November 1947 throughout Malabar, the strike was held. There was a lull in the activities of the federation till 1951. The Communist party and many other organizations were banned during this period and a cruel oppressive rule followed.

Student protests almost ritualized by 1948, since the Government were not at all positive in finding a solution to their demands.

The students in Malabar were really on the path of struggle, when they realized that the interests of them really depended on the winning of independence from the colonial administration. In the beginning of the National Movement the Indian National Congress was not in favour of mobilizing the student community.

The real attempt to organize the student community was done by the Congress Socialist Party and then the Communists. They understood the potential of the student community and tried to mobilize them. There was a row between K.Kelappan and E.M.S.Nambudiripad on the issue that whether the students should be politicized. The former was of the opinion that the children should spend their time in learning activities but the latter was on the contrary. He supported the political activities of the students. But even after the formation of the student unions, the student movement was not led in an organized way. But many had jumped into the political struggle. (Appendix-V)

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120 C.Bhaskaran, *Keralathile Vidhyarthi Prasthanam*, p.29
121 Ibid, p.34
122 Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-being*, p.65
There were many external factors that inspired the students to involve in the ongoing political movement. Many of the student activists could not continue school education, for they were expelled for being with the political struggle. Any study regarding the student movement is rather incomplete without considering the factors that stimulated them to engage in the struggle against the tyrannical forces.